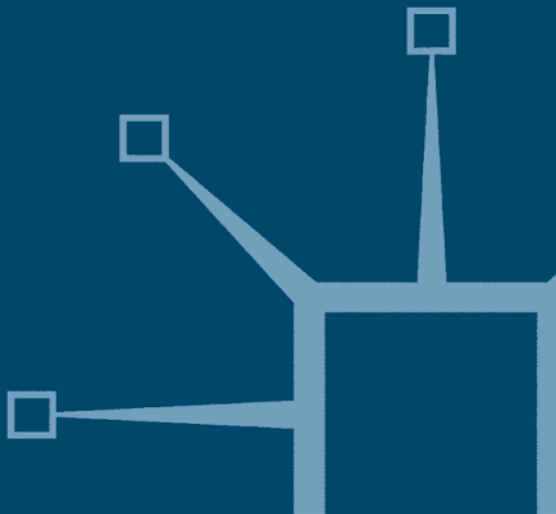
palgrave
macmillan

Zhang Xueliang

The General Who Never Fought

Aron Shai



Zhang Xueliang

Also by Aron Shai

ORIGINS OF THE WAR IN THE EAST: BRITAIN, CHINA AND JAPAN, 1937–1939

BRITAIN AND CHINA, 1941–1947: IMPERIAL MOMENTUM

THE FATE OF BRITISH AND FRENCH FIRMS IN CHINA, 1949–1954: IMPERIALISM IMPRISONED

SINO-ISRAELI RELATIONS: CURRENT REALITY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

BENHAZAR: SON TO A STRANGER (HISTORICAL NOVEL)

This page intentionally left blank

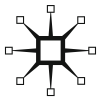
Zhang, Xue, Liang

Zhang Xueliang

The General Who Never Fought

Aron Shai
Tel Aviv University

palgrave
macmillan



Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-0-230-27906-3

First published 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-32678-5 ISBN 978-0-230-34891-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230348912

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12

To my grandchildren, Roni, Timor, Lihi, Yoav, Hagar, Assaf and Daniel

> The gentleman devotes himself to the roots. Once they are established, the Way grows.
> 君子務本、本立而道生。
>
> (*The Analects of Confucius*, 1: 2. Author's translation)

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Maps and Plates

Maps

Plates (between pp. and pp.)

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues and friends at Tel Aviv University for affording me the opportunity to pursue my research in their most congenial company. I am particularly grateful to Mr Robert L. Chang (Zhang Lulin), Zhang Xueliang's son, for his kind cooperation and for giving me the permission to reproduce his father's photos, photos of members of his family and those of the family's home in Shenyang. I am likewise grateful to the extremely cordial and helpful directors of the Oral History Research Office and Rare Book Manuscript Library at the Butler Library, Columbia University, and to the librarians who guided me when I conducted my research in New York. In writing this book I adhered to the policy of the oral documentation project, and the material I used from the transcripts is summarized and paraphrased and no parts (except for a sentence or two) are reproduced. In other words, the gist of the interviews conducted with the hero of this book are in my own wording.

It should also be noted that some of the maps in this book were inspired by the work of Brian Catchpole in *A Map History of Modern China* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1976).

Special thanks go to Yuri Pines, Zhang Ping, Dror Weil and Wei Zhengwei, who helped me to understand further Chinese society and customs. I am also grateful to my research assistants at Tel Aviv University, especially to Or Biron.

I would also like to thank my friend and colleague, Professor Fu Youde of Shangdong University, who encouraged me to translate this book into Chinese. The Sinologist, Professor Raoul David Findeisen, read the manuscript and suggested illuminating corrections and additions. I am most grateful to him.

My dear friends, Leah Nobuko Eisenberg, her daughter, Emily, and Horacio Furman, are sincere and true supporters of the students and faculty at the Department of East Asian Studies, Tel Aviv University. They have encouraged me and inspired me throughout my research work on this book. I am deeply indebted to them.

Shoshana London Sappir translated the book from Hebrew into English. I thank her for her professional work and most helpful comments. I am also indebted to Roza I. M. El-Eini, the copy-editor of the book.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my wife, Puah Shai, without whom this book would not have seen the light of day.

Aron Shai
Rector
Tel Aviv University

Notes on Sources, Index and Transliteration

The Select Bibliography at the end of this book contains archival materials, memoirs and works on the main characters of this study. While there are quite a few bibliographical items concerning Zhang Xueliang, some deal with marginal events in the Marshal's life and others are mere chronologies relating to his story. At times it seems that the authors' main goals were political–ideological, that is to say in order to justify the stance of the Nationalist Party (the Guomindang), or to inculcate the Communists' narrative. On some occasions, interviews with Zhang were simply recycled in either this or that manner.

Relative freedom of expression relating to recent history in both mainland China and Taiwan began to be felt only in the 1990s. Thus it is the more recent publications, including the ones that appear on the Internet, which are truly interesting.

The four indexes making up the Index section of the book – Chinese personalities, Place names in China, Non-Chinese names and Select terms – will hopefully serve as helpful supportive lists. In the case of Chinese names of personalities, the surnames precede the first names.

Most of the Chinese names and terms that appear in this book are transliterated using the Pinyin ('spelled sound' or phonetics) system. This Romanization method, introduced by the Chinese Peoples' Government in the 1950s, is still the official transliteration system in most Chinese-speaking countries. There is more than one transliteration system because during different periods and in different territories, different methods were used. Here, while the names were transliterated using the Pinyin system, in a few cases the older Wade-Giles system, which was the most popular until the 1970s, is also used. The Index may be helpful since the names and terms appear in both Pinyin and in the original Chinese characters.

Introduction

The man in the light suit with a briefcase in his left hand, the crowded and noisy group of tourists and the swarthy boy on his bicycle trying to cut his way through it; none of them slowed down when they passed the elderly Chinese man seated in a wheelchair. Just as he was every day, he had been brought to the beautiful beach of Waikiki, not far from the Hilton Hawaiian Village, after having the newspaper headlines read to him, while the radio screamed the day's news into his deeply crevassed face.

In the midst of the brightness of the golden sand and the clear sky, the old man liked to sit for hours in his wheelchair, his permanent perch, and gaze at the waves. He would scan the horizon, beyond which was the continent of Asia, and on its edge his homeland, China. Then, when he got tired, he would be wheeled back to the luxury apartment where he lived, the last of the many dozens of homes fate had afforded him as a frenzied shelter. At 7 p.m. he would retire for his night's sleep in his home, his castle, thousands of miles from his birthplace, which was lovingly maintained by his devoted wife, Zhao Yidi, until the day she died.

After the passing of Zhao Yidi, known to some as Edith Chang (Zhang), the old man liked to say that he no longer feared death. When he lived in Taipei on Mount Yangming, near a cemetery, and was asked why he had chosen that location, he mentioned the Ming dynasty poet, Gui Zhuang, who had established residence in his ancestral burial plot. Zhang Xueliang said that after all, everyone was going to die anyway, that was our destiny and direction and he might therefore just as well live by a graveyard.

Zhang Xueliang (known as Peter H. L. Chang) was about a hundred years old when he laid his wife to rest in June 2000. He wondered to himself again and again whether his long life could even remotely compensate

him for all the days, the years and the decades that he had spent in prison and in detention in almost total solitary confinement.

For more than thirty years I have been mentioning this man, Zhang Xueliang, in my lectures, articles and books. But only recently, following a tour I made of Manchuria, or Dongbei (meaning 'northeast' in Chinese, which is how the province is known in China), his homeland, did I decide to collect the information about him, scattered all over the world, and use the documents he deposited at Columbia University in New York for researchers on China. For decades I talked to Chinese people from the mainland, from Taiwan and overseas, and listened to their comments about Zhang and his career. Nobody remained indifferent. Everyone's eyes shine when he is mentioned.

In the spring of 2001, I asked the head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Tel Aviv to help me meet the man. I offered to go all the way to Hawaii, the farthest land point in the world from my home in Israel, to see him and exchange a few words with him. But in the fall of that year I received an official letter from the Taiwanese diplomat that the Marshal was suffering from ill health and could not be visited. A short time thereafter he passed away, ripe with age and experience.

The story of Zhang Xueliang, an amazing, unique and strange one, is known only by a few. The man, who was called 'the Young Marshal' even when he reached old age, maintained a long silence. Only a select few had the privilege of talking to him about the event that changed his life immeasurably. He usually refused interviews and would not share his secrets. Even more than fifty years of detention, prison and isolation, of life under tight surveillance (which his prison guards called 'voluntary abstinence'), did not change his custom. Was it a reverberating silence, or perhaps a serene philosophical withdrawal, which Westerners, but also his own people and contemporaries, could not understand?

The story of the Young Marshal does not stand alone. It is intertwined with the modern history of China and his life, his ambitions and his unique career cannot be understood without knowing the history of China in the last three or four generations.[1]

* * *

It was December 1936 in Xi'an[2] in Shaanxi province. After bitter misgivings, Zhang Xueliang decided to order the military force that he commanded to abduct his teacher and commander, General Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), the man who held the primeval divine authority to rule China, and arrest him. His goal was to influence Chiang by his unusual action to adopt a determined anti-Japanese policy and desist from his

incessant campaigns against the Chinese Communists, the most important of which was assigned to him, Zhang Xueliang. Zhang realized that the Communists were not enemies but, to the contrary, brothers, allies in the nation's war against the loathed Japanese, who ripped away Manchuria in northern China, originally home of the Manchu people, and saw it as a bridgehead for the conquest of China itself, piece by piece. Therefore at some moment in time he decided that fighting the Communists was pointless, and from that point on he looked for every possible way to persuade Chiang Kai-shek, the leader, of his view.

The moment that his plan was put in place, it undermined a foundation of the ancient Chinese political culture of the ruler – the 'heavenly mandate' (tianming).[3] After all, awe of the emperor-leader, who received the heavenly blessing and therefore the government, was a basic tenet of the Chinese state and of Chinese society. By his very action, the abduction of Chiang and holding him in captivity, Zhang not only humiliated the leader that cut him to the quick but also dared raise the banner of rebellion and sever the chain of obedience without which 'the correct path' (dao) could not prevail in China. And had not the sagacious Confucius said,[4] when asked what qualities a man needs to be called a man of virtue: 'A man who has a sense of shame in the way he conducts himself and, when sent abroad, does not disgrace the commission of his lord […].'[5]

Indeed, by his action Zhang had violated the primeval, one could even claim that he stuck a knife in the heart of the more than 3000-year-old ethos, and carved a mark of shame on his own forehead. However, at the same time, his half-crazy, unbelievable action made him a national hero of a sort that had not been seen in China for hundreds of years, nor was it known in the West. But perhaps, ultimately, Zhang had acted as Confucius had suggested elsewhere when speaking about the proper man serving his father and his mother:

> The Master said, 'In serving your father and mother you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient but should remain reverent. You should not complain even if in so doing you wear yourself out.'[6]

Surely it could be argued that by the temporary arrest, Zhang was rebuking the leader 'in the gentlest way'. At any rate he did not hurt him physically. When he realized that Chiang was not willing to change his direction, he withdrew again and subjected himself to the authority of

his commander. Like in Chinese tradition, so in the affair of Zhang's rebellion, the forbidden and the permitted were mixed. But this affair also contained a built-in paradox – had the leader remained in detention, he would have in any case been unable to fulfill the expectations of his captor and act against the Japanese. In order to carry out that mission, he had not only to break free and preserve his prestige but also to imprison the rebel who had captured him.

The main incident in the drama of Zhang's life is called the 'Xi'an Incident'. Zhang was the person who orchestrated it, who played the main role in it and who was ultimately its victim. Without penetrating the depths of that affair, we cannot understand an important and mysterious piece in the history of modern China or even comprehend the roots of World War II in Eastern Asia. And so, after studying the history of modern China and its relationship with the international arena from a variety of perspectives, I decided to tell the story in sequence, to collect the pieces of the mosaic and to put them together for a complete picture. This does not aspire to be a comprehensive biography of Zhang. It is difficult to penetrate the complex and unique personality of the Marshal. My intention here is to shed light on a special man and a time and place that is distant from us.

While I was writing the story of Zhang Xueliang, as will be presented in detail below, I had the feeling that even the main character in the central drama here was often surprised by his own reactions, actions and most of all inactions. He simply did not obey the director who was, of course, himself.

After Zhang Xueliang's death, interest in him was sparked, and the Internet was flooded with a wave of essays, comments, trivial information and critical articles about him. However, no extensive works, certainly not in English, have been written yet on the basis of source materials, documents, Zhang's letters, documents in his handwriting, pictures and oral histories (more than 4000 pages) deposited at the Columbia University library of rare books and manuscripts a while before his death. That material, which I used here, adds another important layer to his story. Indeed, it seems to be time to try to draw up a new balance sheet as to the importance of this historic hero and the events in which he played a central part, while using the new material, a retrospective view made possible after his death, and a 'fresh' literary, moral and philosophical approach far from the site of the events. However, those documents should certainly not be the only basis for such a study and the material gathered from them should often be cross-checked with the information from a variety of other sources. The historian, Bi Wanwen, already

pointed out some inaccuracies in them. For instance, in one interview about sixty years after the events, Zhang confuses what happened in 1928 with an incident that happened in 1931. It may be regarded as a minor error considering the circumstances and the fact that the speaker was 95 years old, but for a researcher of the period seeking any piece of information to create a mosaic, it is a significant one.

As for the importance of writing a book about such a seemingly esoteric subject, the process of globalization, which began on the economic level, has opened a window to cultural globalization as well. There is no longer any circle that stands alone separated from the others. It is strange and perhaps surprising, but even the 'distant' Xi'an Incident, which stands at the center of this book and happened 75 years ago, did not remain buried in the remote Shaanxi province. Many people were involved in it and mainly in its consequences. It shook the foundations of the East Asian regional system and even had consequences for the preparation of the forces ahead of World War II.

And maybe there is another reason to write the book now. Zhang Xueliang's actions as presented here may seem strange and perhaps a little hard to understand in the West today, not torn by war and revolution. He was a tragic hero, who was willing to degrade himself and even become a victim in order to achieve his goals. From having been a strong man and a warlord with a private local army, he became frail and was no longer militarily active. Zhang Xueliang proved that there is an alternative to the accepted way to change and shape history.

1
Opium and Government in Manchuria, 1901–31

In the summer of 1900, a multinational force invaded the northern part of the country and burst into the capital, Beijing, in response to the Boxer Uprising.[1] *The agreement forced upon the Chinese government a year later brought yet more pressure to bear on the Chinese Empire by the Powers, in a history of increasing Western pressure on China that had its roots in Britain's victory over the Chinese in the Opium War that ended almost sixty years earlier. This war broke out against the backdrop of China's opposition to the distribution of the opium drug by British merchants in its territory.*

Shortly after the invasion of northern China by the multinational force, a war broke out 1904 in Manchuria, north of the Great Wall, between Japan and Czarist Russia, ending in a Japanese victory in 1905.

Those were the last years of the Manchurian Qing Empire, whose fate was sealed after failed and late attempts on its part to enact reforms.[2] *At the end of 1911, the dynasty collapsed completely and the last emperor, Pu Yi, was ousted. So this imperial regime came to its end after more than 260 years.*

In January 1912, a republic was established in China, inspired by Dr Sun Yatsen and continued under his partial leadership. Sun, a doctor and a revolutionary who worked for many years outside of China's borders, adopted the principles of republican governance that he had learned when educated in Hawaii and British Hong Kong and on his journeys to Britain, Canada, the United States and Japan. At the base of his political theory were the Three People's Principles: nationalism, democracy and the people's livelihood (a principle that among other things was to bring about a broad agrarian reform, while compensating the landowners).

The Republic that was created was split at its inception between a number of centers of power. Sun ruled Canton (Guangzhou) in the south, in the province Guangdong and its environs, while various warlords ruled the rest of the country. Sun strove to unite China as a single unit and hoped to persuade

the warlords to relocate the capital from Beijing in the north to the city of Nanjing in the south, on the banks of the Yangzi River. He hoped to build national parliamentary institutions in the new capital. However, he never succeeded in realizing his vision. Worse yet, during World War I, the countries of Europe withdrew most of their forces from China, allowing Japan to take advantage of that situation and increase its imperial influence in its neighbor's territories. In the Versailles Treaties of 1919, China did not receive international recognition of its right to full territorial cohesion. Japan was not required by the leaders of the victorious Powers to withdraw from those parts of China that it had taken from Germany and now occupied. For the people of China, this was a big disappointment that caused deep frustration. After all, China had contributed, albeit modestly and not so famously, to the victory of the Allied Powers. It sent an expeditionary force of 150,000 or more laborers to the killing fields in France. The dismissal of its requests sparked popular outrage, which in turn led to an outburst of a national revolt against the Powers and their leaders. That is how the May Fourth Movement was born and forged, expressing the rising modern Chinese nationalism. The image of the young and revolutionary Soviet Union remained positive in China. After all, it was a different entity, different from Czarist Russia, which for years exploited China's weakness in order to promote its own interests. Radical circles called for the adoption of the Soviet course and the ideological model that guided it.

The internal split in China continued. However, in 1926, after the death of Sun Yatsen, his successor Chiang Kai-shek went on a two-year campaign to unite the country. With the Communists' support, the Guomindang forces, the Nationalist Party at his command reached Beijing and the line of the Great Wall. But even now little changed. Despite the territorial national union, neither full political unification, nor parliamentary democracy nor a just society, one of whose features is agrarian reform as dreamt up by Sun Yatsen, were achieved. Most of the warlords, including Yuan Shikai, ruler of Beijing, although seemingly accepting the authority of the rule of the Republic, continued each to maintain his local nearly absolute authority.

In 1931, less than three years after the state was united, at least formally, Japanese military forces conquered Manchuria in northeastern China. The invader established its rule there, threatening northern China and Beijing.[3]

* * *

The surname of the hero of this story is Zhang. His first name – including the name of the generation to which he belonged in the extended family – is Xueliang, a name of which meaning combines study and good merits, quality and morality. In his childhood he was called Shuangxi – double

happiness. In his youth his close friends called him Hanqing. Eventually he took additional names, as was the custom in China at the time. In 1839, his family, a family of Chinese peasants headed by his great-grandfather, settled in Manchuria. It was on the eve of the outbreak of the First Opium War, or the Anglo–Chinese War (1840–2). In that war Britain succeeded, with its military and naval might and its advanced technology, to break through China's borders and establish semi-colonial outposts along its eastern and southern coasts. From here on the Chinese Empire completely lost its ability to prevent the introduction and distribution of opium in its territory. The drug was produced from bulbs of the poppy plant that grew mainly in the expanses of British India.

Zhang's family came to Manchuria from Hebei province in north-central China. The family went north after natural disasters that hit Heibei forced many to desert their homes and wander to the fertile and rich region of Manchuria in search of a better future. Zhang's grandfather, just like his great-grandfather, was a known gambler and gave his family a bad reputation. He died in a disreputable scuffle with a creditor. Zhang Zuolin, Zhang Xueliang's father, eventually became one of the most powerful men in Manchuria and over the years even became the region's warlord.

Manchuria was one of China's fertile regions. It is rich in minerals and natural resources such as coal, iron, copper, lead, zinc, uranium and gold. It was often called Asia's 'cockpit', the territory over which the countries of the region competed because of its strategic and economic importance (Map 1). From the middle of the nineteenth century and into the first half of the twentieth century the population of Manchuria grew substantially, primarily due to the immigration of Chinese residents, but Japanese and Koreans (from 1895 Korea was under strong Japanese influence and was formally annexed by Tokyo in 1910) began settling there too, mainly because of the economic crisis that hit Japan.

In 1904, a war broke out between Japan and Russian over control of that region. The war ended with the victory of the Japanese, who gained a foothold in Guandong in southern Manchuria. They controlled the southern extension of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which was built in the heart of Manchuria by the Russians in the early twentieth century. This railway was in fact a shortcut for the world's longest railroad, the Trans-Siberian Railway from near the Siberian city of Chita via Harbin across northern inner Manchuria to the Russian port of Vladivostok. The Japanese also meddled in local affairs, and among other things

Map 1 China's borders under pressure from the Powers, early 20th century

maintained a military expedition in Manchuria, named after the region, the Guandong Army.

In the interregnum period, between the fall of the Imperial dynasty in 1911 and the reestablishment of the Republic under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek in 1928, Zhang Zuolin gained a reputation as a charismatic military leader. He became the most prominent figure in northern China. In various civil fields, in the development of agriculture, in the

fight against corruption (at least of those who did not belong to his inner circle), he developed and elevated the status of Manchuria. During Zhang's rule the region's population reached 30 million. That fact attested to the attraction and success of the prosperous and resource-rich area. However, the success of the senior Zhang and subsequently of his son Zhang Xueliang did not carry them to the seat of the ultimate government of China. Eventually it would be Chiang Kai-shek who received the traditional primeval divine authority – the right to govern and to serve as the leader of China.

For the sake of gaining living space for him and his people Zhang Zuolin fought the various warlords who sprang up throughout Manchuria. The Japanese helped him in the hope that their interests in the region would be advanced. At the end of many bloody battles he became the most powerful man, not only in Fengtian (roughly corresponding to present-day's Liaoning), which bordered on Inner Mongolia and where his career began, but in all of Manchuria. A thin and fragile-looking man, with a drooping mustache and a soft voice, who wore an ornamented robe uniform (his nickname 'the Tiger' did not befit his appearance), became its absolute ruler. The political entity that he headed, created almost from scratch, operated as a sovereign state and even made agreements with foreign countries such as Russia. However, his victory was only the beginning of his struggles. Manchuria, which was not only the site of domestic battles but also the site of struggles between China's neighbors, Russia and Japan, was in for some difficult times, and Zhang Zuolin never ceased to struggle to maintain his rule. At first his status and title were not sufficiently clear in the context of the political chaos that prevailed at the time, but soon enough he gained the reputation of being a stubborn fighter, and everyone knew his worth.

Zhang Zuolin was a focused and calculating leader, without a wide ideological political vision. He acted from day to day and from hour to hour without restricting himself by ideological constraints. He conducted a complex relationship with the Japanese. He feared them but also respected them. From the beginning he enacted a policy of calculated cooperation with them, but his policy did not constitute self-deprecation or the provision of services as a puppet governor. The Japanese may have used his help and even used his influence in Manchuria, but he too stood to gain, because he received necessary aid, supplies, ammunition and tactical advice. The continued cooperation with the Japanese could have allowed him not only to establish his status in Manchuria, but also to rise to become the prominent and dominant power in the area south of the Great Wall, in China itself. His behavior usually met with

Japanese expectations and they considered him the right ally under the existing conditions, who would eventually help them realize their ambitions to take over Manchuria and annex it to Japan.

The Soviet Union, the agent of Bolshevik ideology, and the Chinese Communists, on the other hand, threatened his reign. Had the Soviets become stronger in the region and fought off Japanese influence at Zhang Zuolin's expense, he could have paid with his position.

Zhang Xueliang, Zhang Zuolin's eldest son, was born on 3 June 1901 in the province of Fengtian. In his youth his father prepared him for a military career. And sure enough, he graduated from the local military academy, and at the age of 19 began serving in his father's army. He quickly rose to the rank of colonel and became the commander of his father's personal guard. Later, as part of the fabric of relations between the rulers in Manchuria and the forces that ruled in Beijing, he was appointed assistant to Xu Shichang, the President of China, who actually ruled only the northern part of the country. Soon Zhang Xueliang was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and a year later, at the behest of his father, he traveled to Japan to watch military maneuvers there. On his return he suggested reforms of the Fengtian Army. These were focused on promoting the idea of aerial warfare, which was still at its inception throughout the world. Within a short period of time he built up and developed an air force. During the course of the wars between the warlords in northern China, in which he took part, he made pioneering use of airplanes both for surveillance and observation and for bombardment.

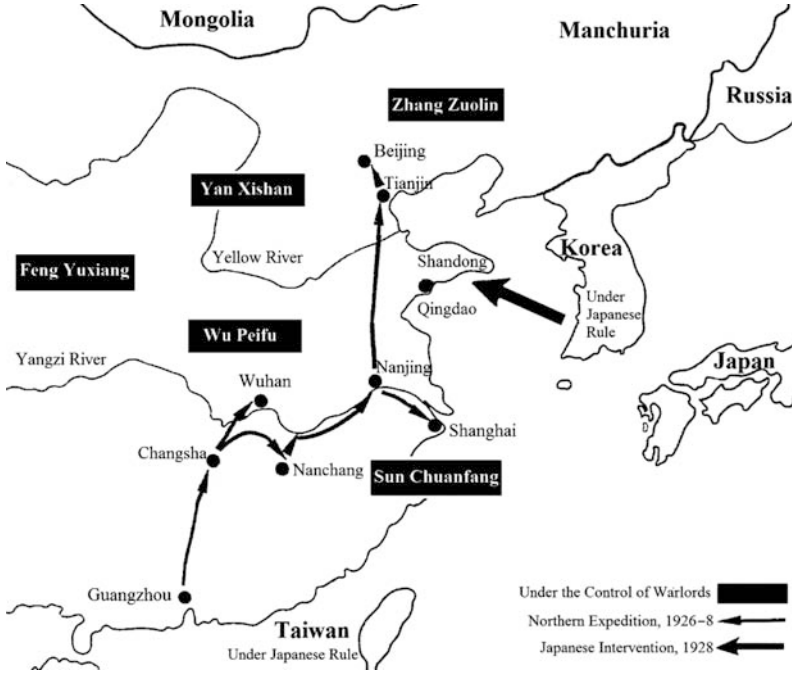
The 'Young Marshal', as he was called, never fought in the great wars that engulfed China, first against Japan and then the civil war between the Communists and Nationalists, and only participated in the limited war of warlords. In 1922, he took part in the war between the Fengtian Army and the army of Zhili province (the former name of Hebei province, where Beijing is located). At the end of that war he was appointed commander of a corps in the Fengtian Army and commander of its military academy. In 1924, during the second war between the two armies, he excelled in battles in the local area of the Great Wall.[4] A year later he was called upon by Duan Qirui, the Prime Minister who sat in Beijing, and asked to introduce comprehensive reforms in the Yangzi area. He came to Shanghai at the head of a military force. After battles to quell uprisings against Duan, he was appointed commander of the Beijing military academy and simultaneously commander of the Fengtian Army. Because of his frequent absences from Fengtian, Zhang appointed Guo Songling, one of his closest friends, as acting military commander.

A few months after he was appointed military commander, Guo Songling sensed that he had stumbled upon an opportunity to go from being a senior officer in the Manchurian (Northeastern) Army to a full-fledged warlord. At the end of 1925 he initiated a revolt against Zhang Zuolin, but did not take into account the Japanese force stationed in the area, which sought to maintain the stability of Zhang Zuolin's status in Manchuria. The Japanese Guandong Army intervened in favor of Zhang Zuolin, while clarifying the point that Japan would not agree to an infringement on its interests in the region in general and on the South Manchuria Railway in particular, and Guo's forces were not permitted to use the railway lines controlled by the Japanese. The uprising failed and Guo was executed.

And so the local uprising was nipped in the bud. Now everything could have returned to normal, had the failed uprising not had a decisive impact on the trust between Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang. After all, Guo was a close friend of the son, who had appointed him to his high position, and the father therefore suspected that his son had a hand in the revolt, that he knew about the intention to depose him and even collaborated with the rebels. Zhang was so furious, that he was about to execute his son as well. It was his close friends who were able to dissuade him from doing so.

In 1926, while the warlords of the north fought to maintain their status, a military campaign to unite China set out from the south, headed by the commander of the Nationalist forces, Chiang Kai-shek (Map 2). Chiang was the student and successor of Dr Sun Yatsen, the ideological father of the Chinese Nationalists, who had formulated the Three People's Principles: nationalism, democracy and the people's livelihood. Sun did not manage to apply his doctrine to all of China but only to the province of Guangdong in the south. The man who did succeed in stabilizing the Republican government after Sun's death in 1925 and in expanding it to the rest of China was the leader of the Nationalist Party and the strong man in China, Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang did not hesitate to use military force or take uncompromising diplomatic measures. Even though he paid lip service to the political-ideological doctrine of his teacher and was supposedly committed to its three principles, he was no different in his modes of operation from the warlords who ruled the various provinces of China, except for only one essential difference: his belief in a strong Chinese nationality. And so, in a brilliant military move, he launched out on a journey to unite China under his scepter.

Despite the damage to Zhang's status because of the failed conspiracy, he remained an active partner in his father's military struggles against



Map 2 The Northern Expedition, 1926–8

the warlords of northern China. They, in turn, formed a coalition to prevent the Nationalist forces led by Chiang Kai-shek from moving northward and taking over the capital, Beijing.

The great expedition to unite China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek and that of the Guomindang Party he headed lasted about two years. Chiang Kai-shek's initiative gained the support of the Soviet Union. From Moscow's point of view, a strengthening of the Chinese Nationalist force carried by the national bourgeoisie was a necessary and vital stage in the realization of the socialist-proletarian revolution. According to Marxist doctrine, a national-bourgeois class dialectically expands and strengthens the new emerging workers' class, that is, the urban proletariat, without which a proletarian, workers' revolution cannot take place. The national strengthening and eventually the socialist revolution would cause the undermining of Western and Japanese imperialism. Despite the support he had from the Soviet Union, Chiang Kai-shek continued as before to view communism as a real danger to his

rule. He intended using the Chinese Communist forces and their supporters, and maybe even hoped that over time they would merge with the Nationalist forces and give up their aspirations. Both were proved wrong. Chiang Kai-shek was not willing to realize the dream of freeing the peasants or even to realize his teacher Sun Yatsen's idea of agrarian reform. The Communists, for their part, did not mean to be swallowed up by Nationalist ideology.

Either way, in the middle of the journey, in the spring of 1927, Chiang confronted the Communists who served in his army, killed the ones he could lay his hands on and scattered the rest to the four winds. The surviving Communists withdrew southward and established a territorial foothold in the province of Jiangxi, which quickly became a sort of 'soviet',[5] from which a few years later they left on the 'Long March'. The elimination of the Communist forces in the Nationalist Army brought Chiang Kai-shek's camp supporters from the ranks of the wealthy, but also caused alienation in parts of the leftist and liberal circles. Moreover, it made the Communists uncompromising enemies from within. After he got rid of the Communists, at least temporarily, Chiang had to rely on greater cooperation from local warlords and give their forces status and influence.

The warlords from northern China, Zhang Zuolin of Manchuria and Duan Qirui of Beijing, did not consider Chiang Kai-shek to be a legitimate national leader worthy of ruling the entire Chinese people, but another warlord threatening their government. They were not willing to cooperate with him. Therefore they colluded to prevent the Nationalist forces that he led from moving northward and taking over the capital Beijing.

Zhang Xueliang was sent southward to fight the Chinese Nationalist forces led by Chiang Kai-shek. His father, Zhang Zuolin, was in Beijing at the time, and his representative, a local general by the name of Wu Shuchen, represented him in Shenyang, the capital of Manchuria, or Mukden by its Manchu name. This important city was situated at the heart of an ore-rich region and was the focus of the transportation network of the area – railroads and highways. In the years before China was occupied in 1644 by the Manchus, who then made it their capital, and to this day at its center is the Imperial Palace of the Manchu Qing dynasty, a sort of miniature 'forbidden city'.

While his son was at the front, Zhang Zuolin overpowered his rivals and coalition partners in northern China, took over Beijing and declared himself *dayuanshuai*, Commander in Chief, of greater China. Indeed, before the war between the Nationalist forces and the local warlords was decided, Zhang Zuolin toyed with the idea of taking over all of China, or at least its northern part. Chiang Kai-shek, who was to be the future

leader of China, witnessed the strengthening of his northern rival and his ambitions, and the tension between them heightened.

The new Prime Minister of Japan, Tanaka Geiichi, also became concerned about the strengthening of the Chinese Nationalist force, and in April 1927 he took real steps to reinforce the status of his country in China and Manchuria. His motives were mainly economic – at that time, population growth in Japan soared and the country suffered from a food shortage. A Japanese economic presence in northern China and Manchuria and settling Japanese in rich provinces in northern China could ease Tokyo's distress. Tanaka sent about 25,000 soldiers to Jinan, the capital of the province of Shandong, to protect the Japanese subjects in the area and to block the path of Chiang Kai-shek's troops on their way north towards Beijing. Thus he created a de facto buffer zone between the Chinese Nationalist forces and Manchuria, to which, along with Inner Mongolia, the Japanese claimed special rights. Over the following months many soldiers and civilians were killed on both sides. Japan's intervention naturally aroused strong anti-Japanese feelings in China and in the international arena. In China, those sentiments were reflected in a boycott on Japanese products and since at the time China consumed about 25 per cent of Japan's exports, the boycott on the products of its eastern neighbor had far-reaching economic consequences. Ultimately, Tanaka had to withdraw his troops from China, and Chiang's way to Beijing was open.

With Chiang's position strengthened and the parallel rise in his popularity as a national leader, Zhang Zuolin changed his approach. He started to consider tactical cooperation with Chiang's Nationalist government forces while abandoning his undeclared ally, Japan. The Nationalist movement headed by Chiang Kai-shek, which could not be ignored, and the impending conquest of Beijing, while neutralizing the local warlords, created a new reality. Now it appeared as if a policy of non-resistance to the Nationalist government forces was preferable to joining the Japanese. Zhang Zuolin expected Chiang to channel the soaring Chinese might wisely and help him shake the Japanese off his back. That seems to be the background to the rapprochement between Zhang and Chiang Kai-shek and even to the suspicious policy towards the Japanese eventually adopted by his son, Zhang Xueliang. While previously Zhang Zuolin repressed anti-Japanese expressions and the imposition of a boycott on Japanese products, now he softened his resistance and allowed Chinese patriotic feelings to foment.

As mentioned, Tanaka was inclined to make concessions following his failure in Shandong and he hesitated in taking the initiative in Manchuria,

but the commanders of the Japanese Guandong Army in Manchuria saw things differently. They were unwilling to remain idle as their political–military gains were steadily lost while the Chinese Nationalist movement gathered force. In May 1928, they demanded that Zhang Zuolin leave Beijing and return to Manchuria, fearing that his continued stay south of the Great Wall could weaken his status in Manchuria and thereby threaten their own interests. General Wu Shuchen, his representative in Manchuria, also called on Zhang to return home. Zhang acceded to the pressure, even though in accordance with his original plan he should have waited with his forces for Chiang Kai-shek's army and confronted it as it advanced towards Beijing. By rejecting the idea of a great confrontation with Chiang, Zhang Zuolin actually gave up his desire to become the ruler of China, if not its emperor.

In 1928, Chiang Kai-shek entered Beijing at the head of his forces. On 10 October, the new Nationalist government came to power. Chiang Kai-shek's soldiers did not reach Manchuria, but that province too fell into the hands of the new regime by the force of an understanding reached between Zhang Xueliang, who succeeded his father, and Chiang Kai-shek. Zhang Xueliang joined the central government, whose seat was relocated, according to Sun's will, from Beijing to China's new capital, Nanjing. Chiang Kai-shek was now a powerful warrior and the epithet 'Generalissimo' clung to him.[6]

As for the Japanese presence in China, Chiang Kai-shek's position may have been unequivocal – to reduce it as much as possible. However, as it eventually became clear, when Chiang had to decide which of his enemies, the Communists or the Japanese, was more dangerous, he preferred first of all to act against the Communists. He considered them a malignant disease in the nation's body. He compared the Japanese to a skin disease, the treatment of which can wait. Therefore, after overpowering the warlords in the south and center of China, Chiang directed most of his energy to suppressing the Communists.

On the evening of 3 June 1928, Zhang Zuolin made his way by train from Beijing to Manchuria, even though the head of the military police in Mukden had sent him a secret telegram earlier warning him that Japanese agents were going to try to assassinate him during his journey. And, indeed, that day the Guandong Army placed an enormous quantity of explosives on a bridge in the suburb of Huanggutun on which the railway line passed. The subsequent explosion was powerful and the train was severely damaged.[7] Zhang was fatally wounded and died shortly afterwards. One of his wives – his sixth – who was with him

on the train, was lightly injured in her leg. His fifth wife (who was not Zhang Xueliang's biological mother; his mother was the first wife) was at the palace at the time, preparing a reception for her husband. When she learned of the disaster she ordered the members of the family to continue their actions as usual so as not to attract the attention of the Japanese, who could not yet assess the damage they caused and did not know what had become of Zhang Zuolin. In the meanwhile, she waited for Zhang Xueliang's return to the capital; he only learned of the attack on the train two weeks later. Thus, she actually facilitated a relatively smooth transition of government from father to son and the rise of Xueliang to the throne of power in Manchuria. The day of his father's assassination, 3 June, was Zhang Xueliang's twenty-seventh birthday. To his death he avoided celebrating his birthday on that day.

A vast autonomous kingdom, 1.25 million kilometers square in size with a population of 30 million, had now fallen into the hands of Zhang, the Young Marshal. It was not easy for him to enter into his father's shoes. His father's assassination did not immediately lead to the results desired by the commanders of the Guandong Army, the Japanese expeditionary army in Manchuria. In the meanwhile, Zhang Xueliang launched a stubborn anti-Japanese campaign that lasted for years. He allied himself with the Chinese Nationalist movement and its leader Chiang Kai-shek in the hope that Chiang would fight the invading enemy to the bitter end. On 29 December 1928, the two made a personal pact that only grew stronger. The Manchurian flag was replaced by the flag of the new Republic. Zhang, who now became the uncontested ruler of Manchuria and of the provinces of Chahar and Jehol on the Manchurian border, was now prepared to hand over management of the foreign affairs of the territory that he controlled to the government in Nanjing headed by Chiang Kai-shek. His political and military strength in his native province now derived not only from his father's legacy but also from the backing given to him by Chiang.

Zhang Xueliang's deep animosity towards the Japanese did not come, then, from his father. His father was equivocal towards them and actually lacked a deep and authentic sense of Chinese nationalism. He was merely a classic, pragmatic warlord who focused on military and political survival and fought daily for his piece of land, while striving to enlarge it at the expense of his rivals. His actions were not characterized by a comprehensive vision and ideological depth. His son, on the other hand, had a broad perspective. He represented the interim generation of Chinese, the great transition from a traditional society to a modern

and diverse society, and ushered in the beginnings of a national consciousness, one of its manifestations being resistance to the Japanese, who threatened the emerging Chinese nationalism.

As often happens in history, it was foreigners who dialectically helped shape the turbulent Chinese nationalism, and in this case it was the Japanese. There is no doubt that the assassination of Zhang's father by the Japanese had an important role in shaping his views. In any case, Zhang fought tirelessly against Japan's emissaries, who first operated in Manchuria in northern China but also had their eyes on the country's interior. That struggle became the core of his life and being. The Young Marshal was exposed to modernization and the features of the new century. In his own way he symbolized the rising China, a China that no longer clung exclusively to Confucian values. He saw before him a collapsed empire and a system of warlords struggling to deal with the challenges of the times and the pressure of the imperialist powers, which reached new heights. He did not reject out of hand cooperation with the USSR and eventually even with Chinese Nationalists, when it appeared to him that they could promote the political agenda that he favored. This became of paramount importance over the years. While the father confronted Chiang Kai-shek and was willing to compete with him over the leadership of northern China and possibly even of the whole country, the son was willing to cooperate with the Generalissimo at certain stages, up to a clear line or lines that he set for himself.

On a personal level, both figures, father and son, did not turn their backs on the frivolities of this world – smoking opium, playing mahjong[8] and consorting with women. Zhang Xueliang was a sort of playboy, which he demonstrated even in his apparel, following the fashions of London and New York. So, for instance, he was one of the first to wear tweed suits and shirts with a 'modern' folded collar, and he combed his smooth hair straight back. Sometimes, at garden parties, he wore white shoes. He felt comfortable at cocktail parties with strangers and making small talk, including witty comments about women. In that respect, he represented the new generation, while his father followed the behavior patterns of a traditional warlord.

Zhang Xueliang had three wives during his long life. His first marriage, to Yu Fengzhi, was an arranged marriage, in accordance with the custom of the time, after a two-year engagement that began when he was 14 years old. His future wife was two years older than him. Her father, his father's best friend, was a landowner who grew field crops in Manchuria. Even though the marriage was arranged, the two loved each other dearly. Yu had four children.[9] She apparently became addicted to

opium, which her father-in-law introduced her to as he thought that it was a way to prevent her from having more children. In the course of the following years, she managed to acquire an informal education through private tutors made available to her.

In 1922, the young Zhang met a girl called Gu Ruiyu in Tianjin, when he came to the city at his father's behest in order to negotiate with British agents over the purchase of airplanes. Gu, who knew English well, helped him in his mission. Their relationship developed and became closer. She accompanied him in his jobs and tasks and did not shy away from staying with him in war zones where the warlords were fighting in northern China.

In October 1924, Zhang married Gu Ruiyu. Her status was lower than that of Yu Fengzhi, the wife of his youth. She was not allowed to congregate with the family, and when she came to Mukden she was housed in a private home purchased for her by Zhang opposite the family palace. Forty years later, in Taiwan, he would marry his third wife, Zhao Yidi, also known as Edith Chang.

In 1924, just when it seemed that Zhang was enjoying some success, the revolt of Guo Songling broke out. It was put down by Zhang Zuolin. The execution of Guo and Zhang Zuolin's rage towards his son were, according to one version, among the factors that caused Zhang Xueliang the bitter anguish that ultimately led to his addiction to opium, morphine and their substitutes.

But it is doubtful whether that explanation is true. In China in those days, as in the previous hundred years, the use of opium spread and became almost as common as drinking alcohol was in Western society. China's defeat in the war with Britain (the Opium War of 1840–2) is what led to opium gaining a stronger hold throughout China. The Chinese supervision mechanisms, which had previously prevented its infiltration, if only partially, were of little use in the face of the agreement forced on the Chinese Empire by Great Britain. The drug's most effective importers and distributors were Britain's official and unofficial envoys. At a certain point, the Chinese themselves began growing opium poppies and marketing the drug. It was a reliable source of income for its growers. A good many members of the higher classes became addicted. The inability of the kingdom under the leadership of the Qing emperors and then under the leaders of the Republic to curb the scourge was among the factors that sealed China's fate. Only when the Communists came to power in 1949 did the situation change.

Somewhat ironically, it was an English doctor who was hired by Gu, Zhang's second wife, to help him recover from his addiction. Although

it quickly became clear that it was a miserable failure, Gu did not give up, and now recruited a reputable Japanese doctor who specialized in addiction. But he, too, after extorting no small amount of money, failed. Worse yet, that doctor, who according to one opinion was a secret agent in the service of his country, left Zhang addicted not only to opium but also to the medication that he had prescribed for him. Gu continued to spend a lot of money in attempts to achieve the desired withdrawal from drug addiction, in vain. At the time that he seized the reins of the government of Manchuria, Zhang was addicted to drugs.

Zhang Xueliang consolidated his power up to the time that he forged his alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, and especially in the second half of 1928, after his father's death. To that end, he was willing to employ any tactic possible. So, for instance, he maintained a close relationship with Japan's consul general in Manchuria, Hayashi Kyujiro, and with the Japanese premier's envoy to Manchuria, Baron Hayashi Gonsuke. He also maintained a regular dialogue with the commander of the Guandong Army, General Honjo Shigeru. In the meanwhile, like some of the warlords who suddenly became supporters of the occupying Nationalist forces, he strengthened his ties with the rising Nationalist camp headed by Chiang Kai-shek. Once he joined the Nationalist camp, he could play not only in the Manchurian arena but also in the all-Chinese arena. From that point of view, the attachment between Manchuria and the Chinese heartland might be seen simply as an alliance between two regions of the country, and not as the 'unification of China', as it is usually portrayed. In the winter of 1928, Zhang was appointed by the supreme executive branch of the Nationalist Party, the Guomindang, as a member of the state assembly in the new capital of Nanjing. It was a council of 16 members that acted as the highest body at the 'instruction' stage of the national revolution.[10] Zhang's attachment to the Nationalist government forces and its institutions allowed him to place the burden of the Japanese pressure on Manchuria on broader shoulders.

But no sooner had Zhang Xueliang taken his first steps as ruler of Manchuria than some of his late father's 'friends' began scheming to depose him. After all, they must have thought, he is young, a little reckless, addicted to opium, confused and politically inexperienced. And worst of all was his decisive and destructive anti-Japanese tendency. During this difficult period, Gu, his second wife, came to his rescue again and encouraged and urged him to get even with his enemies.

In January 1929, Zhang began deceiving some of his rivals, operating against them with full force. For instance, when two of the most prominent among them – Yang Yuting, his father's close advisor who actually

served as his chief of staff, and Chang Yinhuai, governor of Heilongjiang, one of Manchuria's largest provinces – came to his house on the tenth of the month, he immediately settled accounts with them. The two demanded that the Young Marshal appoint Chang Yinhuai to the position of Director of a segment of the Chinese Eastern Railway. They explained that they intended to take over the entire railway, which was jointly managed by the Chinese and the Russians. Being Director of this line was a paramount economic–strategic position in Manchuria. Zhang replied that he would consider the proposal and the two turned to leave. But while they were in the vestibule of their host's villa, the signal was given to kill them. According to another version, they were invited to a game of mahjong, in the middle of which the Marshal informed his guests that he did not feel well. He covered his mouth with a handkerchief (a known sign among his acquaintances that he needed his drugs), and when he left the room his aids burst in and shot the guests to death. Zhang's villa in Shenyang is currently open to the public, and features two wax figures that represent Yang and Zhang when they were attacked.

In any event, by that act Zhang instantly crushed a threatening opposition faction that wished to tie the province's fate to the Japanese and to depose him. It was one of the few times that he acted decisively and without hesitation. Eventually, sixty years or so after the event, he expressed some regret at having killed the two,[11] and disclosed that before he had them shot his wife wondered whether it would be wise to eliminate his rivals in his house and urged him to change his mind. He said that he accepted her request partially and resolved to toss a coin and decide, depending on how it fell, whether the two were indeed deserving of the immediate punishment he had in store for them. The coin landed three times on the side that required the death penalty. Again his wife urged him to change his mind and again he tossed the coin, but this time, too, it fell on the side of executing the two, and he gave the order.

His conscience seems to have plagued him for decades for his action and he kept the coin for many years as a sort of talisman. He reiterated that it was not his fault and that the fate of the two was decreed by the heavens. He had nothing to do with it. He even mentioned that it was an ancient Chinese tradition that new emperors eliminate the servants of previous regimes. Even though that sweeping statement is not accurate, it appears that Zhang believed it served his purpose. In the modern era, the turn of the twentieth century, the Dowager Empress Cixi, who was the absolute ruler of China, eliminated her opponents not only during the period of her reign but even in her very last hours.

While he was dealing with the challenges of the Japanese threat and the dangers from within, the Young Marshal had to continue keeping his eyes open to make sure that the Russian enemy would not eat away at his power and forces. In 1929, when he was, among other things, commander of the forces defending northeastern China on behalf of the Nanjing government, he was involved in a conflict with the USSR regarding the Chinese Eastern Railway, which, as mentioned earlier, went through Manchurian territory and connected Russia's Asian provinces with Vladivostok, as a sort of extension and shortcut of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Once the line was completed on the eve of the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–5, it became the spearhead of Imperial Russian's presence in China. The zones on either side of the railroad were declared extraterritorial areas. Thus was created in the heart of Manchuria a thirty kilometer strip where the Russians had special rights, which became a source of friction between Manchuria and Russia. Zhang acted to prevent Russian Soviet influence in his territory and strove to take over the railroad line and strengthen his power all along it.

In May 1929, his forces surrounded the Soviet consulate in Harbin and arrested 39 officials on the pretext that they were spreading communist ideas in Manchuria. A crisis then arose around the Soviet demand to release the prisoners, against the Chinese demand that Moscow stop preaching to them and reduce their influence on matters concerning the railroad line. Zhang's forces even took measures to take over the Chinese Eastern Railway line, the apple of the Russians' eye in Manchuria. Chiang Kai-shek, who seemingly remained indifferent to the events (probably because Zhang entered into the confrontation without consulting him), did not help lower the tension and solve the problem. And so the diplomatic conflict deteriorated to a military conflict, with Soviet aerial attacks on Chinese targets along the railroad in northern Manchuria (a relatively new tactic in the 1920s). This confrontation lasted until the winter, and resulted in hundreds of Chinese casualties.

On 22 December 1929, in the city of Khavarovsk, an agreement was signed between both sides. That agreement damaged Zhang's prestige, because from then on he was not permitted to retaliate and he had to agree to strengthen the Soviet's initial hold on the Chinese Eastern Railway line. For his part, Chiang Kai-shek could gloat, because the outcome of Zhang's initiative proved that without the help of the central government he could not stand on his own two feet.

During 1930, Zhang's status in Manchuria stabilized and his pact with Chiang Kai-shek grew stronger. The Young Marshal waved the banner

of the Republic headed by the Generalissimo and became his deputy as the Supreme Commander of the Nationalist Army. However, he still equivocated and continued to strengthen his personal status in northern China, along the railroad lines of Beijing–Hankou and Tianjin–Pukuo. He even collected quite a lot of money for his own government from the custom services in Tianjin. But his declared policy, unlike his father's, continued to bear Nationalist characteristics. In May 1931, he participated in the national assembly in Nanjing – an assembly that may not have met the standards of a Western parliamentary democracy, but made strides towards forging the idea of an all-Chinese national republic. In November of that year, Zhang appeared as a guest with special stature for the fourth plenary assembly of the Central Committee of the Guomindang Party, the Nationalist Party, that took place in the new capital, Nanjing. He quickly became a member of the Guomindang's Central Political Committee. That step appears to have been a concession made by Zhang from his independent position of power, but was later proved to be a brilliant tactical political move. During that whole period he made sure to maintain mobilized military forces numbering 400,000 men or more.

As for the Manchurian railways, Zhang paid no heed to Japanese demands concerning greater influence in Manchuria and referred the issues that came up in this context to the central government. He also acted to neutralize Japan's role in the northern limits of Manchuria, whether by the initiative to build a competing seaport to Dalian, which was in Japanese possession, or by repeated attempts to retrieve Chinese control of the South Manchuria Railway. The friction with the Japanese and their interests only grew.

Indeed, even though Zhang can be criticized in retrospect for the shallowness of his views, budding ideological considerations can be detected in his thinking. So, for example, his consistent and uncompromising anti-Japanese position reflected a strengthening Nationalist view.

During this period, Zhang's marriage to his first wife was in crisis. While he still lived with her in the family palace, Gu, his second wife, had become his confidante. However, it was not long before their relationship, too, took a turn for the worse. His circles spread the word that she was no longer the enchanting woman he had fallen for. While he divided his time between Mukden and Baoding in Hebei province, Gu lived alternately in Tianjin and Beijing. According to her detractors, she was sinking into the game of mahjong, becoming addicted to dance, visiting the opera excessively and overspending, without heeding Zhang's

reservations on these matters. The marriage soon ended. In the divorce agreement, it was stated that Gu was not to act or speak for Zhang's family in any way whatsoever from the moment of their separation, nor could she misbehave and she was not to remarry. Her life from thereon became a hard one. She did not remarry and died in 1946, aged only 42 years old after a difficult period of illness, suffering from hypertension, a stroke and alcoholism.

As mentioned above, in the years 1928 to 1931, Zhang Xueliang's reign in Manchuria established him as deputy to the charismatic leader, Chiang Kai-shek. As mentioned above, Manchuria had natural resources that Japan lacked. Of the 30 million people who lived in the province at the time, 90 per cent were members of the Han, ethnic Chinese, and only about 9 per cent were Mongolians and Manchu. The Japanese continued to exploit systematically the foothold that they had gained following their victory over the Russians in 1905 – the railway line that connected the ports of southern Manchuria, Dalian and Port Arthur (Lushun) and the capital, Mukden. This railway line acted as a sort of wedge between Zhang and his control over Manchuria as his power in the province weakened.

Zhang helped Chiang Kai-shek establish his government by defeating the Generalissimo's enemies in Beijing and its environs. He also instigated reforms that encroached on Japanese revenues from the Manchurian railroad lines, and made rules that threatened their status. The first signs of the implementation of those important reforms were in the areas of industry, commerce, the economy, finance and education. From the Japanese point of view, therefore, Zhang's Nationalist approach, which began to form and find economic and political expression in Manchuria, signaled the beginning of the end of their hold on the province. It became increasingly clear to them that Zhang was actually their rival. He was not going to let them realize their plan to take over that rich and strategic province.

Two additional events may also be seen as catalysts of a future military assault, in addition to the shaky relations between Zhang and the Japanese. The first event was a confrontation between the Koreans and Chinese on the last day of July 1931. The Japanese considered the attack on the Koreans, who were residents of their protectorate country, to be an attack on them. In the second event (called the 'Nakamura Incident'), a Japanese intelligence officer, Captain Nakamura, was shot and killed in Manchuria by Chinese soldiers. On hearing the news, members of the Japanese Guandong Army voiced harsh criticisms of the Chinese, and shortly afterwards the army attacked the province, in what eventually came to be known as the 'Manchurian Incident'. On the night of

18 September, the Guandong Army took over the province, declaring that it was free from the yoke of the supreme army command and of the authority of the government in Tokyo.

What was the background of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria?

Since the beginning of the 1920s, Japan had experienced severe internal crises. Its agricultural production declined, with its silk output being especially hard hit and the protectionist system in international trade harming its exports, and all this happened during a period of accelerated demographic growth. These internal woes were exacerbated by the international financial crisis that started in 1929, and became worse in the following two years as the international economic recession deepened. It is no wonder then that radical extra-parliamentary nationalist groups grew stronger in Japan. Those groups took root in the army and in the general staff as well. Criticism of the young and ineffective democracy gained force, and the dilemma between loyalty to the elected institutions and 'saving the nation' by bypassing the organized systems intensified.

This was the atmosphere in which an activist trend developed in the Guandong Army, and calls were made for a unilateral takeover of the Manchurian expanses, without advance permission from Tokyo. There was also a social explanation: the officers and soldiers of the Guandong Army were members of the classes that had been significantly harmed by the economic crisis that hit Japan and predated the international crisis. Their families suffered from unemployment and poverty.

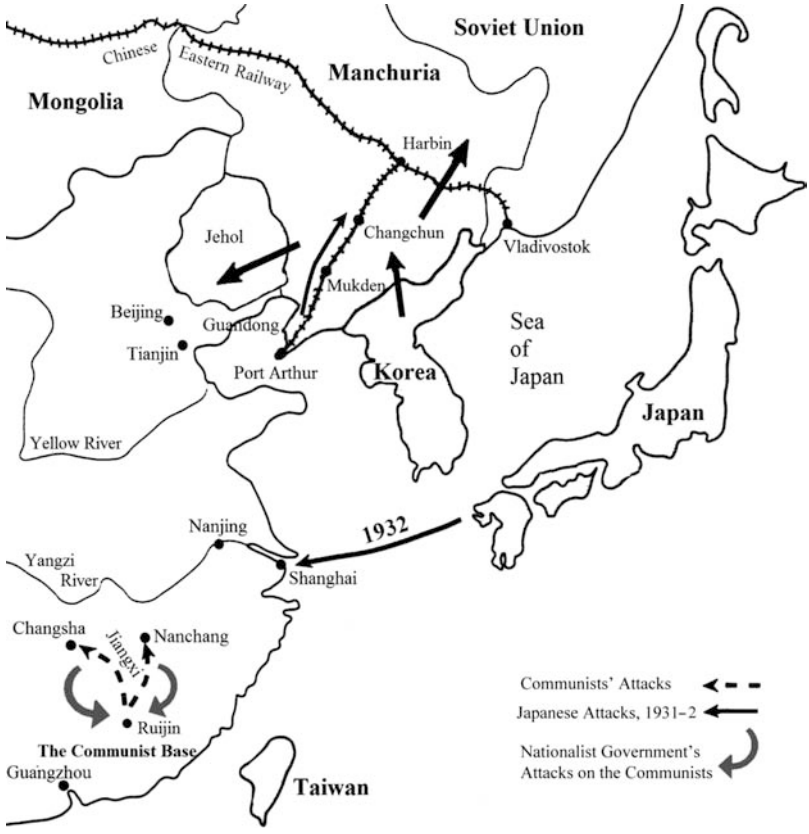
At first, the expeditionary army made attempts to take over Manchuria by political and diplomatic means, but after the assassination of Zhang Zuolin frequent attempts were made to take it over militarily. This was not least because of deep Japanese disappointment at the failure of Zhang Zuolin's assassination yielding the expected results and that his son had begun acting independently. Up until the autumn of 1931, the army had taken diverse measures to establish permanency in the area. Successive Japanese governments headed by Tanaka Geiichi, Hamaguchi Osachi (eventually murdered by an ultra-nationalist) and Wakatsuki Reijiro in the years before the takeover of Manchuria could not stand up to the expeditionary Guandong Army and its initiatives on Chinese soil. It was clear that if this army was called to order and placed under restrictions, then its prestige would have been damaged. Japanese nationalist circles even stressed that the homeland itself would be hurt. Showing leniency towards the radical activist ultra-nationalist circles was now a fact, an established principle in Japan's conduct.

Even when, in the spring of 1931, the Tokyo government discovered the conspiracy of the Guandong Army officers to attack Manchuria

without permission, it acted very inadequately and did not actually take any preventive action. On the eve of the 'Manchurian Incident', when the Guandong Army attacked and took over the province, very little was done about it by Tokyo and it was too late to change the course of events. The Japanese Foreign Minister alerted his colleague, the War Minister, of the expeditionary army's intention of acting without permission. The latter, for his part, sent a frenzied warning in writing to the commander of the Guandong Army against taking unauthorized action. But the letter with the warning was given to General Tatekawa Yoshitsugu who was a party to planning the coup, an advocate of 'direct action' in Manchuria and a member of a radical nationalist group. Apparently, he went to Manchuria especially in order to deliver the letter, but actually he only meant to guarantee the delay of its delivery until it was too late to stop the military process. General Tatekawa took a boat to Korea, crossed the peninsula by train and reached Mukden on 18 September. To his consternation, he did not manage to arrive late enough, and so he actually decided to delay delivery of the message to the commander of the Japanese forces one more night. That night he rested from his exhausting journey at a geisha house, where at around midnight he heard the shots that signaled the beginning of the offensive initiated by his co-conspirators to conquer Manchuria completely.

Hence, the 'Manchurian Incident', which saw Japan's military and political takeover of Manchuria in China by its expeditionary army, the Guandong Army, paved the way for the establishment in the occupied area of a pro-Japanese puppet government called Manchukuo (Map 3). The 'incident' began on the night of 18 September 1931 with an explosion on the South Manchuria Railway line in the suburbs of the city of Mukden. It has not been clarified conclusively whether the source of the explosion was a Japanese act of provocation or Chinese sabotage. However, although the explosion was small and did not even stop the running of the trains, it immediately developed – at the initiative of the Japanese expeditionary army – into a far-reaching military operation across all of Manchuria. City after city, district after district, fell to the Japanese soldiers.

The Manchurian army under the command of Zhang Xueliang and on his orders adopted a policy of non-resistance from the beginning of the incident until its end. It should be remembered that at the time, the Young Marshal had already been long-addicted to opium. His body was densely perforated, even his back, with needle marks. That fact, however,



Map 3 The Communist base in the south and the Japanese attacks in the north, 1931–2

did not cause him to be completely and continually dysfunctional.[12] The policy of restraint towards the invader was adopted in full agreement with Chiang Kai-shek. As opposed to the people of Manchuria and unlike the Communists, who were settled in the soviet in Jiangxi province in the southwest, China's leader did not view the Japanese takeover of the province as the main danger to the Republic. Suppression of the Communists, whom he consistently campaigned against, seemed more urgent to him. The Communists took advantage of the situation that arose and declared war on Japan. Even though their declaration had no operative significance, it certainly had an impact as propaganda: 'We are the real

patriots and Chiang Kai-shek is nothing but a domestic agitator,' they claimed over and again. Chiang Kai-shek believed that the international community, and especially the League of Nations, would come to his rescue, but his hopes were dashed. The response of the Powers was very weak and consisted of empty declarations and diplomatic initiatives. Manchuria remained under Japanese occupation until Tokyo's defeat towards the end of World War II.

What was Zhang doing the night of 18 September 1931, when the Guandong Army went on the march in Manchuria? According to various testimonies, he was seen in the company of several people, including two women at a Mukden theater. Years later, he claimed that he was fulfilling a diplomatic duty at the time. He had invited the British consul to the opera after the latter had invited him to dinner at his residence. According to another version he put forward, he was hospitalized at the local hospital that day (apparently due to a severe crisis stemming from his addiction to opium, but the cover story was that he had a high fever caused by gastroenteritis that he had contracted from drinking contaminated water). How can the two versions be squared? Zhang claimed that he simply left the hospital for a short period of time in order to fulfill his diplomatic duty with the British consul, and that the women who were with him were simply two nurses who had escorted him 'just in case'. In 1994, Zhang told the children of the famous actor, Mei Lanfang, who played women's roles, that in 1928, at the time of his father's murder, he was at the opera where their father was singing.[13] The truth is that this event took place in 1931. In any case, Zhang was not properly prepared for the Japanese offensive, and was absent from his headquarters when the bomb went off on the railway line. Zhang was known for his womanizing and his explanation does not sound credible.[14]

According to Zhang's testimony, when he lived with his first wife, Yu Fengzhi, she had a passionate affair with one of his officers. He knew about it, and in order to appease the two he would send them on occasional travels. 'I never loved that woman,' he said. That statement contradicted the belief that they had actually been deeply in love. From later developments, it appears that she stayed with him and helped him during his first years in jail until she became ill and went to the USA. He recalled that Chiang Kai-shek tried to dissuade him from investing time, effort and money in courting women. 'When I was younger, I was like you', the leader told him, 'but now, when I have so much responsibility on my shoulders, I stopped. I suggest that you, too, desist from that activity.'

Even though in Republican China men were forbidden from marrying more than one woman, there were many, including the members of the Guomindang official functionaries, who maintained additional women. These women had a clear and solid status, and even though it was lower than that of married women, at least they enjoyed a binding legal status.

From the time of the attack on Manchuria onwards, Tokyo gave automatic retroactive backing to all of the expeditionary army's unauthorized operations, its conquests and the consolidation of its power in the places it occupied. Zhang withdrew from the province and remained for the next year-and-a-half in control of Jehol province and eventually abandoned it, too. Thus began his personal and political troubles.

In 1932, Manchukuo (Manzhouguo), land of the Manchu, was established by the Japanese under the nominal leadership of Pu Yi, the last and deposed Chinese emperor of the Manchu Qing dynasty. In 1911, after the collapse of the Manchu Empire throughout China, Pu Yi remained in the Forbidden City in Beijing under an agreement made between the Chinese rebels, the new Chinese government and agents of the then underage emperor. In 1924, he was expelled from Beijing and moved to Tianjin, where a few years later he was recruited by Japan's secret services to advance their imperial interests. And so, in 1934, he was finally crowned as the puppet emperor of Manchukuo. Through his coronation, the Japanese tried to present their rule in Manchuria to the world as a legitimate one that was only intended to revive the greatness of the Manchu people and help them reclaim their homeland. And so, in this case, the coronation of Pu Yi as emperor of Manchuria was nothing but the restoration of a worthy and legitimate Manchu leader to his throne.

The puppet government that was established was meant to strengthen Japan's position as part of its overall rule in East and Southeast Asia under cover of a mutual, economic–political–military system of prosperity and cooperation (a block of Asian nations) between the various peoples of East Asia, what the Japanese termed the 'Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'.

In fact, Manchuria was now nothing but a Japanese colony for all intents and purposes. Its new status harmed the initial gains that were evident in the province made at Zhang's initiative. Foreign investors began withdrawing from the region because of its instability, as they became increasingly concerned that cooperating with the Japanese and their lackeys would threaten their commercial interests in China proper. However, new studies indicate that the province underwent

an accelerated development during the fifteen years of Japanese control until the end of World War II. This development was achieved no thanks to investments by Western companies, but because Manchuria was part of the commercial region and economic prosperity that the Japanese sphere of influence in East and Southeast Asia enjoyed. From 1932 onwards, the Japanese strengthened their position in Manchuria. They then gradually began moving south towards the Great Wall, and west towards Inner Mongolia.

2
From One Incident to Another, from Manchuria to Xi'an, 1931–6

In the period between the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and the 'Xi'an Incident' in December 1936, the two leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang, clashed over the question of national priorities. The Generalissimo believed that Communist power should be defeated first and only later should war be declared on the Japanese, who had chipped away at China's integrity and had compromised its sovereignty; while Zhang Xueliang thought that the foreign invaders should be evicted from the country first and only then should attention be given to the nature of the emerging Republic.

In the years 1931 to 1934, the Communists built a stronghold in south-eastern China and established their first soviet, while the Japanese strengthened their position in Manchuria and began to gain a foothold in northern mainland China, in the provinces bordering the Great Wall. In Manchuria, the Japanese established the puppet empire of Manchukuo, headed by the last Chinese emperor, Pu Yi. By 1936, they were in position to advance southward towards Beijing, and in July 1937 they carried out their plan and invaded the country's heartland. At the end of October 1934, the Communists, who had withdrawn from their original base under pressure from government forces, embarked on an impressive withdrawal campaign that came to be known as the 'Long March', and a year later established a second soviet in Shaanxi province in the north.

These were fateful years in the international arena. In 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany and began undoing the sections of the Versailles Treaty that, it had been hoped, would have maintained international order. Fascist Italy under Mussolini did as it wished and scorned the League of Nations. No power prevented it from occupying Abyssinia. The Civil War in Spain between 1936 and 1939 was another sign of the spreading international lawlessness and turmoil.

* * *

At the beginning of 1933, on the basis of a report by a League of Nations delegation headed by Lord Lytton, which investigated the deeper roots of the Manchurian Incident and its unfolding, the League determined that the Japanese forces must evacuate the territory they had occupied. Tokyo refused to accept the decision and withdrew from the international organization in protest. The Japanese army's occupation of Manchuria now became a fait accompli. Zhang Xueliang's forces first withdrew to Jehol province and then continued south of the Great Wall. And so the Young Marshal lost his last stronghold in the north (it can be argued that Chiang chose a policy of restraint towards the Japanese while steadfastly fighting the Communists because, among other considerations, it seemed desirable to him to have Zhang Xueliang, an independent warlord, defeated as he posed a future threat to the Generalissimo). In May of that year, a cease-fire agreement, the Tanggu Agreement, was signed between the Japanese forces and the Chinese government. The agreement created a neutral territory south of Jehol province, which now became the border between Manchukuo and China. Actually, the Japanese arrived at the line of the Great Wall and consolidated their territorial gains. From their point of view, this was a great advantage because it reinforced the defense range of the state that they had created – Manchukuo. Henceforth they became a constant military threat to Beijing and the whole of China. Broad sections of the public perceived Zhang as responsible for the fall of Jehol. That charge would eventually be added to his being blamed for the fall of Manchuria itself.

One of the questions that troubled many people at the time and still reverberates to this day is why was there no resistance or resolute fighting against the Japanese in Manchuria? Did the leader, as was later argued, order that the occupiers were not to meet with resistance? A persistent rumor circulated for many years that a telegram to this effect had been sent by Chiang Kai-shek. According to the rumor, the telegram served for years as a sort of insurance policy for the Young Marshal, proving that he had not betrayed the nation in the face of the enemy's advance, but rather was carrying out an order that he had received from his commander.

A closer look at the issue of the telegram raises several questions. For one thing, there is no evidence of its existence. Even Zhang, who would have supposedly gained from its discovery, himself asserted decades later that the rumors of its existence were 'nonsense'. The telegram was apparently sent after a Japanese agent was seized and killed by forces led by Zhang Xueling and the Japanese in the province were about to launch a retaliatory operation. According to that version, Chiang warned Zhang

that under no circumstances was he to be drawn into a confrontation with the Japanese.

There were also rumors of another telegram supposedly sent immediately after 18 September 1931, and this, too, contained a call by the Generalissimo to Zhang not to confront the Japanese forces. For many years it was believed that even after the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Chiang had indeed blocked all attempts to contain the invader adequately. However, in interviews given in the USA by Zhang Xueliang and his son, Lulin (known also as Robert Zhang or Chang), both denied the existence of that telegram, too. Nonetheless, a telegram was mentioned and frequently discussed as a guarantee for Zhang's safety in postwar China. There is no doubt that the myth of Chiang's instructing Zhang to show appeasement towards the Japanese took hold and still exists in China and in Chinese communities overseas to this day.

At that historical juncture, when the political–military campaign seemed lost, the Young Marshal's advisor and confidant, the former Australian journalist William Henry Donald, convinced Zhang to withdraw from the public arena and start a drug rehabilitation regime. Donald served Sun Yatsen and Chiang Kai-shek after him, Zhang Xueliang and then Chiang again. His Chinese was very basic and he could not negotiate without an interpreter. There is no doubt that many a misunderstanding arose because of the language barrier. Nonetheless, it is amazing to see to what extent that Australian journalist, supposedly a stranger to China, was a central figure in its history. He captured the hearts of those around him in China and his linguistic shortcomings did not stand in his way. It should be remembered that even between native Chinese speakers, misunderstandings would occasionally arise, especially when each speaker came from a different province and only spoke in their own native dialect.

On 15 March, Zhang came to Shanghai and stayed with his entourage at a home made available to him by one of the heads of the underworld in the city's French concession area. He felt obvious satisfaction and relief finally to be free of his unbearably heavy responsibility. In the background lurked the hope that he would be appointed minister of the air fleet, which for him combined both a hobby and a national calling. In the meantime, he attended to his drug addiction.

In testimony that he gave some sixty years later, he said that in his last conversation with his father before he was assassinated, his father had said to him: 'Look at you, addicted to drugs, involved with women. When I die, what will become of your family?' These words were not spoken by someone who could have been considered an educational role

model. Yet these words of Zhang's father, along with the circumstances that lowered his military and personal status in China, were what led Zhang to begin his drug rehabilitation. He turned to Dr Harry Willis Miller. Miller was an Adventist Christian who observed the Sabbath and who had come to China thirty years earlier out of a deep sense of mission. Despite his ample financial means, Dr Miller lived modestly as an ordinary Chinese. In his early days in China, he dressed like the local people, wore a traditional Chinese robe, adopted the local hairstyle of a long queue and shaved pate. He moved around the Shanghai area where he was based and treated its rich and poor alike, including Chiang Kai-shek and his wife. Eventually he came to be known as 'China's doctor' and won the 'Blue Star' medal from the Generalissimo himself for his services to the Chinese people.

Zhang knew Miller, and even helped him with generous donations. Zhang received intensive treatment for his drug addiction at the doctor's medical rehabilitation center. The doctor's detoxification method was controversial and was even considered dangerous. At least one person was known to have died during the treatment. Zhang knew that, yet still believed in Dr Miller and stayed with him. The treatment included an injection into the patient's abdomen. When fluids accumulated at the site of the injection, the doctor drew them out and injected them back into the patient. The treatment included some ten days of painful procedures, three of those ten days of which Zhang was not fully conscious. According to his testimony, during those difficult days, when he craved drugs and was about to collapse, Zhang would hit himself. His adherence to Christianity in the following years may be related to the success of the treatment by the devout doctor. Zhang emerged rehabilitated from his addiction. Dr Miller's wage was a personal check of $50,000, a small fortune equivalent to about $1 million today.

On 11 April 1933, about a month after his treatment, Zhang traveled to Europe and stayed there for some nine months. According to the documentation, one of his reasons for leaving China was to maintain his rehabilitation. His army with all of his soldiers and officers remained under the supreme command of Chiang Kai-shek, but stayed loyal to him. Before he left, Zhang sold the hospital he owned in Tianjin to the French, who had the extraterritorial concession in the city. That sale drew severe public criticism. His large real estate holdings and rare art collection were ostentatious. He also had expensive hobbies. He was a very active art collector and patron of the painter Lin Fengmian who studied in France, returned to Beijing and was among the activists against the surrender to the Japanese in the period after World War I.

Zhang arranged Lin's escape and helped him hide from the Nanjing government, which feared the wrath of the Japanese. He also started a collection of Lin's paintings. Zhang was also connected to one of the more 'colorful' painters of China in the twentieth century, Zhang Daqian (Chang Da-chien), and owned both his paintings and his forgeries, which eventually became valuable in their own right. In addition to the collection of paintings, Zhang had a rare collection of calligraphy. His other hobbies were the game of Weiqi (better known by its Japanese name, Go),[1] mahjong and cultivating orchids.

Despite his great wealth in property, it was often said of him that he did not care very much about money. There were rumors that his wealth was actually nothing but embezzled public funds. In his old age, when he was hospitalized for a heart condition, he told his doctor that the money he had was his and his only. 'When my father built railroads in Manchuria', he explained, 'he commissioned American engineers. He gave one of them some money to invest for him in the United States. That money yielded great dividends and my father became a millionaire. In the end, after many troubles, the money came to me.' In interviews he explained that during his father's lifetime, some 80 per cent of the family's funds and properties were registered in his father's name. Zhang stressed that his family was very rich, and that anyone who visited or stopped by their house was invited in to dinner. He boasted that the family home had as many as 70 chefs in its kitchens.

Complementary accounts of the Marshal's financial resources mention that while he was the ruler of Manchuria, a certain English businessman helped Zhang build a factory to manufacture explosives and different kinds of ammunition in the province with raw materials brought over from Sweden. That factory earned Zhang a fortune, provided the ammunition for his armies and, according to Zhang's testimony, came close to manufacturing chemical weapons and even aircraft.

A somewhat different account of his wealth emerges from later interviews that he gave. According to these, every autumn his family used to buy large quantities of grains (sometimes using bank loans) and store them until spring. Then, when the prices rose, they would sell the stores for large profits. At any rate, one thing is clear beyond any doubt – that Zhang was a very wealthy man. He made sure to show it, too: whenever he left his house in Manchuria, his aides would carry seven sets of clothing in case he wanted to freshen up. When he lived in a hotel in Beijing he hired a special valet to handle his clothes, and he came to every meal in a different outfit. He was also meticulous about his hairstyle. However, he did not make his ample resources available to

Chiang Kai-shek's treasury, and the latter neither owed him any thanks nor depended on him.

Zhang traveled to Europe on the Italian ship *Conte Rosso*. While on board its deck, he met his acquaintance, Edda, the daughter of the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, who was accompanied by her husband, Count Galeazzo Ciano. Ciano had completed his term as consul general of Italy in Shanghai, he was then put in charge of the embassy in Beijing for a while and was later appointed by his father-in-law as his country's foreign minister. Zhang was accompanied by his advisor, Donald, his wife, Yu Fengzhi, his concubine, Zhao Yidi, whom he married officially in 1964, his three sons, his daughter and his personal physician.

Zhang and Edda Ciano first met in Beijing at a dinner for the League of Nations delegation headed by Lord Lytton. The delegation was there to investigate the roots of the Manchurian Incident and its developments. According to her testimony, Edda sat across from Zhang at the table and at the end of the evening he passed her a note inviting her to join him for a tour of the Imperial Summer Palace the next day, which she gladly accepted. The following day they spent a number of hours at the palace, with Zhang serving as Edda's guide and giving her all his attention, while almost completely ignoring the other members of her entourage, including high-level personalities. The attention of the strongest man in China and ruler of its northern provinces, the daughter of the Italian dictator noted years later, 'flattered my ego'. This indicated how Zhang had maintained his position in the kingdom, even at his lowest point after his defeat by the Japanese.

During the month following that tour of the Summer Palace, the friendship between the two deepened. They met with their partners, or to be more accurate, as a group of five, made up of Edda and her husband, Zhang Xueliang and his wife, Yu Fengzhi, and his concubine, Zhao Yidi. Zhang, his wife and his concubine were then still addicted to opium. In their talks, Edda managed to convince Zhang to purchase three Italian-made aircraft for the Chinese Air Force. The close relationship between the Italian and Chinese air forces, which developed during the 1930s, can be attributed to the personal friendship between Zhang and Edda. Years later, Zhang testified that Edda wrote many letters to him over a long period of time, but at some point asked him to return them to her. When he was asked if they were love letters, he refused to reply.

The two met frequently in Shanghai during Zhang's drug rehabilitation process. One evening, Zhang held a festive dinner at his magnificent villa in honor of Edda and her husband ahead of their return to Italy,

even though he and his entourage were about to sail on the same ship with their guests. As part of the detoxification process, Zhang, his wife and concubine were on a strict diet and were forbidden from enjoying the kitchen's delicacies. They were weak and forced to rest most hours of the day. Edda described what she saw at the entrance to Zhang's house: in his giant room a bed was attached to either side of his bed, one for his wife and one for his concubine. 'It was amusing', she wrote with amazement, 'how, flanked by his wife and concubine, [the Young Marshal] stared at us while we ate .... What European would have had the wisdom and sense of humor to organize such a party without being able to enjoy it himself?'

Through Edda and her husband Zhang became familiar with Italian fascism. He met Mussolini, whom he came to admire, and traveled on Italy's highways – even driving a car on them – paved by the architects of the fascist regime, and in general was impressed by the achievements of the corporative country. His tour of Italy reinforced his belief that the fascist model should be applied to China.

On Mussolinis's recommendation he went to Germany. During his visit he met Hitler and Goering. His belief that fascism was indeed the solution for a society in distress was further reinforced. From what he wrote to a friend, it appears that he did not understand the broader meaning of Nazism, including its theories on race, and focused only on the model for a strong (desirable) leader for China.

He never visited the Soviet Union, even though he definitely considered going there and gaining a greater knowledge about that country as well. It appears that the Soviets were not interested in hosting Manchuria's strongman, with whom they had such a complex relationship, fearing any contact with him could unnecessarily entangle Moscow with the government in Nanjing.

After his return to China, Zhang tried to persuade his friends, members of the Guomindang and Communists alike, that Chiang Kai-shek should adopt Mussolini's approach as the best one for the emerging China. Chiang, however, although he may not have been averse to the fascist model, did not adopt it. He was not familiar with European fascism. Zhang's somewhat naive attempt to urge figures such as Zhou Enlai and other Chinese leaders to recognize the advantages of fascism and apply it to China was certainly astonishing. For a Westerner it was unbelievable. However, in the Chinese context in general and in the context of the Young Marshal's biography in particular, it is not surprising – the mixture and coexistence of opposites and contrasts were the secret of Zhang's existence, the story of his life. Moreover, as mentioned above,

Zhang did not study any ideology deeply, and when he talked about implementing fascism in China he was probably envisioning the leadership component of the system, rather than all the details of fascist doctrine and its methods.

While he was in Europe, Zhang enjoyed a level of good health and freedom that allowed him to experience a quality of life that he had not known in years. He devoted himself to domestic Chinese politics (including criticizing Chiang Kai-shek for not ordering the Nationalist forces to block the Japanese unequivocally in Manchuria), engaged in his hobbies, gained weight and looked his best. Everyone who knew him before the detoxification process and afterwards immediately noticed the change that he had undergone, and the level of concentration and sharp thinking that he now displayed.

There were some who interpreted Zhang's extreme and uncompromising anti-Japanese passion, which would ultimately lead to his being sentenced to more than fifty years in prison, as a sort of emotional compensation for the opium that had been 'taken away' from him. According to that approach, his adherence to fundamentalist Christianity until his death was also a 'compensation' for some of the deprivation that he had experienced.

The Young Marshal spent many months in Europe. He divided his time mainly between Italy, France and England and went from one country to another without much preparation. In England, 'the new modern citizen of the world' – to use the phrase of journalist James Bertram who was stationed in China in the 1930s and wrote important dispatches from there – found plenty of room for his interests and hobbies. Zhang rented a house in Brighton and sent his children to a local school. He himself resided in the luxurious Dorchester Hotel in London. Here he met senior figures such as Lord Hailsham and Lord Astor and Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald. For a while it looked as if he had become a playboy again. He planned to buy a home in England and even take a quick aviation course. According to one report, he also underwent medical treatment at a private clinic to ensure the continuation of the detoxification process he had agonizingly undergone in Shanghai.

In January 1934, Zhang returned to China aboard the ship *Conte Verde*. He was received by his supporters when the boat docked at Hong Kong, arrived in Shanghai five days later and set out from there to Beijing. Photographs from that period show a young and healthy man who looks ten years younger than his age, wearing a tweed suit typical of golfers – golfing was one of his many hobbies. When he returned from Europe, two of the conflicting trends in Zhang's life were now reversed.

He was free of drugs and his physical condition improved remarkably, but it was precisely now that his star as a warrior and independent statesman, a worthy contender for the leadership, began to set. He paid a heavy public price for not confronting the Japanese in Manchuria, for losing Jehol province, which he had maintained for a year-and-a-half after the Mukden Incident, for befriending the heads of the underworld, for possessing – according to rumors – some of the imperial treasures of the Forbidden City and for selling his hospital to the French.

However, in February 1934, Zhang Xueliang was appointed as Chiang Kai-shek's deputy and commanded armies in the provinces of Hunan, Anhui and Hubei. His assignment was to quell the anti-government revolts against Chiang Kai-shek's regime that were also taking place in the distant regions of Guangdong, Xinjiang and Gansu, Fujian and other provinces. His absence from China, and especially his appointment to a job in even more distant provinces than the Japanese-controlled northern ones, somewhat helped quell the anger of the militarist circles in Japan who viewed Zhang as an enemy, a consistent opponent of their interests in China.

An outside observer might wonder how, after his failures in Manchuria and Jehol and after such a long absence from the political and military scene, Chiang had agreed to appoint him to such a senior position. The answer is probably to be found in Zhang's special trait of character – his unflinching loyalty to the leader – added to the fact that he was now far from Manchuria and did not pose a threat to the Generalissimo. Chiang Kai-shek was also well aware of the popular support that the Young Marshal had in northern China and Manchuria. In other words, he believed in the man and at the time preferred Zhang to be with him rather than against him.

However, Zhang was no longer what he had been when he ruled Manchuria high-handedly and competed as the potential ruler of all of China. Since his departure, his strength in China seemed to have seeped away from him. Not only did his image suffer a severe blow, but his capital dwindled because he was cut off from his source of lucrative funding, the tax-collecting system in his homeland – Manchuria. Although he continued to collect large sums of money from his district after joining the Nationalist government, and did not transfer them to the Treasury in the capital, his army was increasingly dependent on the allocation of resources by the central government, specifically by Chiang Kai-shek. No longer could he mobilize new soldier recruits as he pleased, and he had to cover many expenses from his own pocket, such as building accommodation for his officers in Xi'an. The Dongbei

Army, the base of his power, now operated under the threat of its gradual disbandment.

During this time, in Hankou, his main headquarters, while taking his first steps towards socioeconomic rehabilitation, Zhang tried to copy the model of fascist rule that he had seen in Italy. On the national level, in terms of fighting the Communists who were still surrounded in Jiangxi, the Nanjing government launched the Fifth Campaign (officially, the Fifth Encirclement and Annihilation Campaign) to defeat them. They were perceived as the main national enemy. Chiang Kai-shek intended to crush them with an iron fist. Nearly a million soldiers participated in this military campaign. The government hired the services of German advisors and used artillery, tanks, aerial bombardment and, according to one source, even gas. New roads were paved to facilitate access to the targets and fortified outposts were quickly built in order to choke the 'red' capital. An iron ring encircled the soviet in the south, and it was made tighter. The campaign was costly, but above all it cost in blood, mainly that of civilians, most of them peasants. Not one of those measures had previously been used in Manchuria and Jehol when the Japanese attacked. The Chinese retreated from these places with surprising speed and Zhang, who later claimed to have wanted to confront the enemy, did not receive the kind of reinforcement now thrown into the battle against the Communists.

Yet, despite all of Chiang's efforts, the Red Army, the army of the Chinese Party, did not surrender. Its members acted on the values being preached at the time by some of the party's leaders, especially Zhu De and Mao Zedong. Mao was born in the province of Hunan in 1893 to a relatively wealthy peasant family. He studied in the province and went to Beijing in 1918. In the capital, he served as an assistant librarian at the university. Here, at the very heart of the country that seven years earlier had renewed itself as a republic, he acquainted himself with the political-philosophical writings of a number of prominent intellectuals, some of whom he met such as Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, members of a radical Marxist circle who had been among the founders of the Communist Party in China in 1921. Mao, who had been active in the Party since its first days, viewed the peasantry as an important element in developing the revolutionary movement and in creating a new, just and worthy society. That was the beginning of his initial digression from the guiding model based on the urban proletarian class leading the revolution, in light of which other similar parties in the world operated, and especially the Soviets.

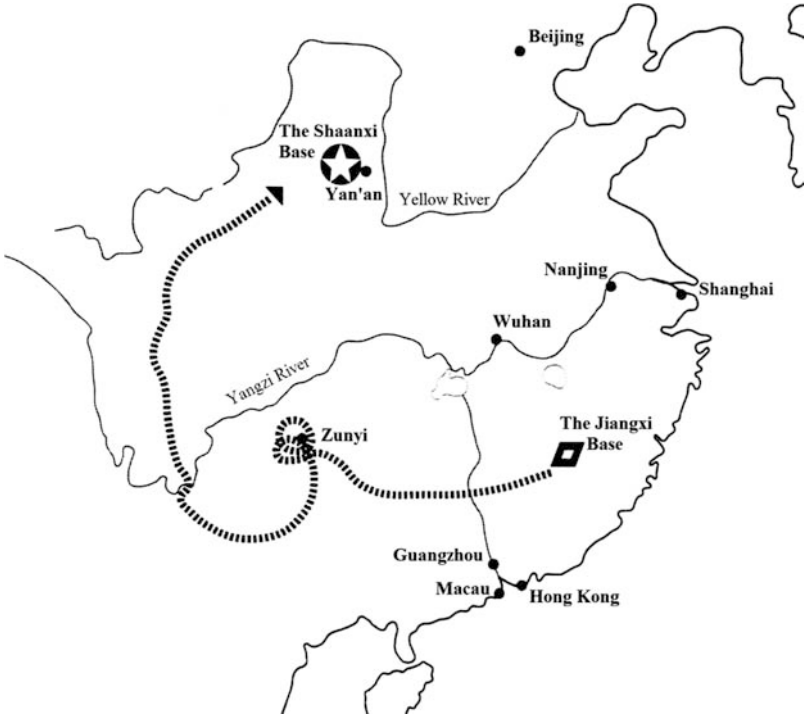
The Chinese Communists participated in the campaign to unite the country under Chiang Kai-shek, the heir of Dr Sun Yatsen, the Republic's

founder and first president. But in the spring of 1927, Chiang turned against them and succeeded in slowing their progress. Eventually they established a territorial foothold in the province of Jiangxi. It was here that Mao's star rose and he became one of the Communists' military and political leaders in what was called the Chinese Soviet Republic. Even though his offensive on the cities of Changsha and Nanchang failed, he did not lose status. That experience strengthened his resolve to embrace the indirect method of guerrilla warfare. Later on he would order that: 'When the enemy advances, we retreat; when the enemy stops, we harass; when the enemy is tired, we attack; when the enemy retreats we pursue.'

The Chinese Communists' long and heroic campaign of tactical retreat for the purpose of fortifying new bases began after four campaigns had been launched against them, in which the government army failed to drive out the rebels from their main position. In the winter of 1934, the Communists and their tens of thousands of supporters had to abandon their base following the drumbeat of the fifth massive assault. They escaped the tightening stranglehold in a number of columns, almost out of sight, and began walking away, in what came to be known as the Long March (Map 4). Some 100,000 people crossed mountains and valleys on their new trail. From Jiangxi they went to Guangdong, Guangxi and Hunan, and from there to Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, Xikang, Qinghai and Gansu, until they reached Shaanxi in the north, carrying red flags with the symbol of the hammer and sickle. They fought off attacks from the rear and maintained a strict discipline in their ranks, clinging to their principles. Many faltered and were injured and killed, but those who remained were not afraid of quickly introducing reforms in the places through which they passed. So, for instance, they would ask the local peasants to point out to them the landowner who had exploited them: sometimes they would kill him and burn quantities of the opium that he stored in his silos. At times, they even had the audacity to sell the rest of the opium on the free market in order to cover their expenses.

They also distributed his lands among the peasants. Indeed, they dispossessed many but very many others joined them, so many in fact that although only about a tenth of those who embarked on the campaign in Jiangxi survived it, the number of marchers who arrived at the Communists' new base a year later was equal to that at the outset of the campaign. In the winter of 1935, the marchers reached Shaanxi and joined their supporters who had been waiting for them there since 1933.

During the campaign, in the city of Zunyi, Mao succeeded in overcoming his domestic rivals and became the leader of the Party. Up to



Map 4 The Long March, 1934–5

the time of his death forty-one years later, he remained the indisputable leader of the Communist Party, which in 1949 had founded the People's Republic of China.

With their Long March the Communists managed to turn a defeat and withdrawal into an ideological and practical springboard for success. Their ambitious declaration of war against the Japanese Empire at the beginning of 1932 now gained credibility, because they had now advanced to where the occupier was located in the territory of the motherland. Indeed, since invading Manchuria and Jehol, the Japanese had advanced into Inner Mongolia with the goal of driving a wedge between northern China and the Soviet Union in order to block the link between Russia and China through Xinjiang and Outer Mongolia.

Zhang had to move his headquarters out of the center and consolidate it in northern China in order to block the Communist threat. The fight against the rebels was perceived as the top priority of the Nationalist

government headed by Chiang Kai-shek, and the Marshal's job was therefore one of the most important and prestigious in China. Zhang rose up through the ranks of the Nationalist hierarchy and became one of the members of the central government. His army, the Dongbei (Manchurian) Army, joined the 17th Army of the government forces commanded by Yang Hucheng and additional units allotted for the purpose of quelling the Communists. Yang Hucheng, a native of the province, was at first suspicious and afraid of Zhang Xueliang's intentions. From his point of view, the Young Marshal could have undermined his authority in his territory. Yang was 18 years older than Zhang. He had participated in the Republican Revolution of 1911 when Zhang was still a child, and he took part in the Northern Expedition to unite the country (1926–8) and been involved in the conquest of Xi'an, China's ancient capital. According to several sources, Yang's wife was a member of the Chinese Communist Party and he himself negotiated with them on non-belligerence agreements; according to later testimonies, he also negotiated his joining the Party.

While Zhang and Yang were of equal status in the northern region, nationwide Zhang's status was higher. There were rumors that he was planning to declare his independence from the central government. But in the meanwhile, despite the criticism in Nanjing of his misconduct in Manchuria in 1931, he was considered a relative success on the front he now commanded in his fight against the Communists. Zhang toyed with the idea that once he defeated the Communists, his position on the national level would be strengthened and the groundwork would be laid for an all-out and decisive battle against the Japanese, a battle to which he was looking forward. However, in September 1935, Zhang suffered a number of defeats at the hands of the Communists. Chiang Kai-shek reacted by criticizing the Manchurian Army and did not hesitate to mock him. Zhang found some consolation in the fact that Yang understood his difficulties. It is possible that at the time, both of the generals – who were under Chiang Kai-shek's command – changed direction, pragmatically and even ideologically, from that of being totally supportive of the Generalissimo to becoming more critical of him in their agreeing with the Communist stance on the issue of the urgent need to fight the Japanese. In any case, within a short period the two grew close and cooperated with each other, becoming good friends. Their strategic goal of fighting Japan was the basis of their deep friendship.

The residents of the provinces where the Young Marshal's soldiers were operating in showed more than a modicum of contempt for the 'foreign' force that had been defeated in its own homeland (Manchuria) and now

came to their rescue. But even worse, they were increasingly asking why a crusade was being launched against the Communists, who treated the local population well. Even the soldiers and officers of the government's army who were captured by the Communists claimed that the 'Reds' acted properly. Many returned enchanted by the Revolutionary Army and by the Communists' behavior and sense of devotion. Sometimes they were treated even better than they had been by their own government.

Zhang would later recall that during this period he sacrificed many of his elite combatants for the central government, which had waved the banner of fighting against the Communists. This made him feel very guilty and ultimately led him to pressure the leader, Chiang Kai-shek, into changing the national priorities – to stop fighting the Communists and direct every possible effort towards the war against the Japanese enemy. In late 1935 and early 1936, Zhang came to the conclusion that the Communist forces could not be defeated by open and direct confrontation. His motivation for continuing the struggle waned, and feelings of hopelessness permeated the ranks of his soldiers and officers on the ground. It may have been a self-fulfilling prophecy. Either way, assaults against the Communists gradually decreased; there was actually a sort of cease-fire between the two armies. The slogan 'Chinese do not fight Chinese' succeeded. Indeed, at the time, the leaders of the Communist Party were working on a strategy of a 'united national front'. Such a front, they thought, could advance their ideological agenda more effectively and more quickly than the dogmatic adherence to the radicalism of class struggle, which was less urgent and less relevant to Chinese society with the Japanese enemy standing at its gates.

In the meanwhile, and in no small measure based on past experience, Zhang and his men began wondering whether they were being sent to fight the Communists, or rather, in order to exhaust and even eliminate them, the Manchurian fighters whom Chiang Kai-shek regarded as a potential threat. Zhang's army was split between the southern part of Hebei and the province of Shaanxi. Unlike in the past, the soldiers no longer received their salaries regularly and were not sent the reinforcements and proper fighting equipment that they were promised, which contrasted with the provisions made to units defined as unflaggingly loyal to Chiang Kai-shek.

In 1934, when Zhang was still in central China and had not yet gone to the northwestern province of Shaanxi, he studied the issues relating to Chinese communism. One experience that sparked his interest in communism was a meeting at the Hung Chiao Hospital in Shanghai with his friend Du Zhongyuan. Du, a Chinese from Manchuria, was a political

activist and critic of Chiang Kai-shek's regime. He introduced Zhang to an alternative view to that of the policy Chiang Kai-shek's government, and presented him with the possibility of cooperating with the Communists. Du's intention was not to cooperate with the Communists for ideological–philosophical, social or economic reasons. Rather, he aimed to advance a pragmatic goal, namely changing the central government's national priorities to allocating all available resources to fighting the Japanese invader, even at the price of working with the Communists. Although he was educated in Japan, Du was among the supporters of taking a hard line against the Japanese occupation. His rhetoric against the Japanese and against government policy, which was published in the newspaper that he edited, eventually led to his arrest by the Chinese authorities in Manchuria on the eve of the Japanese invasion. The pretext for the arrest was his having insulted the Japanese emperor. Tokyo subsequently demanded that he be punished. Hence, it is no surprise that in the political climate that prevailed in China then, Du gradually grew close to the Communists and eventually became the connecting and mediating link between a handful of members of the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Guomindang and some members of the Communist Party, a connection that became of utmost importance in future political developments.

In his conversations with Du, Zhang Xueliang was honest. He confessed his disappointment with Chiang Kai-shek and said that China needed a fascist regime modeled after Mussolini's government in Italy. Yet, his criticism of Chiang, the charismatic national leader, did not make him turn his back on him. He thought that Chiang was worthy of ruling China and could extract itself from its current strife, as long as he changed his policy and decided unequivocally to fight Japan. It is no surprise then, that when government army forces were sent to Shaanxi to defeat the Communists in their northern base and many soldiers were killed and wounded in the battle, Zhang felt that it was a mistaken policy that had to be nipped in the bud. Although he was not certain that the Communists would be willing to cooperate, Du repeatedly encouraged Zhang to strengthen his ties with them.

Among those convinced of the urgent need to cooperate with the Communists was also Gao Chongmin, who had influence in Nationalist Party circles. Gao had been captured by the Communists and spent two months at their base in Yan'an. During those two months he received special treatment from his captors. It is an interesting phenomenon that government-supporting Manchurian commanders who were captured by the Communists were then subjected to a series of talks and lectures during their captivity, meant to persuade them to join the Communist

Party. Often prisoners would be released as a gesture of goodwill, the Communists being satisfied to recognize that on the soldiers' return home they would be loyal agents of their ideology. And, indeed, so they were in most cases, thereby reinforcing the 'red' line. Gao's captors managed to convince him that the Red Army really did carry the banner of the uncompromising battle against the Japanese, and that national-patriotic sentiment was much stronger among the Communists than in the ruling party. In early January 1936, Gao told Peng Dehuai, one of the leading Communists, that he was willing to help unite the two armies, the Dongbei Army and the Red Army, for the common goal of fighting the Japanese. He promised that in exchange for his freedom he was willing to talk to Zhang Xueliang. This way he succeeded in gaining his freedom and began his political machinations.

Gao approached officers in the Nationalist Army and asked them to talk to Zhang Xueliang and convince him to adopt the alternative line. After all, now that Manchuria had fallen to the Japanese as a result of Chiang Kai-shek's mistaken policy, and with other parts south of the Great Wall now also in danger of falling to the enemy, it was time to change direction.

Another person who influenced Zhang to turn his back on Chiang Kai-shek and fight for an uncompromising line towards the Japanese was Ma Zhanshan. Ma, who served in Zhang Xueliang's army, remained in Manchuria and consistently fought the Japanese occupation regime. In the summer of 1933, on his return to China from a visit to the Soviet Union he met Zhang in Wuhan and tried to convince him to reconsider his loyalty to the Chiang Kai-shek government. Ma was very critical of the direction that Zhang was taking and questioned his policy since the period of the autumn of 1928. He argued that Zhang should not have supported Chiang Kai-shek's Nanjing government from the very beginning and should not have attached his forces to its army, and that from September 1931 he should not have listened to Chiang and avoided fighting the Japanese. To the contrary, he argued, he and his army should have confronted the invader. Ma was also critical of Zhang promoting fascism in China and presented it as a mad idea requiring a determined fight against the Communists, which was paramount to the Dongbei Army committing suicide. He reminded Zhang that his army was the only and most important asset he had and suggested that he do everything possible to return to his homeland, the northeastern province, victorious. The way to fight the 'little noses' (the Japanese), explained Ma, was through obtaining the help of the 'big noses' (the Soviets). So Ma clearly associated Moscow with the Chinese Communists and stressed the need to cooperate with them both.

That Zhang Xueliang then became amenable to Ma's approach reflected the long way he had come since he was exposed to the hard line of his father, Zhang Zuolin, who had staunchly opposed communism and who throughout his career feared the infiltration and increased influence of Moscow in Manchuria. His son, Zhang Xueliang, became increasingly convinced that he could no longer sit on the fence. Not taking a stance, he thought, amounted to supporting the government's misguided policy. Zhang therefore began acting to consolidate all the forces allocated for the fight against the Communists, which were concentrated north of Xi'an, in order to fight the Japanese enemy. This may have been an attempt to make amends for his past actions in Manchuria. This pattern of behavior, namely the attempt to correct a historical mistake by a corrective and compensatory action years later, is not rare among statesmen.

He made contacts with the Communists by a variety of means: through one of his subordinates, Li Du, through some of the faculty of Dongbei University, which had a number of Communist activists, and through the mediation of the commander of the 67th Army, Wang Yizhe, and the commander of Regiment 619, Gao Fuyuan. The latter had been captured and then released by the Communists, and he maintained contact with them. At the time, according to one estimate, there were already over 120 Communist Party members in the Dongbei Army. This was not a small number, considering the fact that it was part of Chiang Kai-shek's armed forces.

The Chinese Communist Party was firm and resolute in its purpose and to further its goals its leaders were willing to go a long way towards Zhang, who had also signaled an interest in them. At this point, Zhang's confidant, Li Du, approached Liu Ding. Liu Ding was a military man who had been educated in Germany and the Soviet Union and had joined the first Communist base in the Jiangxi province but was then captured by government forces and finally escaped and hid out in Shanghai. Liu Ding came to the anti-Communist headquarters in Xi'an and met with Zhang and the two began talks. It was surely ironic that at the main national anti-Communist headquarters, the two were talking about cooperation and the possibility that Zhang would support the Communist agenda.

The talks strengthened Zhang's feeling that it was necessary and urgent to create a united national front in order to beat the Japanese. Years later, when Zhang recalled his decision to cross over the lines to the Communists, he mentioned that he noticed the corruption that had spread at the time through the ruling party, the Guomindang, and the endless and destructive infighting in it, to the point that he lost his faith in the National Party. His own army's mounting casualties and

losses in its fight against the Japanese also strengthened his realization that the possibility of joining forces with the Red Army to fight the enemy should not be taken lightly, and that only a united national front with the Communists could solve the nation's problem, namely the Japanese occupation.

It is interesting to note here that in 2004 and 2005, three to four years after the Young Marshal's death, reports surfaced that at the end of 1935 Zhang applied to become a member of the Communist Party.[2] Whether the reports are true or not, it is clear that such a membership would have guaranteed Soviet support for Zhang's great plan to establish a broad-based political foothold in the northwest, instead of in the north-eastern provinces that had been lost to the Japanese. He hoped that he could then use that base to launch a similarly broad-based campaign to take over all of China.

According to the reports about Zhang seeking membership of the Communist Party, his application was approved by the Communist Party in China but then rejected by the Comintern,[3] based at its headquarters in Moscow. This occurred in the second half of 1936, and then again later. One of Moscow's reasons for rejecting his membership application was quite pragmatic: under the circumstances, Zhang and his 'ideologically non-affiliated' army were in a greatly advantageous position on the way to establishing a broad-based 'popular front' in China. Paradoxically, it was precisely the Young Marshal's joining the Communists that could have been damaging. His public crossing of the lines would have prevented his good services to the cause of establishing the 'popular front', which was what the Communists wanted to see as it would have advanced their own cause – Zhang could no longer serve as a neutral bridge between the sides.

The disclosure of the 'secret' of Zhang's attempt to join the Communist Party is undoubtedly fascinating in of itself; however, it does not change the general picture. After all, Zhang's sympathy for the Communists during this critical period in China's modern history was well known. Moreover, Zhang did not follow any ideological line. He sympathized with Italian fascism and considered it an appropriate model for China, while at the same time calling for cooperation with the Communists. Nor should his formal membership of the Communist Party, if there was any, be taken too seriously. At any rate, the road was short to arranging a meeting between Zhang Xueliang and Zhou Enlai, one of the Communist leaders.[4] This meeting began in the evening on 9 April 1936 and lasted through the night, ending the next morning. It was also attended by Wang Yizhe, commander of the 67th Army of the

Manchurian Army, and Li Kenong, head of social affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Zhang and Zhou agreed on a number of basic points, but also had differences. During the talks they drew up a number of principles:

1. The Communist Party would be willing to reach agreement with the government army and subordinate its forces, which would undergo reorganization, to the command of Chiang Kai-shek with the goal of fighting the Japanese.
2. The Red Army would receive appropriate guarantees from the government that its fighters would not be cheated and would not be forced to turn in their weapons.
3. The Red Army would be stationed at places decided upon between the sides.
4. The Red Army would stop being called by that name, and would be treated like any other unit in the Nationalist Army.
5. The Communist Party activists would not interfere in military affairs.
6. The Communist Party would stop its political struggle against the government.
7. Communist activists who were arrested would be freed and allowed to be politically active as long as they did not undermine the authority of the government and its head.
8. Military people who were not members of the Communist Party would be allowed to live in the northern part of Shaanxi province.
9. At the end of the war against the Japanese all military forces would lay down their arms.
10. At the end of the fighting the Communist Party would be a legal party as it was in Western countries.

The Communists' willingness to cooperate with the central government resurfaced occasionally over the coming years. At its base was the ideological consideration of the need to cooperate with the 'great bourgeoisie', and pragmatic considerations, such as that the lack of adequate resources could harm the success of the revolutionary struggle. But there was another consideration – the need to elicit broad public support.

According to the memoirs of Liu Ding, who liaised between the sides, there were often obstacles in the negotiations. There may have been agreement to stop the fighting between the forces in order to fight the Japanese together, but Zhou Enlai did not at all like Zhang's enthusiasm for fascism. As he saw it, fascism was the result of imperialism and was not to be emulated or supported in any way. He thought that China needed

democracy, and choosing the path of fascism was worse than surrender to the Japanese, who had recently adopted a model of facism. So when Zhang recognized the ferocity of opposition to the fascist idea, which in the Chinese consciousness was associated with everything despised in Japan, he stopped mentioning it. He only reiterated that Chiang Kai-shek, as leader of the nation, was the man who could also lead the proper struggle against the Japanese. He thought that he should have been included in the plans to defeat the Japanese, and that the Communists had to stop fighting his forces. As for the Soviet Union's support of the anti-Japanese struggle, Zhang was suspicious and wanted to wait and see what happened in order to check Moscow's position on this matter.

Along with talks of a cease-fire between Zhang's army and the Communists, Zhang and Zhou discussed cooperating on a commercial and educational level. At the end of their meeting, Zhang gave Zhou a rare map of China along with a large sum of money in cash. But none of that erased doubts about the success of the complex initiative that Zhang had taken in participating in negotiations with the Communists. Zhang was well aware that even in his own army the idea of a rapprochement with the Communists was not universally supported. This juncture may have signaled the beginning of his change of direction and of his growing awareness of the need to forge his own path.

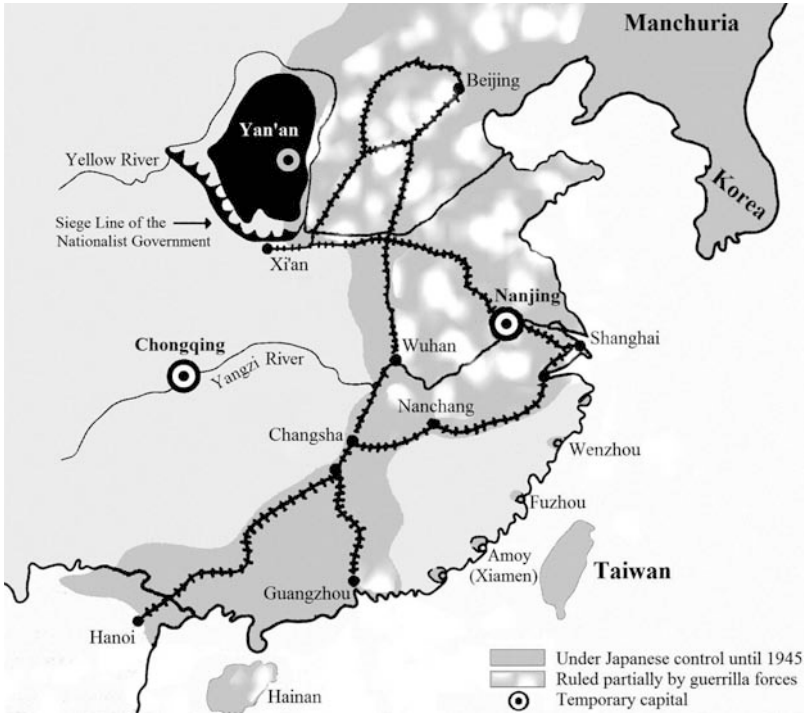
Zhang made remarks to that effect to Liu Ding in July 1936. He stressed that he had decided to lead his army into cooperation with the Red Army in the fight against the Japanese and asked for that message to be delivered to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. He then left for Nanjing in order to participate in the second plenary session of the governing party's fifth convention. Zhang's message was delivered to Mao and his colleagues. They thought that it would be better for Zhang's army to remain independent and have it cooperating with the Red Army rather than have it dismantled as a separate unit. It was considered the only way to have any chance of mobilizing Chiang Kai-shek (who was busy at the time putting down revolts against him in the south) to fight the Japanese as part of a unified national front. It is important to note that Zhang's soldiers were personally loyal to him even though he did not always view them as outstanding (they had not been properly prepared to fight the invading Japanese force in 1931). So, for instance, it was told of one of his officers that he explained in a conversation with Chiang Kai-shek: 'If you want me to kill someone, just tell Marshal Zhang to instruct me to act. I only take orders from him.'

In June 1936, Zhang Xueliang had a second meeting with Zhou Enlai. This time Zhang had more information about the Communists.

The information came from his officers who had been captured by them and spent a long time at the soviet base in Shaanxi. They told him about the Communist organization, their training and the special spirit that prevailed among the ranks, and of course about their absolute willingness to fight the Japanese. These reports clarified for him that it was primarily disappointment at Nanjing's policy towards Japan that had brought young people, students, intellectuals and soldiers to sympathize with the Communists, even to the point of joining their ranks. All this information somewhat hastened Zhang's drift towards the Communists' position, as he gradually grew more and more sympathetic towards them, so that he could now speak to Zhou Enlai with greater confidence and, more importantly, express this sympathy. All this paved the way for the drastic steps that he would take in the future.

Here it should be stressed that since 1932, when the Communists declared total war on the Japanese who had invaded Manchuria, they had managed to position themselves as the spearhead of the national struggle. While Chiang Kai-shek, for his own reasons, exercised a policy of restraint, they took action. The Communists' declarations may not have been worth much at the first stage of their actions, because they were under siege by the Nanjing government at their base in the north. But about three years later, their propaganda campaign assumed real momentum and even operational value when they advanced their forces northward from their southern base during the Long March and and established a new base near the front with the Japanese invaders (Map 5).

During this period, they temporarily suppressed their desire to carry out their socioeconomic platform and stressed their patriotic stance and willingness to sacrifice whatever was required in order to defend the homeland. That stance, which was not a passing populist tactic but had a great deal of inner truth, helped to consolidate Chinese nationalism in northern China and later on throughout the whole of the country. That feeling grew ever stronger during the long anti-Japanese campaign, which became the furnace in which the strength of the Communist Party was forged. Indeed, in the years prior to and during World War II, in Asia (as opposed to Europe – except for Yugoslavia, northern Greece and isolated enclaves here and there), communist movements were perceived to be carrying the banner of nationalism come late. Internationalism, hailed by the Chinese Communist Party and its Asian counterparts, was to a large extent just a formality. It was not internationalism that swept the peasant masses into the embrace of China's local communist leaders and their ideology, but rather national, anti-Japanese sentiments and the hope of socioeconomic reforms.



Map 5 The three governments in China during World War II

In Russia, the leaders of the Soviet Union and the heads of the Comintern were not happy with the idea of accelerating the Socialist revolution quite yet. They were interested in the policy adopted by the Chinese Communists – a joint national Chinese campaign against Japanese militarism. Zhang's willingness to join that campaign paved the way to cooperation between his army and Moscow. That position was not new, but since the Young Marshal's father had tried to push the Soviet Union out of his territory to prevent it from gaining control of the province's railroads, the Soviets were afraid that the son, too, wanted to eradicate their influence from his power base. Once the Soviet Union was convinced that Zhang wanted good relations with it in order to fight the Japanese, its fears dissipated.

In early August 1936, Mao Zedong, chairman of the Chinese Soviet Government, adopted the idea of a national front and quickly reached a policy of cooperation between Zhang's army and the Red Army. Zhang,

for his part, began an active policy of realizing the idea of 'national rescue', more or less on the basis of the lines established in the theory of the 'national front'. Intensive courses were started in Xi'an for junior officers and other functionaries on the necessity of fighting the Japanese. At Dongbei University – which was previously based in Mukden (Shenyang), but was moved to Beijing and then reestablished in Xi'an – propaganda work was done on the need to fight the invaders. So Xi'an now became the center of resistance to the Japanese, a resistance that the government was trying to suppress in the other provinces of China.

3
'Forced Advice': The Revolt Against Chiang Kai-shek, 1936

In the last three months of 1936, important events took place in China in which Zhang Xueliang was directly involved. The international diplomatic arena was also seething with activity during that period. The Rome–Berlin Axis agreement was signed in October, setting out the very clear division between the two sides in the forthcoming war in Europe. Within three weeks, Germany announced its objection to the international supervision of its waterways. It was just one more step in its determined fight against the Versailles Treaties of the post-World War I years that had disabled it. At the end of November, the German–Japanese Agreement was signed, followed by the Italian–Japanese Agreement against international communism, the Comintern. The 'Axis' countries, Germany, Italy and Japan, were now one group. The developments in Xi'an should not be viewed separately from the international political developments that were taking place because from an international perspective, China was an important front in the deployment of forces between the two fighting camps in World War II.

* * *

Shao Lizi, the governor of Shaanxi, was well aware of the changes that were taking place in the province that he ruled. When he noticed the rapprochement between the Dongbei Army and the Communists and the increasingly closer relationship between Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, he became alarmed and informed the Nanjing authorities. That was the background to Chiang Kai-shek's visit to the province in October 1936 (two months earlier, in August, Chiang had met with Zhang and Yang in Xi'an to discuss the struggle against the Communists). In those conversations and at meetings with senior officials and staff officers, Chiang insisted that it would be madness to fight the Japanese rather than the Communists. His position on this issue was absolute

and uncompromising, without his bothering to understand the motives of the leaders of the opposing party. Nevertheless, he hoped to consolidate all available forces to accept his own view.

For their part, members of the Communist Party met repeatedly with Zhang Xueliang and presented him with their position on cooperating with the Guomindang. They even showed him a draft agreement on a strategic anti-Japanese plan that was supposed to be delivered to the Nationalist government. Zhang, who was afraid that Chiang Kai-shek would reject the idea out of hand, suggested to the Communists that they propose an alternative whereby they would stop operating against the government and its forces and that the cease-fire would be the basis on which both camps could cooperate in fighting against the Japanese. On October 5, the Communists agreed, on the condition that the government forces also stopped operating against them. But the idea never came to fruition. Chiang Kai-shek remained determined in his opinion that the Communists had to be fought. When he realized in December that the battle was at a standstill, he went to Xi'an to check how Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng were managing the campaign. It is difficult to know if at that early stage Chiang had begun suspecting that his two subordinates were in contact with the Communists.

Chiang thought that the Red Army could be crushed. He thought that if no progress was achieved on the front against the Communists in the north, Zhang and Yang's armies could be pulled out of the front as a last resort, moved to the provinces of Fujian and Anhui, and replaced by the central Nationalist Army.

What was the international situation at the time? In their biography of Mao Zedong, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday[1] have their own version of the general backdrop to events, but when reading it one should keep in mind their hostile attitude towards the Chinese Communists. Nonetheless, the unique interviews that they had with key figures should not be ignored. Chang and Halliday note that after the Communists reached Shaanxi province in northwest China after the Long March in October 1935, they wanted to break through to Xinjiang province, northwest of Shaanxi and Outer Mongolia (to its immediate north), which were under Soviet influence. In this way they hoped to gain access to military aid and supplies that were vital to expanding their base against government forces. Placing Zhang Xueliang at the head of some 300,000 soldiers against the Communist forces in a sort of encirclement was meant to prevent Mao Zedong and his friends from carrying out their strategic intentions. However, it is doubtful whether this explanation is true and whether Zhang really could have

prevented the Communists from joining the Soviet forces, since Zhang's headquarters were in Xi'an in Shaanxi province, while Mao and his people were based 300 kilometres to the north in the same province.

As explained above, while Zhang served as Chiang's right-hand man, he was also undermining him. His subversion had two goals, political and strategic. On the political level, his goal was to replace the leader, and on the strategic level, to change national priorities. Zhang himself had national aspirations based on his past achievements, when he ruled the expanses of Manchuria (1,554,000 km^2, which was larger than Germany, France, Spain and Portugal put together). Despite the confrontation with the Soviet Union in 1929, he tried, both on his visit to Europe in 1933–4 and now, in the mid 1930s, to create a close and reliable relationship with the Soviet Union and its ruler, Stalin. Those were understandable aspirations from his point of view, intended to allow him to run a foreign policy independent of Nanjing. But the Soviet Union was not inclined to respond to his wooing. In the background was the constant conflict with Manchuria and its rulers as well as Zhang Xueliang's strange and somewhat naive sympathy for fascism. But there was another serious consideration – that of his complex attitude towards Chiang Kai-shek. From Stalin's point of view, only Chiang Kai-shek, as representative of the national bourgeois and the large landowners – despite his indefatigable fight against the Communists – and not some local warlord or another, should be China's national leader on its long path towards a future revolution. Only a leader of the stature of Chiang Kai-shek could compromise imperialist interests in China and even help create the necessary conditions for the construction of a socialist society. Moscow's refusal to accept Zhang as a guest when he was in Europe stemmed from this attitude and from the tension that had arisen between the Soviet Union and him when he was governor of Manchuria, as well as to there being an aversion to having direct contact with him after his return to China due to his having led the campaign against the Communists in Shaanxi.

However, at times Moscow's attitude changed. If Zhang was really so strong and Mao with all his army and supporters could be curbed by him, maybe a channel of dialogue should be established with him after all? That might ease the pressure on the Chinese Communists.

In the contacts created between Zhang and the Russians in Shanghai and Nanjing, Zhang explained that he would be glad to reach an agreement with the Chinese Communists and of course to continue fighting the Japanese. This was more than a hint that he was willing to take a step that the leader was not – to declare war on Japan. In exchange, he

hoped to gain Moscow's support and maybe even its recognition that he and no one else was the ruler of China. According to Zhang's estimate, this plan could gain the support of Stalin, who wanted China to draw Japan's armies into the country's interior and thereby set a trap for them. Only a conflict between China and Japan, he thought, could ease the pressure exerted by Japan on the Soviet Union.

Stalin thought that Chiang did too little to overcome the Japanese. And, indeed, he preferred to sit on the fence – not to surrender to Japan, but not to declare war on it either. A declaration of war could have prevented him from receiving military aid from the United States, because Washington, according to its laws at the time, could not help countries that were officially in a state of war. Another one of Chiang's considerations was that a declaration of war by China would have required the deployment of all Nationalist forces to that fight and would not have left any fresh divisions for the future inevitable clash with the Communists at the end of World War II. And anyway, was there any chance of defeating Japan? Eventually Chiang became convinced that it was best to leave the task of defeating Japan to the United States, and be almost a bystander and calmly take what could be gained from the victory. That tactic was possible thanks to China's huge expanses, which are not completely conquerable. And had not history already shown that its conquerors often became its conquered? There was also a hidden Machiavellian consideration in Chiang's heart (the reverse of Stalin's considerations) – that perhaps Japan might turn against the Soviet Union after all, and leave China alone.

Between the four sides – the Chinese government, Zhang's army in Xi'an, the 'state within a state' created by the Communists and the Soviet Union – there could not be full agreement. Each side, while creating an understanding or an alliance with the other, was keeping an eye on an alternative possibility, allying with a competing party. The situation was fluid.

Stalin, although he appreciated the dowry that Zhang Xueliang could bring with him, did not completely trust the Young Marshal. The confrontation between Zhang and the Soviet Union in 1929 contributed to Stalin's considerations on the matter as he did not believe in Zhang's ability to lead an all-out war with the Japanese. Moreover, a civil war in China could weaken the latter even further as a fighting body standing against Japan and pose a risk to the interests of the Soviet Union. After Japan and Germany signed the agreement against the Comintern on 25 November 1936, Stalin's fear of the situation increased and he was furious. He became obsessed about the danger presented by two countries

hostile to him on either side of his country cooperating with each, and in his policy towards China this served only to reinforce his position on Chiang Kai-shek's role. The Chinese front must by no means be weakened, leading to interprovincial and interpersonal tensions in that country.

That is how the Russians chose the more devious option – Zhang was left to think that his plan was being adopted, in the hope that he would support the Chinese Communists, while Moscow stuck to its original plan – supporting Chiang Kai-shek.

The Chinese Communists led by Mao, however, had a different plan. At one point they were interested in seeing Zhang replace Chiang and forming an alliance with him. In such an event, the Young Marshal's dependence on the Soviet Union would have given Mao even greater political power in China. When talks took place between the Communists and Zhang, the latter was led to believe that Moscow stood behind the plan. Mao even encouraged Zhang to leave the protection of the central government. Attempts along this line were made by the leaders of the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi. But that was not the position of Moscow, which wanted to see China united against Japan and even instructed Mao to act accordingly. The idea was not to treat Chiang like an enemy. Zhang Xueliang did not completely comprehend the differences between Moscow and the Chinese Communists, and the latter even purposely misled him on that matter.

During the whole of this period, the Chinese Communists were not doing well. They had advanced towards the provinces under Soviet protection but did not receive the aid they had hoped for. According to one version, it was under these conditions that Zhang conceived of the idea of abducting Chiang. Such a move was supposed to play into Zhang's hands and strengthen his position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. It was a gamble, because he did not yet have a promise from Moscow that it would support him. But Zhang was a gambler. He hoped that his twofold aims would be realized, and that if he failed on the first mission and did not succeed in conquering China's seat of power, he would shortly manage to change national priorities and see all Chinese forces diverted to the fight against the Japanese occupier.

Mao seems to have known about Zhang's intentions but did not reveal them to Moscow. After all, his interests did not completely correspond with the Soviet Union's. He continued with his sophisticated game between Stalin, Zhang Xueliang and Chiang Kai-shek, playing his cards close to his chest. One way or another, Zhang was unaware that the Soviet Union had no intention of accepting his great plan.

Chiang received a constant flow of information about developments of the front of the fight against the Communists and planned to come to Xi'an to see what was going on there firsthand. A few days before his visit he met Zhang in Luoyang, 400 kilometers east of Xi'an. Zhang tried in vain to explain his position again. Chiang promised to come to Xi'an to understand the issue, and indeed he arrived there on 4 December 1936. During this visit, a dramatic confrontation occurred between the leader and the two generals, Zhang and Yang. Journalist James Bertram, who was staying in the city at the time, testified that the residents received Chiang Kai-shek festively. The streets were cleaned and the rickshaw pullers were given new uniforms. A large sign was hung up on the northern gate, saying 'Long live Chiang Kai-shek, the revolutionary leader'. The road to Lintong, the area designated for the guest's residence, was coated with a new and smooth layer of asphalt. The residences in which he and his entourage were to stay were cleaned and given a new coat of paint. Proper furniture was brought in, new telephones were hooked up and splendid light fixtures were hung up.

The leader arrived accompanied by 45 selected bodyguards. In addition, 50 Nationalist Luoyang Regiment soldiers were deployed to guard the compound.

On 7 December 1936, Zhang Xueliang and Chiang Kai-shek met for a talk. While Zhang expressed his thoughts and argued for the necessity of an all-Chinese cooperation in order to defeat the Japanese, Chiang Kai-shek attacked him and accused him of not seeing the whole picture. First, he stressed, national unity had to be achieved and only then should efforts be directed at defeating the Japanese occupier. 'The communists', Chiang said to his partner accusingly, 'fooled you and confused you. Even if you put a gun to my head I will not change my mind.'

This exchange illustrated Chiang's view, as many understand it to this day, that it was obvious that the idea of fighting the Japanese should not be rejected out of hand. However, it was necessary to wait for conditions to ripen on the national level. As far as he was concerned, the fight against the external enemy could be postponed for five or even ten years. Chiang believed, as he put it years later, that Zhang did not have the emotional strength to restrain himself until the right moment, to take one step at a time as was required.

Zhang Xueliang, on the other hand, claimed that the Japanese strategy was meant to expand their influence from the northern arena, from the provinces of Hebei and Chahar to Suiyuan in Inner Mongolia. If Chinese forces did not stop them, greater China would be lost and would remain

under Japanese control for a thousand years. The Communists, he said, were prepared to help in the national struggle and to adopt Chiang Kai-shek as leader of the nation. Zhang stressed the point that 'The war now is at home and over home,' adding that the current policy was wrong because it did not matter who won the inter-Chinese struggle, the Chinese nation would in any case lose and the Japanese would have the upper hand. 'My army and I', Zhang said with emphasis, 'will always be at your side. We helped you as leader of the nation and were also willing to accept your decision about the Mukden Incident [referring to the Manchurian Incident of 1931].' By that he was hinting that a few years earlier he had to accept severe criticism for abandoning Manchuria without a fight and for not realizing his basic right to defend the province of his birth. His willingness to accept the criticism even though he was innocent was a sort of sacrifice for the leader and his prestige.

By the next day, it was clear that Zhang had failed to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to change his policy and move in the direction of Zhang and Yang Hucheng's plan. But the two generals were unwilling to give up what for them was a basic principle. They stuck to their initiative to promote the strategy in which they believed – uniting all of the fighting forces in China in order to confront the invading Japanese army. To that end they were even willing to use their armies, with all that that entailed. From there it was but a short leap to resolving to force their policy on Chiang Kai-shek, even at the price of his detention and of restricting his freedom. At this point it was no longer only a meeting about Zhang and Yang's political approach, but was also one about their personal considerations. Their growing anger at Chiang Kai-shek was like wind in their sails. During this period, Zhang Xueliang also learned of Chiang Kai-shek's attempts to meet his officers behind his back. He was furious. He felt that the leader was trying to weaken his hold on the fighters that he had nurtured. Chiang had also tried to subvert Yang Hucheng's position with a similar tactic, and the latter felt threatened and betrayed.

The ninth of December 1936, five days after Chiang Kai-shek arrived in Xi'an, was the first anniversary of the demonstrations against Japan. Commemorative demonstrations were led by a student movement that emerged in Beijing. The students began waving banners against surrender to the Japanese and the idea of applying 'autonomy' to China's northern provinces. Indeed, autonomy was nothing but a diplomatic cover, permission and legitimacy for the Japanese infiltration of China. The members of the movement demanded that China maintains its territorial integrity, and called for an end to the internal conflicts in the country and for freedom of speech, a free press and the right to

congregate and form organizations. Some 10,000 students, some of them from Dongbei University, which was now operating in Xi'an, and some school children from this city, marched in the pageant meant to convince the Nationalist leadership to do the utmost to save the nation from the external enemy. Among other things, they called for a block on the increasing influence of the occupying Japanese forces in the province of Suiyuan bordering on Manchuria. But Chiang Kai-shek was not willing to move at all from his position. He continued to oppose vigorously the students' platform and ordered the progress of the marchers to be stopped. The police opened fire on the students near one of the schools, injuring two of them. Deeply distressed, the students continued their march towards Lintong, the area where Chiang was staying, intending to submit their protest. But Chiang ordered Zhang Xueliang to open fire if the demonstrators did not heed the soldiers' warnings.

Zhang was troubled by the expected violence and adopted his own line. He met the leaders of the protesting students in Baqiao, between Xi'an and Lintong, and conveyed to them the government's tough position. The students did not listen to his explanations and insisted that they would not retreat from their unbending line of national resistance to the invader. They demanded that the government support the Manchurian Army's position and embark on an uncompromising fight against the Japanese. They thought that it was better to die for the homeland than to be 'stateless slaves'.

Zhang was in an embarrassing position. He was moved by the students' stance. 'I am a soldier of the state,' he told them. 'I will not disappoint you or lie to you. My answer will be by action!' This actually created a temporary hiatus in the conflict between the sides.

That very evening Zhang again met with Chiang Kai-shek, but before he could reiterate his position and urge the leader to adopt it, the latter reprimanded him for not accomplishing his mission to stop the students by force, but rather, entering into a dialogue with them. 'After all', Chiang said, 'my orders were clear – to fire on the demonstrators if they do not heed the government's instructions.' Chiang Kai-shek took an increasingly stiff and uncompromising position, which only strengthened Zhang Xueliang's resolve. When he returned to his headquarters, he called in his military commanders and gave them an account of his difficult conversation with the leader. He made it clear to them that Yang Hucheng and Shao Lizi, the governor of Shaanxi, supported his position that dialogue was the best way to prevent a violent clash between the students and the authorities. He thought that the students should be allowed to protest, but that their way to Lintong should be

blocked. Zhang also thought that Chiang Kai-shek's tough approach would inflame the students and increase the violence.

The new situation encouraged Zhang to carry out an unprecedented action: he would force the leader to replace his corrupt policy with a worthy one, by fair play or foul! From Zhang's point of view, his motives were pure and devoid of any personal interests. After all, the pressure he put on the leader was not meant to eliminate him politically and Zhang was not aiming here to succeed Chiang. On the contrary, Zhang knew full well that he might pay a very heavy and painful personal price for carrying out his ideas. Nonetheless, he decided to correct what he viewed as the leader's digression from the national path. Decades later he would present his approach as true and altruistic, devoid of even a shred of personal political gain.

Chiang Kai-shek was not afraid of Zhang Xueliang and did not suspect his intentions, even after the sharp differences that emerged between them. After all, he had a special relationship with the Young Marshal, he was his confidant. On his visits to Xi'an, for instance, he stayed with his entourage and bodyguards in Lintong, an area under Zhang's control, rather than in Xi'an itself, which was under the control of the 17th Division commanded by Yang Hucheng. In the region under Zhang's command, the leader felt safe.

The conspirators at first considered deploying soldiers from Yang's army for the mission to arrest Chiang Kai-shek. But after a new operational evaluation, in which they considered the possible scenario that a misunderstanding could arise between the armies of Zhang and Yang during the operation and that there might be incidents of 'friendly fire' between them, they decided that the Dongbei Army should be the one to seize the leader and arrest him. Yang's army was assigned the task of blocking and disarming any government supporters who might come to his aid.

Between 9 and 11 December, the two generals met on a number of occasions and schemed their conspiracy down to the details. They decided that they would do everything they could in order to gain the support of the governors of Guangxi and Sichuan, even though it was clear that because of the huge distance from those provinces the two could not provide any real military support, and that the most that could be expected from them was political and moral support. Military support could come from the central provinces and from Shandong. The governor of Shaanxi was expected to adopt a neutral position. The Communists could be assumed to have been involved in the machinations, whether through

Yang's wife who sympathized with them (and according to some sources, was even a member of the Communist Party) or through other open and underground supporters.

However, the two expected that immediately after Chiang Kai-shek's imprisonment, help would come from those governors who had been sitting on the fence, and perhaps even the government forces in Nanjing would deliberately avoid attacking Shaanxi province. In that case, the governors of the various provinces and sectors of Chinese politics would mobilize in support of the idea of national defense and of the creation of a united anti-Japanese front. No scenarios were discussed of ousting Chiang Kai-shek from government. All along, the conspirators hoped that by the avalanche that they would create, the Generalissimo would be forced to announce publicly a change in national priorities and express his willingness to cooperate with Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng's armies, and that when he did so they would free him so that he could carry out the new strategy.

On the night of 11 December, Chiang Kai-shek held a reception in Lintong, and one of the guests was Zhang Xueliang. In his greetings, the Generalissimo referred to the fight against the Communists and in that context even announced a few new appointments. If any further proof was needed, his words clearly attested to the fact that his basic approach had not at all changed. And so Zhang learned that while he and Yang were furthering their plans to arrest the leader in order to neutralize him and force their will on him and his government, Chiang continued to weave his plans meant to strengthen the uncompromising fight against the Communists. The crisis that evolved within one day was inevitable. There was a complete psychological and operative disconnection between the two camps.

After the reception everyone went to the New City in Xincheng, this time for a reception held by Zhang Xueliang. The Young Marshal drove himself to the event. A number of figures from Nanjing were with him. 'I am not a very good driver', Zhang joked, 'and your lives are in my hands.' There was more than a kernel of truth in his words.

The party ended at 10 p.m. and the guests left. Zhang and Yang stayed behind in order to coordinate their actions in the coming hours. Zhang undertook to be the leader of the revolt at the Xincheng headquarters, and Yang was supposed to help him. The Young Marshal then went to speak to his subordinates and give them the details of the operation.

After midnight there was a further consultation, this time the forum was broader-based. Ten military men who were Zhang Xueliang's confidants

came to Xincheng to meet Yang and his aides. They agreed on the final details of the plan to abduct Chiang and decided on who was to be responsible for what on each and every matter. So, for example, Liu Duoquan, commander of Division 105, was put in charge of the operative measures. One of the possibilities that was considered was to make an open statement about the impending coup. Someone suggested calling the event the 'Double-Twelve Revolt' after the date of the planned operation – the twelfth day of the twelfth month. That day was indeed a turning point in the conspirators' struggle against the Japanese.

On Saturday, 12 December, at 3:30 a.m., the dramatic events began. Rebel forces surrounded the government soldiers and Chiang's personal guards were killed. Meanwhile, additional forces loyal to Chiang and his government were attacked and killed. In addition, the headquarters of the Guomindang, train stations, telegraph offices and 'blue shirt' bases (secret Nationalist government task forces modeled on the German SS) were sabotaged and destroyed. The rebels also took over the city's airport and the bombers that were stationed in it. Public figures who were considered loyal to the leader, such as Shao Lizi, the governor of Shaanxi province, were arrested.

Sun Mingjiu, an officer in the Dongbei Army, who was part of the rebel force that burst into the leader's residence, observed that Chiang's bodyguards put up minimal resistance. When Sun and his men reached Chiang's room, they did not find him there. The blanket on the leader's bed was still warm, his false teeth remained on the dresser and his bags, coat and hat were hanging on the coat rack. All the signs indicated a hasty escape. The servant who remained there divulged nothing. Chiang's car was parked outside. The forces responsible for the peripheral defense of the living quarters told the rebels that no one had crossed the line of which they were in charge. A thorough search immediately began in the area surrounding the place, focusing on the nearby mountain, Mount Lishan. The rebels closed their ranks around Lintong.

And so the takeover of Xi'an that morning became a fact. The center that symbolized the strength of the leader's rule had fallen. From here on there are two versions as to what happened next.

Chiang Kai-shek told a *New York Times* correspondent some four months after the events that when he learned at dawn about the impending revolt, he came to the conclusion that it was locally based and that it would not involve all of the divisions that he had allocated to defeating the rebels. On the advice of his guards, he abandoned his living quarters, and after clambering over the three-meter wall surrounding the compound (during which he hurt his back and sprained

an ankle when he fell into the trench on the other side), he began climbing Mount Lishan until he reached the top. From there he saw the rebel soldiers searching for him. They apparently shot and hit some of his soldiers. At some point he decided to come out of hiding and return to the compound. He began going down the mountain, but fell into a cave whose opening was covered with prickly shrubbery. Since he was exhausted and in severe pain, he decided to wait there and follow developments. Soon after, soldiers searching for him approached the cave. When they found him he said: 'If you consider me your prisoner, kill me right now and do not expose me to unnecessary humiliations.' He was then approached by Sun Mingjiu, who got down on his knees and pleaded through his tears that he descend the mountain with him. And so he returned to his quarters and was driven from there to meet Zhang.

The rebel sources are more detailed and present the events in a somewhat different light. According to them, when Zhang Xueliang learned of Chiang's escape he was horrified. 'If we do not find the leader', he said, 'I will cut off my head and ask for it to be presented to the authorities in Nanjing!' He wanted to prevent another civil war at all costs. According to those sources, the search for Chiang continued at dawn under the command of Sun Mingjiu. One of the leader's aides who had been wounded was seized. When he was asked about Chiang's whereabouts he refused to answer, but after Sun's soldiers threatened to kill him he turned his gaze revealingly towards a giant rock known in the area as the Leopard's Rock. There, between the rock and the side of the mountain, in a sort of crack or gap, Chiang was hiding. It was somewhat ironic because Chiang's first name – Jieshi, as it is pronounced in Mandarin – means 'between two rocks'.

When the pursuing rebel soldiers neared the hiding place, they saw a man's shadow next to the large, wet rock, but the shadow quickly disappeared. The soldiers shouted and threatened to open fire. Sun, the commander, called the leader by his official title, *Weiyuanzhang*, Supreme Commander. Now Chiang's voice was heard: 'Don't shoot, I'm coming out.' He appeared, bent over, wearing a bronze robe over white pajamas. He was barefoot and his hands and feet were wounded. He leaned against the rock, pale and shaking from exhaustion and the cold and injured in his back and foot. It was clear that it was difficult for him to move freely because of his injuries. He then changed his request: 'Please, shoot me,' he shouted out to Sun. 'We will not shoot! All we want is for you to lead us in a fight against the Japanese,' Sun replied. 'If you do that, we will be the first to praise you.'

Chiang stayed put. 'Call Marshal Zhang and I will come down to you,' he said. 'The Marshal is not here. There is a revolt in the city and we came to defend you,' Sun explained. 'Okay then', responded the leader, 'bring me a horse and I will come down to you.' 'We don't have a horse', answered Sun, 'but I will carry you down.'

Sun approached Chiang, whose feet were blue from the cold, injured and bleeding, and knelt down beside him in the snow. The leader bent over the officer's back and he carefully carried him down. Now Sun was like a modern Saint Christopher, carrying the savior of the Chinese nation on his back, almost buckling under from the burden.[2] The story of Chiang being carried on Sun's back became a legend, told over and again in the coming decades. It appeared that the leader with the divine license to rule and lead his nation had retained his charisma, power and strength.

Shortly thereafter, Zhang and Yang ordered Chiang to be moved from Lintong, which was outside of the town, to the New City in Xi'an, where the Emperor's palace had been during the Tang dynasty, and where General Yang's fortress now stood. The Generalissimo remained without his bodyguards and without his soldiers. When he sat in the car next to Sun Mingjiu, the conversation turned to the urgent need to go to war against Japan. Sun, who as a junior officer in other circumstances would not dare look the leader in the eye, called for an immediate change of government policy. But Chiang reiterated his position with short and sharp words. 'I am the leader of the Chinese nation, I represent it and I believe that my policy is correct!' He stressed that the war against Japan would come only after the victory over the Communists. 'Even arrest and pressure will not make me change course,' he insisted.

Nonetheless, it is possible that the unexpected verbal confrontation with the junior officer who stood in the eye of the storm of the surprising revolt did cause an initial change in the leader's consciousness. Chiang, who until that moment pulled all the strings of government alone and controlled everything like a wonderworker, was now suddenly alone and abandoned.

In China at the time, there was an authoritarian government that combined traditional Chinese elements and what one researcher called 'Bonapartistic republicanism'. Up to that surprising opportunity in Xi'an, there was no possibility of dialogue with the leader, no opportunity to present arguments to him, to illuminate points that he and members of the central stream in the government surrounding him may have not thought of. Ironically, it can be claimed that Chiang's arrest gave him not only long hours to read the Bible, an apt activity for someone who had

converted to Christianity under his wife's influence five years earlier, but also time to think about his life, his decisions and their consequences. He now had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to examine himself and consider different courses of action. The Xi'an Incident may therefore have been not only the sole path to self-examination, but also to what can be called a 'forced dialogue' or the 'forceful giving of advice'.

4
The Great Reconciliation, 1936–7

The closing days of 1936 were a fateful period for China, which had only just come out of the crisis of the Xi'an Incident. Within a few weeks of the incident, a limited cooperation began between the Nationalist government and the Communists. Paradoxically, this was possible only after Chiang Kai-shek was released from rebel captivity and had his dignity restored. Now he could take the steps proposed to him during his imprisonment by Zhang Xueliang.

* * *

As the news of the rebellion that had taken place in the early morning spread throughout Xi'an, a tense quiet fell over the city. Martial law was proclaimed, businesses remained closed and there was a prevailing sense of insecurity. By the same afternoon, however, traffic began to move again in the city and the feeling was that order had been restored.

On this same eventful day, Zhang sent a telegram to Song Meiling (known outside of China as Soong Meiling or Madame Chiang), the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, explaining the motives behind his rebellion against his teacher and guide. Zhang made it clear that Chiang would remain in Xi'an on a temporary basis so that he could consider his overall policy. He promised that the plotters had no desire to harm or abuse him. 'My conscience is clear', Zhang wrote, 'and I can show it in broad daylight. Madam, you may feel calm, and if you wish to come to Xi'an you are welcome to do so.' Zhang also sent a message in a similar spirit to Dr Kong Xiangxi (also known as H. H. Kung), a member of the government and of the National Economic Council, who was serving as acting leader at the time.

Soong Meiling, Chiang Kai-shek's third wife, was the daughter of one of the wealthiest and most influential families in China. Her sister was married to the father of the modern Chinese nation, Sun Yatsen. Soong

was renowned both for her alluring appearance and for her sharp intellect. She had been educated in the United States and, after returning to China, became a dominant figure wielding power and influence in China's political arena. She was a worldly and charismatic woman and a formidable power in her own right. As the wife of the Chinese leader, Soong was considered someone who did not shy away from pulling the strings in her husband's actions. *Time Magazine* would later dub her 'the Dragon Lady' – an epithet that accompanied her for the rest of her life. Soong shrewdly exploited her position as the prominent lady of the family and became intricately involved in political life, the army and at all levels of Chinese society. She soon emerged as the strongest and most dominant figure within the Chinese Nationalist camp.

It is impossible to describe and analyze the history of the Chinese Republic without a detailed examination of Soong Meiling's personality, and it is impossible to appreciate the life and works of Chiang Kai-shek without considering his wife's presence. Zhang Xueliang maintained a unique relationship with Soong throughout his life, as we shall see below.

A full discussion of the status of women in China is beyond the scope of the present work. It is important to note, however, that although Confucian tradition imposed an inferior status on women, who were subject first to their fathers and then, after marriage, to their husbands, in practical terms, and particularly in the twentieth century, women were among the leading figures and decision-makers in diverse sections of society.

The Dowager Empress Cixi, for example, who died in 1908, played a key role in Chinese history during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the new century. Soong Meiling, the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, left her mark on Chinese national affairs over a period of more than half a century. Moreover, many of the radical transformations seen in the People's Republic of China in the mainland may be attributed to the revolutionary zeal of Jiang Qing, the third wife of Mao Zedong. As one of the leaders of the Cultural Revolution, Jiang was instrumental in pushing its radical policies. And, one can argue that, paradoxically, in dialectical terms, following Mao's death in 1976, the popular criticism of the radical policies detesting the notion of a market economy led years later to China's entry into the 'Open Door' era and its policy that resulted in its flourishing entrepreneurship-oriented market economy.

Deng Yingchao, the wife of Zhou Enlai, China's charismatic prime minister, was also among the grey eminence. In her youth, she joined

the organization to abolish the custom of binding women's feet and took part in the May Fourth Movement. Later, with her husband, she traveled to the Jiangxi soviet, joining Mao Zedong and his followers on the difficult and challenging Long March (1934–5). After the Communist victory in 1949, she was revered as the nation's 'elder sister', and became a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee and Political Bureau. One can also mention Soong Ch'ing-ling, who as the wife of Sun Yatsen, the father of the Republic of China, was also known as Madame Sun Yatsen. After Sun's death in 1925, Soong Ch'ing-ling was elected to the Guomindang's Central Executive Committee. Soong was also part of the united front heading up the Revolutionary Committee of the Guomindang. In 1939, she founded the China Defense League, which later became the China Welfare Institute. It focused on maternal and pediatric healthcare, preschool education and other children's issues. During the Chinese Civil War, she sided with the Communists. After the People's Republic of China was established, she served as Vice Chairperson of the People's Republic of China and as Co-Chairperson from 1968 until 1972 and briefly, before her death, she was made Honorary President of the People's Republic.

It might rightly be pointed out that these women derived their initial power from their husbands' positions. Nevertheless, they – and many more female figures in various fields – were undoubtedly pioneers and became role models for other women.

To return to the events in Xi'an: the task now was to convert the operational success of the rebellion into political success. From the plotters' perspective, it was important to prevent their initiative from acquiring a negative public image that could offset their initial strategic achievement. To this end, there was a need to engage in propaganda on the international stage, since echoes of the events in Xi'an had spread far beyond China's borders and were reverberating around the world's capitals. Accordingly, an important document was prepared and disseminated on the same day. Entitled *A Telegram to the Nation*, copies of the document reached the various provinces of China, the press and even the schools. The document was addressed to the Nationalist government in Nanjing.

The *Telegram to the Nation* stated that since China had lost the northeastern provinces (Manchuria) five years earlier, its sovereignty had been impaired. China had been humiliated by interim agreements such as the Tanggu Agreement and various local agreements that were effectively imposed through coercion. In the international arena, the Great Powers had acted to advance their own interests (the reference was mainly to the signing by Germany and Japan in 1936 of an agreement against the Comintern, the international union of Communist parties). In light of

all these developments, the leader of the nation should recognize the need to establish a front for national defense and should reject efforts by various political and diplomatic circles to reach a compromise. Since the arrest of patriotic activists in Shanghai (supporters of Zhang Xueliang's course of action), the country had been in turmoil. Surrounded by advisors unworthy of their titles, Chiang Kai-shek had betrayed his former supporters and his policies had proved detrimental.

The document claimed that its signatories had begged the leader, with tears in their eyes, to choose a different course, but their requests had been repeatedly rejected. Worse still, when the students had demonstrated in Xi'an to mark National Salvation Day, the Generalissimo had ordered the troops to open fire on them. How could a conscionable person act in such a manner? 'We, his colleagues for many years, could not stand by, and accordingly we offered the leader advice while guaranteeing his safety.'

It should be explained here that Chinese tradition recognizes a form of protest known as *jian*, a type of forceful remonstration intended to draw the emperor's attention to his subjects' distress or complaints. The custom has its origins in pre-imperial times. Zhang and his supporters followed this model, which does not amount to a form of subversion requiring the death penalty.

The document went on to list the demands of the military leaders that they had adopted unanimously:

1. The government in Nanjing was to be reformed, and all political parties would be permitted to share responsibility for saving the nation.
2. The various forms of civil war would end.
3. The activists arrested in Shanghai would be released.
4. All the political prisoners in China would be freed.
5. The patriotic movement would be permitted to continue its activities.
6. Political freedom would be granted and permission would be granted for political gatherings and meetings.
7. The legacy of Dr Sun Yatsen would be implemented in practical terms.
8. The Committee for National Salvation would be convened.

The telegram ended by expressing the hope that 'you, the leaders of the nation, will adopt these demands, which express the will and sentiments of the people, and will correct past errors that have damaged the country. As regards our culpability, we leave this matter to the judgment of the citizens of the country.' The telegram was signed by Zhang Xueliang, Yang Hucheng and several senior commanders from the Dongbei Army and the 17th Division. This document, which later came

to be known as the 'Eight-Point Plan', included democratic elements and may be considered progressive in terms of the prevailing norms in China at the time.

Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng continued their rebellion by abolishing the special command established by Chiang Kai-shek to suppress the Communist rebels. This was a practical manifestation of the softening of the psychological and military battle fought against those defined as enemies by Nanjing. Moreover, a group of officials gathered around Zhang and Yang who were Communist sympathizers and even party members, such as Zhang's secretary and, in all probability, Yang's wife. The two rebel generals subsequently released political prisoners, introduced reforms in the provincial government in Shaanxi, seized control of the central government newspaper and froze government bank accounts in Xi'an. They also took military steps with the aim of securing their achievements.

It is difficult to gauge the level of popular support for these moves. Although China was formally united, it did not in fact function as a cohesive entity. Provincial governors and sundry warlords still saw their own personal interests as their main priority. Information flowed slowly and never reached significant swathes of the population. It may be assumed, however, that the leader was still considered to hold supreme authority, if not a Mandate of Heaven, so that Chiang Kai-shek probably enjoyed a high level of power, recognition and admiration. The rebel generals, by contrast, enjoyed a strong basis of support among their own followers and associates.

On 13 December, the day after the rebellion, Zhang Xueliang convened a meeting of the officers in charge of the unit responsible for suppressing the Communists and explained his motives for dismantling the unit. He emphasized that he had first tried to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to take steps in keeping with national interests and to focus on the war against the Japanese, and only after failing to do so had he decided to act by force.

As noted above, Zhang and Yang ordered Chiang to be transferred from Lintong to the New City. This occurred after Zhang received an anonymous letter urging him to release the leader immediately, and hinting that he might be freed by force. Testimonies suggest that when the leader was asked to get ready to leave his place of detention in Lintong, he was convinced that he was about to be executed and he refused to eat or to wear warm clothes.

Song Wenmei, the commander of the 8th Intelligence Battalion and the officer responsible for Chiang Kai-shek during his imprisonment,

wrote in his memoirs that at the first meeting between Zhang and Chiang after the rebellion, the latter remained seated and moaned loudly as Zhang entered the detention room. Zhang bowed briefly before beginning to speak, apologizing and expressing his regret at the discomfort caused to his commander. Chiang made no response. Zhang went on to explain that his actions were based on the will of the Chinese people. 'Our hearts are pure,' he emphasized. 'We did not do this for reasons of personal benefit but for the sake of the people. I hope that now, Generalissimo, you will act to correct your errors and organize matters so that the nation may fight the Japanese and be saved.'[1]

Chiang eventually responded, 'If this action was indeed undertaken for the sake of the people, send me to Luoyang and then we shall talk.' Luoyang was at the time under the full control of the Nationalist government army. Zhang reiterated that the leader must correct his errors and gain strength in order to protect the interests of the nation. He added, 'If you intend to insist on your personal beliefs, I shall have no alternative but to ensure that you are tried by the people!' Chiang then softened his tone, alluding to their former comradeship: 'I have always treated you so well and now you wish me to be tried by the people? If you did what you did for the sake of the nation, send me to Luoyang before we speak.' He closed his eyes and refused to utter another word. Zhang left the room.

Much could be written about the relationship between the two men up until that day towards the end of 1936. The lives of the two generals had been intertwined in local politics, in military maneuvers, and even – in a convoluted manner and away from the public eye – in affairs of the heart, as the two men competed (or so it is occasionally claimed in some publications) for the affections of the leader's wife, Soong Meiling. According to Zhang's testimony some years before his death, in interviews for the oral history research project of Colombia University, he and Chiang also faced a communication problem on the simplest of levels – the language barrier. They often simply failed to understand each other because of their different dialects. Chiang Kai-shek spoke the language of his native province of Zhejiang, whereas Zhang spoke a northern Manchurian dialect. The considerable differences of pronunciation and the distinct and rich colloquial idioms each man had acquired over the course of his life led to misunderstandings. When the leader was angry or agitated he spoke rapidly, making no effort to ensure that he expressed himself in a manner that could be understood by those from other parts of China. For example, the Young Marshal recalled, when Chiang ordered him to take a particular course of action, he, Zhang, would reply

using the expression 'Why not?' Chiang was unfamiliar with this turn of phrase, which he interpreted as insolence and insubordination.

Some time after the unproductive discussion between Zhang and Chiang, the latter initiated a meeting with Shao Lizi, the Shaanxi provincial governor, who, as noted above, had also been detained as a confidant of the Generalissimo. Chiang Kai-shek made his position unequivocally clear to Shao – under no circumstances would he change his political approach as the result of pressure. He saw only two options: either that he is released and transferred to Luoyang, or that he is executed by the rebels. Shao, who had been briefed by the plotters before entering into the conversation with the leader, alluded to a third possibility: Chiang Kai-shek would resign and would only return to political life when called on to do so. Chiang flatly refused to accept this idea.

At the second meeting between Zhang and Chiang Kai-shek following the latter's detention, the leader refused to permit the Young Marshal to refer to him as Generalissimo or as the Supreme Commander, *Weiyuanzhang*. Chiang would not be moved: 'If I am your commander, I order you to send me without delay to Luoyang; and if you do not do so, I shall not talk to you.' He immediately placed his hands over his ears and signaled that the conversation was over. No further dialogue proved possible between the two men.

Over the coming days, Zhang and Yang visited Chiang in his cell. Chiang wished to know whether Yang was a party to the coup. Yang confirmed that this was the case, and explained his motives – the essential struggle against the Japanese, which he believed came before any other national goal.

During the days of imprisonment, Chiang wrote two wills, one addressed to his wife and one to his sons. In the former document, he wrote that he was determined to sacrifice his life for the sake of the people. He ordered his wife, Soong Meiling, to care for his two sons, Jingguo (from his first wife) and Weiguo (who was adopted). In the latter will, he ordered his sons to regard Soong, who was not their mother, as his only wife and to care for her.

Soong Meiling learned of her husband's imprisonment from her brother-in-law, Kong Xiangxi, while she was at her home in Shanghai. From that moment on she devoted every ounce of her energy, used every connection she had and her personal charms and every possible ruse in order to solve the problem of freeing Chiang – a problem that, for her, was above all a personal and family matter. The supporters and admirers of the leader, meanwhile, saw the situation as a national crisis of the utmost gravity. Senior army officers, headed by the Minister

of War, He Yingqin, took a pragmatic and operational approach and planned a punitive action against the rebels. Soong realized that, as a first step, she must prevent any military operation by the government, since this would have been liable to endanger her husband. She sought to prevent a confrontation and wanted to reach a settlement based on compromise and reconciliation.

For his part, He Yingqin had his own personal reasons for opposing a compromise; if the leader was harmed, he would take over as the new leader of China. Accordingly, he attempted to prevent mediators from setting out for Xi'an. He Yingqin, a graduate of the Japanese military academy and one of the architects of the struggle against the Communists, his colleague the Foreign Minister, Zhang Qun, who had also received a Japanese education, and several other politicians formed a closely knit group in the corridors of power that advocated cooperation with Japan. They preferred this orientation to any compromise in the struggle against the Communists. He Yingqin was given responsibility for coordinating an uncompromising struggle against the Xi'an rebels. He contacted Wang Jingwei, another pro-Japanese figure (whom the Japanese would later appoint prime minister of their puppet government in occupied China), and asked him to assist him in his struggle. Wang agreed and returned from Europe, although not before he held a meeting with Hitler – a telling event in terms of his personal political orientation. Although Wang Jingwei joined his camp, Chiang Kai-shek was less than enthusiastic about his return to China. The two men had long been political and personal rivals, and with Chiang in detention he may well have feared that Wang would exploit the situation in order to consolidate his own position at the top of the pyramid of power.

Zhang Xueliang himself, in an effort to avoid an attack on his forces by the government army, reiterated his explanations to Nanjing that his actions were intended to save the nation and that he had had no alternative but to detain Chiang. He emphasized the point that he did not intend to harm the leader. 'For my colleagues and myself', he explained, 'Chiang Kai-shek is still the leader of the nation.'

In the meantime, Soong Meiling continued in her efforts to secure her husband's release. As she later admitted, she was seized by a deep sense of remorse that she had not accompanied him on his journey to Xi'an. Had she done so, she felt, the kidnapping would have been avoided. Although she was sick at the time that Chiang left, she later felt that this was no excuse for her failure to accompany her husband. She now initiated marathon discussions with senior figures in Nanjing with the sole aim of dissuading them from taking action against the

Xi'an rebels. She underlined the point that she was not adopting this position out of concern for her husband; her sole focus was on national considerations. She was forced to repel the repeated argument raised by ministers and officials that the Generalissimo himself, as a military man and political leader, would not be convinced by her arguments, since his life was not a private and family one, but one created and destined for the strength of the nation. Her critics even went so far as to inform her that her husband was no longer alive; and even if they were mistaken in this assumption, what was the fate of one person compared to the fate and future of an entire nation? For her part, Soong Meiling continued to claim that she was not speaking as a wife anxious about her husband's fate. It would indeed be worthy of him to sacrifice his life for the sake of the nation, but this should be for an important national matter. 'I shall be the first to agree that he should sacrifice his life', she argued, 'but the use of military force to attack or bomb Xi'an will endanger not only the leader's life, but also those of thousands of innocent civilians.'

Senior government officials in Nanjing feared that if Soong and her brother-in-law, Kong, visited Xi'an they would also be seized by the rebels and held captive, or even executed. Soong and Kong, however, did not heed these warnings.

On 14 December, Chiang's assistant, William Henry Donald, arrived in Xi'an; he had previously served as an advisor to the Young Marshal. The rebels permitted Donald to meet with Chiang, and he attempted to persuade him to accept their demands and change the national priorities and turn on the Japanese. Donald had discussed the matter beforehand with Zhang and was familiar with his strategic considerations, since as early as 1931 he had emphasized the need to fight the Japanese. Chiang had not been willing to accept his position then, insisting that the time was not yet ripe for an overt confrontation with Tokyo. He promised that an initiative would be launched against the invaders within two years. Five years later, however, no such action was taken. 'The enemy is on our territory', Zhang Xueliang told Donald, 'and there is no justification for further prevarication. The Nanjing government is like a bank that is constantly in overdraft. Surrendering to the Japanese and appeasing them while engaging in a superfluous struggle against the Communists, is a pointless and harmful course.' Zhang recalled the damage that Yuan Shikai had caused to China during World War I when he surrendered to the Japanese, who then went on to impose their so-called 'Twenty-One Demands'. 'Chiang has rejected our protests and is clinging to his approach,' Zhang concluded. 'I had to cut my friendly ties with him and arrest him.'

Zhang did not have to work hard to convince Donald that his position was the correct one to take. Donald had been his faithful assistant and confidant up until 1933 and had intimate firsthand knowledge of the events that had unfolded since the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Their paths had diverged temporarily until Zhang returned from his tour of Europe, but the meeting now was nothing less than a reunion of close friends. It was due to this friendship that Soong Meiling chose Donald to lead the delicate diplomatic campaign to secure her husband's release.

After the conversation with Zhang, Donald was permitted to enter Chiang's room. When Chiang saw him, he burst into tears. Donald handed him a letter from his wife, adding that she was due to visit him in the near future. Chiang, his face red, firmly begged that she refrain from doing so and reiterated this request in a letter to his wife. He wanted the military operations of the government forces around Xi'an to be ended; he was concerned that the situation would deteriorate and feared for his own position as a captive in enemy territory.

In the period after Chiang Kai-shek's kidnapping, rallies and demonstrations were held in Xi'an calling for a struggle to be launched against the Japanese. On 16 December, Zhang and Yang appeared in Revolution Park and Zhang made a speech explaining his position. He emphasized the point that he had always been on close terms with the leader and was willing to serve under him. 'The disagreement between us relates to the question of the urgency of the struggle against Japanese imperialism.' He explained that the arrest in Shanghai of patriots who advocated waging an all-out war on Japan was the last straw. He again compared Chiang's errors – arrogance and disregard for the public will – to those of Yuan Shikai. These errors were liable to lead to the emergence of a quasi-imperial regime, undermining the republican structure. 'Chiang thinks that he is the government', Zhang explained, 'and that all his actions are in the spirit of the Republican revolution. Since he refuses to turn the guns against the enemy, and turns them on us, I had no alternative but to join with General Yang and arrest him. I have no personal or territorial motive; my sole desire is that we should fight the Japanese enemy without compromise.'

The Communists formed another party to the dramatic developments. For them, the incident in Xi'an was a gift: their longstanding adversary was arrested and publicly humiliated. For a while, they even harbored the hope that he would be executed, and they began to imagine the collapse of the Generalissimo's regime. Perhaps the incident would pave the way for a true revolution. The internal division in the Nationalist camp could certainly bring their goal one step closer. From Mao's perspective, if Zhang

Xueliang prevailed and managed to take control of territory in the north, a new and promising situation could emerge for his movement. Perhaps the Soviets would even intervene. Mao hoped that the conflict between the rebels and the Nationalist government would continue to deepen. A few hours after learning of the kidnapping, the Chinese Communists sought instructions from Moscow as to how they should act.

On 16 December, four days after the leader was seized, a telegram arrived from Moscow making clear the position of the Soviet Union: Chiang should be released. The Chinese Communists, however, claimed that the telegram was illegible, but several days later, the same Soviet instruction was again received. The common belief was that until 20 December, that is for eight days – the Communists were unsure about Moscow's position on the matter. This created a short time frame and window of opportunity for the Chinese Communists to formulate their own independent policy regarding the kidnapping. In reality, Mao appears to have used sleight of hand, since at least one version argues that as early as 13 December – the day after the kidnapping – the soviet in Yan'an received a clear instruction from Moscow that Chiang Kai-shek was to be released immediately. The claim that the telegram was incomprehensible was merely an excuse to gain time. The incident highlighted the difference between the positions of the Chinese Communists and the Soviets. The Chinese Communist Party encouraged Zhang to pursue his plan and to spark off a confrontation with the government forces.

Kong Xiangxi, Chiang's deputy, was well aware of the Communists' intentions and warned the Russian ambassador in Nanjing that Russian intervention through the Chinese Communist Party would result in fierce criticism of the Soviet Union throughout China, and would even produce a dramatic shift in policy. China would abandon the idea of fighting the Japanese, and would instead join with them in a struggle against the Soviet Union. This was precisely the scenario that Stalin had feared. He attempted to clarify why relations with the Nanjing government had reached such a nadir, and why the Comintern and the Chinese representatives in the organization had not followed the approach that he had delineated. He attached great urgency to repairing the damage that had been caused.

During this period, and insofar as it is possible to recreate the events of the time, it seems that Mao attempted to strengthen the ties with Zhang and his followers through the mediation of Zhou Enlai, despite the fact that the distance between the Communists' headquarters in Baoan and Xi'an was very great, requiring several days' riding or, alternatively, flying to Xi'an from the makeshift airfield built in Baoan some years earlier

by Standard Oil. On 17 December, Zhang sent his airplane to collect Zhou Enlai, Mao's right-hand man. He hoped that Zhou would help him extract himself from the imbroglio in which he now was.

In any case, five days after the kidnapping, Zhou Enlai, Luo Ruiqing and three senior figures from the Communist Party met with Zhang. The meeting was intended to discuss what steps should be taken regarding Chiang's imprisonment. Zhou argued that if it proved possible to persuade Chiang to turn on the Japanese and that he promised to act in this direction, he should be released so that he could head the national struggle. If he refused to fight the Japanese, however, he should be executed. At this juncture, the position of the Chinese Communist Party once again fell into line with that of Moscow, at least regarding the possibility of Chiang's release. Zhang, however, elegantly avoided making any promise regarding the possibility that Chiang would be physically eliminated. He emphasized that he would follow such a course of action only if the government forces attacked the rebel base in Xi'an and left him with no alternative. As noted, at this point in the development of the crisis, the first signs could be discerned that Nanjing was indeed intending to launch a major offensive against Xi'an. On 16 December, a number of attacks were actually launched, strengthening Mao's hand in the discussions.

During the following days, through his contacts with the representatives from Yan'an, Zhang realized that the tension between the Chinese Communists and Moscow had reached a peak. It was apparent that Mao was pursuing an independent policy. If Stalin suspected that Mao was collaborating with forces opposed to him ('Trotskyites and traitors', to use his habitual epithet), the tables would be turned. Zhang recognized the need to act shrewdly in order to identify new options. Above all, it was imperative to guard Chiang Kai-shek very closely to prevent him from being harmed by extremist elements within the rebel camp or by agents active in Xi'an.

Zhang's assessment of the Communists was that they constantly changed their position on the basis of prevailing moods and evaluations of the situation. For example, they had now ceased mentioning their support for the possibility that Zhang might head an independent leadership as an alternative to Chiang. The Communists now stressed their support for Nanjing as the sole legitimate base of power in China. From Zhang's perspective, the Communists had proven themselves to be a fickle ally. This was the starting point for a notion that would later, after Soong Meiling came to Xi'an, develop into a full-fledged plan: to release Chiang in a cautious and sophisticated move, rather than on the conditions and in the circumstances advocated by the Communists. Zhang understood

that within a few days he would have to coordinate the details with the relevant parties, including of course with Yang Hucheng and Soong Meiling. In fact, he thought to himself, would it not be wise to secure an insurance policy against those in Nanjing who sought his elimination? He held just such an insurance policy in the shape of Chiang himself! In other words, he had an alternative to cooperation with the Communists, and he saw this alternative as reasonable and positive.

The Chinese Communists in the meanwhile had their own particular considerations. The fact that they existed in a separate territory, as a state within a state in Yan'an, gave prominence to their status as an ideological and political alternative to the government in Nanjing. On 19 December, they declared from their base that the leaders in Xi'an had 'acted on the basis of patriotic motives, honestly and with sincere zealotry for the fate of the nation. Their intention was solely to consolidate a national policy of immediate resistance to Japan.' The Communists proposed that a peace conference be convened in Nanjing with the participation of all the parties. In the meantime, they advocated a cease-fire between the armies in Xi'an and those of the Nationalist government. Their proposal was not accepted. On the contrary: the government forces intensified their preparations for an attack against the rebel forces. Several targets were bombed from the air and government planes ran menacing low-altitude sorties over Xi'an. The area was shaken by the noise of the airplane motors. A clear message was conveyed to the rebels, their supporters and the residents of the area regarding the difficult future that they could anticipate. At the same time, of course, the fate of Chiang hung in the balance.

The Communists realized that only Chiang Kai-shek, thanks to his leadership and the Mandate of Heaven he was believed to enjoy by broad sections of the public, could lead the entire nation in its struggle. Zhang could not serve as an alternative leader. Accordingly, it would be best to release Chiang Kai-shek, as this could pave the way for a proper struggle against the Japanese. Their position was thus more moderate than that of the extremist elements in Zhang's army, who sought the execution of Chiang.

The facts regarding the position of the Chinese Communists in the Xi'an crisis are not completely clear and interpretations of these vary considerably. In a review of Zhang's relations with the Communists, published after his death, it was argued that the initiators of the Xi'an crisis, and primarily Zhang himself, were patriots who had been exploited by the Communist Party. The alliance between Zhang and the Communists was based on the deliberate deception of Zhang in terms of Chinese Communist interests and those of Moscow. The review went on to argue

that Zhang's goal was to reach an alliance with the Soviet Union through the Chinese Communist Party in order to work together to combat the Japanese in northern China (Inner Mongolia). Such an alliance might unite the ranks, and could indeed remove the entire basis for the conflict between the Communists and the Nationalist camp and the Chinese establishment. Thus, an impetus might have been created for recruiting all sections of the Chinese population against the Japanese enemy. However, the members of the Chinese Communist Party, under the influence of the Comintern, generally considered the interests of the Soviet Union rather than those of the Chinese nation; accordingly, they rejected Zhang's proposals. Peng Dehuai, for example, a senior figure in the Communist Party, wrote to Mao to warn him against adopting Zhang's plan on the grounds that this could lead to a confrontation between the Soviet Union and Japan, something that was undesirable from Moscow's perspective at that point in time.

According to this version of events, as early as the beginning of 1936, Mao presented Zhang with his model plan for northwest China, by which the Chinese Communists and Moscow would help Zhang gain independence for the region, thus bringing the northern regions (Beijing and Manchuria) back under the control of the Young Marshal, who would serve as president of the entire area. This would effectively divide China into two – the northwestern regions and the remainder of the country. Zhang had a strong interest in the realization of this plan and, to this end, was even willing to join the ranks of the Communist Party. However, the Soviet Union ignored Chinese sovereignty and, at the end of March 1936, signed a mutual agreement with Mongolia, thus finally disconnecting this territory from the Chinese hinterland. There was no possibility of implementing the plan that sought to instate Zhang as an independent ruler of the north. Only one option remained: that Chiang Kai-shek himself would prove capable of securing direct Soviet assistance. The Soviets had an interest in cooperation between Zhang and Chiang Kai-shek, which they felt could yield the desirable struggle against the Japanese.

In the review it was argued that the Chinese Communists prevented Zhang from seeing the overall picture, concealing their true position and the desirable policy from Moscow's perspective, and hence misleading the rebel leader. They operated in contradictory channels and consistently misled Zhang. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when Zhou Enlai spoke to Zhang as events unfolded in Xi'an and warned him against trusting the Generalissimo, Zhang looked at his friend and remarked dryly, 'From what I have learned, the Communists are the last ones who can be trusted!'

Zhang's anger at the Communists was not a transient emotion. When Jung Chang and Jon Halliday interviewed him in 1993, fifty-seven years after the events, they reported that his anger had not subsided.

In the meantime, Soong Meiling was making her way to Xi'an – not with her brother-in-law, Kong, who was serving as Chiang Kai-shek's deputy and could not make the journey, but with her own brother, Song Ziwen (known in the West as T. V. Soong). Before leaving for Xi'an, Soong Meiling asked one of Chiang Kai-shek's senior aides, an officer with the rank of general who had just been released by the rebels and had reached Nanjing, to accompany her. However, the general's wife was fiercely opposed to the request as she considered her husband's life to have been spared by a miracle. The leader's wife was adamant. 'I am not asking anyone to make a sacrifice that I myself would not make,' she said. 'And after all, as a woman, I am implicating myself more than your husband! He is a military man and his life belongs to the nation. As the wife of a high-ranking officer, you must prove that you are worthy of him, and not prevent his departure.' With tears in her eyes, the general's wife watched as her husband joined the entourage. Soong departed with her brother, the general, and with the aide and advisor, Henry Donald, who had managed to leave Xi'an and met them along the way.

At Luoyang Airport, on their way to Xi'an, Soong Meiling noticed Nationalist air force planes ready to launch sorties against Xi'an. She immediately summoned the commander of the base and ordered him in no uncertain terms to refrain from flying his planes near Xi'an or from threatening the city before he received express and direct commands from her husband, the supreme commander of the armed forces. Since Chiang had been kidnapped, Soong was concerned not only that Xi'an would be attacked, endangering her husband's life, but that his orders would not be honored by the government in Nanjing, which might take the position that these were dictated by the rebels. The personal order she gave to the commander of the airbase in Luoyang was intended to guarantee that even if he received an explicit order from Nanjing to act against the rebels in Xi'an, he would refrain from carrying it out.

Soong Meiling and her entourage arrived in Xi'an on 22 December. She had spent much time prevaricating about how she should act when she came face to face with the two rebel generals responsible for her husband's life. She felt that his fate would be determined in no small measure by her attitude and comportment, and vowed to remain calm even if her 'hosts' were discourteous towards her. As the plane circled above the airfield in Xi'an, she and her companions could not discern any particular preparations for their arrival. They wondered whether the rebels had received

notification of their impending arrival, and the pilot was ordered to circle above the airfield several times in order to alert the rebel army to their landing. During these tense minutes, Soong handed Donald her personal pistol and ordered him in the strictest possible terms to shoot and kill her if the rebel forces acted with any violence towards her.

After some minutes the pilot was ordered to land. The door of the plane opened, a ramp was drawn up and Zhang Xueliang climbed up with difficulty. He was visibly tired but perhaps more than that – embarrassed and ashamed of himself. He had known Soong Meiling for many years – since 1925, when she was 27, and he held profound feelings towards this beautiful and courageous woman. According to Soong, she greeted her friend naturally as they would have done in the past, as though nothing had happened since their last meeting. She casually asked that his guards refrain from searching her personal belongings – a request that was intended primarily to set limits and give prominence to her status. 'Madam', Zhang responded in a tone close to apology, 'it would never have occurred to me to do such a thing!' A woman of Soong Meileng's status would not accept any slight on landing in the ancient capital of Xi'an; she was always a leader and a commander.

As they spoke, Yang Hucheng approached slowly. He, too, was visibly disturbed and tense; the meeting was no easy matter for him either. It was one thing to command armies, fight, concoct plots and deal with changing circumstances. But it was a completely different matter to be required to stand before the charismatic wife of the Generalissimo. Within a few minutes the two generals seemed visibly calmer, thanks to the relaxed and almost family-like atmosphere that China's First Lady managed to create in the encounter.

After the entourage arrived at Zhang Xueliang's residence, Zhang asked Madam Chiang whether she wished to visit her husband immediately or preferred to rest briefly. In a move that revealed her astuteness and *savoir faire*, she made it clear that she was in no particular hurry. She would gladly take a little tea before they continued; there was no rush. In her own way, Soong Meiling managed to cast an air of relative calm over the encounter, and to suggest to the rebel leaders that, as gentlemen, she trusted them and had no concerns about placing her fate in their hands and remaining in their company. As she later recalled, she found herself thinking about the leaders of government in Nanjing who had warned her against daring to fly to Xi'an. Though confident and experienced men, they had been convinced that the journey would end in disappointment: she would not see her husband, she would be humiliated and she would even be taken hostage.

At this early point in their meeting Zhang was at pains to explain his actions to Soong. As he had stated many times before, he emphasized that he was not interested in territory or money. However, Soong declined to enter into a discussion about these matters with him or to probe him on his motives. She was forthright and succinct, asking that Chiang be permitted to leave Xi'an and travel to Nanjing. Zhang responded that in principle he was willing to meet her request. However, due to the importance of the matter he was obliged to consult with his colleagues. By this he meant not only Yang Hucheng, but also the senior Communist representative, Zhou Enlai, with whom he was in contact. Soong recognized the constraints that he faced and stated her willingness to meet with anyone necessary in order to advance her objective.

Over the following two days, Soong indeed met with Zhou Enlai several times. At their last meeting, Soong clarified the point that she supported the idea of a cease-fire between the rival factions. 'After all', she said, 'we are the children of the "Yellow Emperor" Huangdi;[2] how can we fight one another?'

The Generalissimo was being held at a location close to Zhang's residence. After a short break, Soong walked to the detention room, passing by armed guards. When Chiang saw his wife, he admonished her, 'Why did you come here? You've walked into the lion's mouth!' He shook his head forcefully and tears fell from his eyes. 'I came to see you,' she replied simply and naturally, as if nothing was wrong. Soong managed to conceal any sense of agitation or danger. She was disturbed by her husband's condition: he was pale and was suffering from a back injury and his arms and legs were also bruised and injured. Despite this, she managed to retain a calm composure and restrain herself.

'Although I begged you not to come, I felt that I could not prevent your coming,' Chiang told his wife. Chiang had converted to Christianity and been baptized some years earlier under the influence of Soong, who was a devout Methodist. He now informed her that the very same morning he had opened the New Testament and, on the first page that fell open, read of all the good that can be expected from woman. Chiang was referring to the Gospel according to Matthew (1:18–23).[3] These comments were of the utmost importance to Soong. She appreciated her husband's serious and faithful attitude and his familiarity with the New Testament. Moreover, the comments were made on Christmas Eve. His mention of the Mother of God certainly came at the right time and place. It is possible that Chiang chose to mention these matters out of gratitude to his wife.

Their conversation then moved on to his present circumstances. Chiang begged his wife not to dare to pressure him to sign any document

or agreement while he was still in detention. He repeatedly stressed his willingness to die for the homeland, while Soong reiterated that her sole concern was not for his personal good, but for a national incident that could bring disaster on every person in China, adult and child alike. 'To imprison you is to cut off the children of China from their father,' she added with pathos. 'When it was mistakenly reported that you had been killed during the rebellion, many soldiers took their own lives. Please, then, do not talk of sacrificing your life for your homeland. For the sake of the homeland, you must live! Take comfort in the fact that God is with us, and I am here by your side to share a common fate with you and even to die with you, if that is God's will.'

Soong went on to offer her analysis of the situation, expressing her opinion that the rebels had already realized that they had made a grave error. She expressed her hope that a solution could be found. 'We must only be cautious and patient,' she said. She recited a verse from the Psalms to him until he fell into a deep sleep.

Soong Meiling believed that the crisis – which had occurred in Xi'an, the city that she called the cradle of Chinese culture – might become an eternal curse if it had a negative denouement. She felt that anarchy could break out if the Generalissimo were not released in a strong position, perhaps even stronger than before the crisis. She feared civil war and its expansion into the heart of China, and the affiliation of the northwestern forces of Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng with those seeking to displace the Nationalist government. The Japanese would then be able to take advantage of this disarray, destroying China.

Soong met again with Zhang Xueliang, repeating her warning that his actions could lead to disaster. She even scolded him and asserted that he would be wrong to delude himself that the citizens of China would support his approach. 'You have embroiled the nation in an intolerable tempest. The only important question now is how to get out of it. Had you consulted me', she added, 'I would have informed you that you could never get what you want from the leader by force.'

Soong was surprised by the Young Marshal's reply: 'Had you been here, things would not have transpired as they did.' She did not respond, but her face betrayed a faint sense of satisfaction. Zhang expressed his regret that Chiang had refused to cooperate with him and his fellow rebels, emphasizing that he had done what he did for the sake of the people and the nation. He asked Soong Meiling to try to persuade the Generalissimo to quell his fury. 'We do not want him to sign any document,' he said. 'We are not seeking any money, nor control of any territory.'

'Then you must release the leader immediately and without condition!' Soong responded. If any progress is to be made, she pointed out, the approach must be moderate and coordinated.

Zhang repeated his position. He seemed to the leader's wife to have the air of a chastised child. He complained to Soong that whenever he tried to speak to Chiang, he hushed him up. 'You do not understand the Generalissimo', Soong explained, 'he only scolds those he trusts. You said several times that you regard him as a father, and he took you at your word.'

Zhang again emphasized that he had a great esteem for Soong Meiling:

> People see you as the heart and soul of the nation. You can certainly help calm this commotion so that the Generalissimo may leave Xi'an soon. We want him to leave here intact and unharmed, and we have no intention of interfering in his work and health. He is our leader and we must follow him. All we seek is to explain our ideas to him.

The conversation moved on to the subject of patriotic self-sacrifice. Soong urged Zhang to seek spiritual guidance, as she herself had done. Though she was alluding to Christian religious guidance, her comments also carried an overtone of traditional Confucian thought. She explained that Zhang's action had undermined the order and decency that were the foundation of national unity. She claimed that it was divine providence that had kept her husband alive on the fateful and rash night of 12 December, as he fled from his captors and climbed the mountain. 'It was only thanks to a miracle that he did not die of pneumonia or from one of the bullets that flew around him,' she said.

Soong went on to implore Zhang to do everything possible to secure her husband's immediate release. He replied that he must consult his colleagues before taking any step. Soong waited impatiently and, as midnight drew near, telephoned the Young Marshal to ask him whether he had reached a decision. He did not express anger at being disturbed at such a late hour, but explained that he had no news. He was willing to release the leader, but his colleagues were unwilling to do so and accused him of becoming embroiled in undesirable negotiations. His friendship with Soong and her brother might offer him some guarantee of safety, but what would happen then? It was clear that the struggle was becoming, at least in part, personal in nature. Soong was surely pleased with the conversation; she was moving rapidly towards her objective.

Despite the strain and unusual circumstances, Soong Meiling managed to steer the events. She and her companions would take walks along the snow-covered paths around the accommodation that had been allocated to them, in an effort to release the tremendous tension caused by the events. Accompanied by her brother, she occasionally met with the rebels. Alongside her discussions with Zhang, she attempted to persuade her husband to submit to something: to retreat or make at least the smallest of steps in order to enable his captors to withdraw some of their demands while saving face. For example, she proposed that the leader might issue a declaration stating that he was ordering the end of the civil war and the adoption of a more tolerant attitude towards the concept of national salvation.

She gradually sensed that she had managed to divide the rebel camp. While Zhang Xueliang had adopted a moderate stance, wanting the immediate release of the Generalissimo, Yang Hucheng and his supporters adhered to their tough line and declined to join the 'intimate coalition' forged by Soong Meiling. They were disappointed to realize just how close their ally had become to Madam Soong and her brother. For a while, Soong feared that Zhang would eventually be arrested by Yang's forces, along with her brother and herself. She later testified that during this difficult period, Zhang cooperated fully with her. He reiterated that only Chiang Kai-shek could pull China out of the crisis it now faced. When he visited the Generalissimo he spoke to him very gently. Even his criticism of the government seemed to have become somewhat muted.

In all of her conversations with Zhang, Madam Chiang reminded him that the leader of a vast and heavily populated country such as China, with its rich and long history, must be astute and plan his moves carefully and moderately. He should not march too far ahead of the crowd, and his ideas must be broadly in-line with those of the general public. Her comments alluded to the difficulty faced by the leader, who was forced to maneuver between the two enemies of his regime – the Japanese and the Communists. If he adopted Zhang Xueliang's recommendation in its entirety, forming an alliance with the Communists in order to wage war on the Japanese, his standing might be diminished in his domestic power base: the leading capitalists and landowners who viewed the Communists as the main threat to their status. Soong's comments were hardly new, but this was, perhaps, the first time that Zhang had heard them presented in a personal and even intimate tone.

Chiang Kai-shek's passivity was particularly notable against the background of his wife's energetic efforts. He became used to others negotiating over his fate, and did not play his usual role of leader

and guide during this period. His wife was encouraged by the fact that the Communists had not interfered in the negotiations. She sensed that they had no interest in Chiang Kai-shek's protracted imprisonment; indeed, she realized that behind the scenes they were urging his immediate release. However, this realization made no difference at all to her underlying conviction that the Communists were enemies bent on destroying the nation.

The imminent approach of Christmas played an important role in the dynamics of the negotiations. As a devout Christian, Madam Chiang saw a message of hope in the impending festival. She felt a need to prove that Christmas was indeed a time of good tidings and that the Savior's will was going to prevail. This theme was raised repeatedly in her protracted and even friendly discussions with Zhang Xueliang. Using impassioned Christian rhetoric, she attempted to persuade the Young Marshal that he had an obligation to release her husband before the festival began. She explained that this would be a special Christmas gift to the Chinese nation – a gift of a spiritual and religious character. She did not hesitate to imply that the entire nation was involved in this matter in her efforts to employ every possible technique in order to secure her objective. From the standpoint of the general Chinese public, of course, the principal concern was the fate of the leader; the religious Christian aspect was of minor significance. Then, as now, the number of Christians in China was extremely small. Nevertheless, in modern times the Gregorian calendar had a daily role in ordinary life, and to this extent the date of Chiang's release was not insignificant.

Soong continued her efforts to persuade Zhang, and her efforts appeared to have been successful and to have led to a surprising turn of events. If this were true, it cast an interesting light on Zhang; if it were untrue, then it cast a highly unflattering light on Madam Chiang herself, who made a great effort to ensure that the story was published in the *New York Times* shortly after the events.

According to Soong Meiling, Zhang was so moved by her request to release her husband immediately that he hinted that he would be willing to act against the wishes of his friend and fellow rebel, Yang Hucheng. His plan, Soong claimed, was to send her to Nanjing on the pretext of continuing the negotiations with senior government officials. In the meantime, the Generalissimo would be disguised and smuggled out of Xi'an to a point close to the government forces, and thereafter on to Luoyang. Soong flatly rejected this proposal, fearing that such a long car journey under the proposed conditions would damage her husband's health. More importantly, she believed that this was an unfitting way

for the leader to reach the capital. From her perspective, Zhang had no alternative but to convince his colleagues to release the leader with all due dignity.

Soong continued her efforts to secure Chiang's release, aware that time was running out. Her close acquaintance with the leaders in Nanjing led her to fear that they might launch a major offensive against Xi'an at any moment. Such an attack could well have led to her own death, as well as that of her husband. The only acceptable course, from her point of view, was that of remorse. The rebels would publicly express their regret for their actions and would subsequently be pardoned by the Generalissimo, saving their lives. This would also save the nation and, no less importantly, the leader's dignity and authority would be restored.

When she came to visit her husband on Christmas morning, Chiang Kai-shek greeted her and wished her a Merry Christmas. For the first time, they were forced to mark the festival without the traditional Christmas tree in their home. Throughout this period, Madam Chiang's brother, Soong Ziwen, held discussions with Yang Hucheng, although Soong Meiling later claimed that she had no knowledge of these talks. One day, Soong Ziwen arrived hastily and announced that the rebels had agreed to let Chiang travel to Luoyang. Zhang himself explained that an agreement had indeed been reached and approved by Yang. However, he added, the agreement was very fragile; senior officers in Yang Hucheng's camp might at the last moment attempt to prevent the couple from leaving. He suggested that they depart in secret, without their entourage.

The biggest surprise was Zhang's demand to join the couple as they left Xi'an, contrary to the express wishes of the Generalissimo himself. Zhang had reached this decision several days earlier. He explained (in a telegram to the correspondent of the London *Times* that was withheld by the authorities in Nanjing and only reached its destination several weeks later) that he and his fellow rebels had agreed that he should take responsibility for what had happened and explain his motives and role in Chang's abduction to Nanjing. From Zhang's perspective, although the events in Xi'an certainly had mutinous overtones, they did not amount to a full-fledged rebellion, since the action was not directed against the honor or authority of the leader. These comments, which reflected trust in the leader and were unprecedented in the history of Chinese rebellions, convinced the Generalissimo to acquiesce to Zhang's request to join in the journey out of Xi'an.

The *Times* journalist, James M. Bertram, succinctly noted that Zhang realized at some stage that it was pointless to endanger the Chinese

nation and drag it into a 'civil war in order to stop a civil war'. In other words, there was no justification to provoke a war between the rebels and government forces in the hope that this would end the conflict between the Communists and government forces. In the context of Chinese tradition, Zhang declined to follow the idiom 'Break but never bend', and took the opposite approach 'Bend but do not break; be like a willow.'

Yang Hucheng came to the leader's residence. The meeting, which Soong and Zhang also attended, focused on discussing the events that had unfolded and on possible ways to bring the crisis to a close. As the meeting began, the two rebel generals stood to attention before their commander, as in days gone past. The remainder of the encounter was friendly and even warm. Soong later wrote that the meeting followed the model of erecting a building: Donald laid the foundations, her brother built the pillars and walls, and she completed the roof.

The imprisonment of Chiang Kai-shek had sent shockwaves throughout China and international diplomatic circles. However, the incident was not regarded as a revolution or a popular uprising. Chiang Kai-shek had not lost his status as had Czar Nikolai after the Russian Revolution of 1917 or Napoleon after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Chiang's influence remained intact despite his capture and he continued to have a special aura about him. He was still a popular and authoritative figure both among his associates and among the general public. Even those who criticized him acknowledged his contribution over the years and recognized the importance of his potential role in the looming battle against the Japanese. The rebels' hope that Chiang's imprisonment would lead to a decline in his popularity and a weakening of the Mandate of Heaven he was believed to hold, with the political and practical ramifications this would bring, proved groundless. It was now apparent that the success of the struggle against the Japanese depended on Chiang; to harm him would be tantamount to exacerbating the civil war, aiding the Japanese and hastening China's subjugation to the foreign invaders.

As time passed and Chiang remained their prisoner, the rebels faced a worsening dilemma: should they release him or not? They gradually came to the conclusion that if Chiang agreed to a cease-fire with the Communists and declared that the main effort would be the struggle against the Japanese, he should be allowed to travel to Nanjing. From the capital he would be able to lead the national and international campaign against the enemy. However, due to concerns at the possible reaction of the group led by He Yingqin, which was opposed to any

compromise, five preconditions were presented as a requirement for entering into negotiations with the government representatives:

1. The internal fighting would halt immediately and the government forces would leave Tongguan, the base from which they were threatening the rebels, a strategic passage between the provinces of Shanxi, Shaanxi and Henan.
2. The Nationalist leadership would demand support for Zhang Xueliang and the goal of liberating the homeland from occupation.
3. Song Ziwen (T. V. Soong, the brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek) would be responsible for an interim government.
4. A united national front would be formed to fight the Japanese.
5. All political prisoners would be released and extensive propaganda activities would be undertaken in support of the new policy.

The negotiations, in which Zhou Enlai was a full participant, eventually led to the outline of an agreement. The government, under Kong Xiangxi, would sideline the supporters of the 'soft' stance towards the Japanese, adopt the new policy and release the rebel supporters from prison. It was also promised that the campaign against the Communists would be halted and that they would be eligible for financial support, provided that the Red Army was reorganized and accepted the authority of the Nationalist government. Several parties would join the broad-based Front for National Salvation. In the international arena, relations with the Soviet Union, which supported the idea of the Front for National Salvation, would be strengthened, as would ties with France, Britain and the United States. It was promised that the Chinese Communist Party would maintain direct contacts with the Nanjing government.

On 24 December, a historic meeting took place between Zhou Enlai and Chiang Kai-shek. The two men had not met for a decade, since the time of the northern campaign to unify the country and the massacre of the Communists in 1927. Their relationship was complex. Zhou was among the union organizers in Shanghai before Chiang's troops entered the city. Through union organization, strikes and hard work, Zhou had managed to prepare the great city for the revolution led by Chiang. As outlined earlier, however, Chiang soon aligned himself with leading capitalists in the city and was on close terms with the local banks and power mongers, including leading criminals. Chiang had little interest in the social democratic and Socialist element represented on the left wing of his party, and he certainly had no time for the Communist platform. He suddenly turned on his erstwhile friends and began

eliminating them. Now that his path to Beijing seemed assured, he no longer needed them.

Zhou Enlai himself survived, but not before he was imprisoned and denounced. He managed to escape to Wuhan and participated in all the rebellions against the government in order to advance the Socialist revolution in which he believed. He would later reach the first soviet area established by the Communists in the southern province of Jiangxi and become one of the leaders of the movement. He held the position of political commissar of the Red Army and deputy chairperson of the Military Revolutionary Commission. The government offered an enormous reward for his capture. Now he faced his commander, comrade and greatest enemy, as if in a scene taken from the theater.

The Generalissimo was lying on his bed. When he saw the Communist leader enter the room, he sat up and invited his guest to sit beside him. Chiang looked older than his fifty years. He was exhausted and pale, and was unsightly without his false teeth. Zhou began by saying, 'We have not met for ten years. You look like an old man now. You are my commander from Huangpu [Whampoa, the military academy]. Listen to me: if you take action against the Japanese everyone will obey you.'

Chiang reiterated his conditions. He must maintain his strength and prestige as the leader of the nation, and he could not concede to the different items in his captors' demands. The implication was that the arrangement could not be reached without the mediation and involvement of Zhang Xueliang, the key figure in the crisis. Zhang steered the course for the eventual settlement between his own interests and the aspirations of the other parties – the Communists and both the camps in Nanjing. However, there was another force without whom no agreement could be reached: Zhang's friend and ally, Yang Hucheng. As already noted, Yang had hesitated throughout the crisis and had reservations about the proposal to free the leader. He doubted the sincerity of Chiang's promises. Would it not be better if he declared publicly, before his release, through a radio address to his people the nature and rationale of the agreement and his explicit commitments to the Xi'an rebels?

Eventually, Zhang Xueliang gathered together all those involved in the matter – his officers and supporters from the Dongbei Army and the supporters of Yang Hucheng. He informed them that Chiang was to be released and that he would accompany the leader to the capital. He added that while he was endangering himself through this initiative, he was obliged to act as a disciplined soldier.

Zhang apparently felt obliged to observe a strict ethical and cultural code. Even in the unprecedented and almost surrealistic circumstances pertaining in China at the time, he could not countenance any deviation

from the Confucian principle that required him, as a subject, to give due respect to his ruler, the leader of the nation. He explained to his supporters that while he had profound disagreements with Chiang, 'I am telling you now not to say or do anything irresponsible. The cause we are struggling for is a grave one that touches on the fate of the entire world. There must be no mistakes!'

It would naturally be wrong to take Zhang's declarations at face value. The course of action he chose must also have reflected a cool and pragmatic assessment of the situation. Cynics might argue that at the complex junction at which Zhang found himself, cooperation with Chiang would have provided at least a partial guarantee of his own safety.

Some of the participants at the meeting asked Zhang what guarantees Chiang had given for the rebels' safety and who could promise that he would indeed meet his commitments after he was released. These concerns were completely understandable, particularly given that He Yingqin, the leading military authority in Nanjing, did not consider himself bound by the agreement reached in Xi'an. In a surprising response, however, Zhang challenged the cynics: 'What guarantee do you want?'

Zhang told Yang Hucheng: 'We have no alternative but to release Chiang, because "if the night is long, you dream more dreams". I intend to accompany Chiang and I expect to return in a few days.' He asked Yang to stand in for him as the commander of the forces in Xi'an and proposed that if, for any reason, he failed to return to Xi'an, Yang was to continue to command the entire Manchurian Army. With hindsight, Zhang's prophecy proved fateful. Despite his doubts about the agreement, Yang showed himself to be a loyal friend.

Zhang's course of action was based on practical motives. He realized that as long as the leader was imprisoned by the rebels, humiliated and isolated, the underlying aim of the rebellion could not be achieved. Chiang could only advance the rebels' objectives and lead the struggle against the Japanese if he were released and his prestige restored; in captivity he was useless. Only as a free man surrounded by an aura of power could he advance the national cause. Only he could rally all the sections of the divided nation and prepare the forces for an all-out attack on Japan.

Chiang did not sign the document presented to him by Zhang and Yang in Xi'an, but he promised that he would indeed change the national priorities and abandon the war against the Communists in order to concentrate on fighting the Japanese foe. This commitment was mentioned, for example, by Mao Zedong in a declaration issued on 28 December 1936. It is also reflected in a documentary film about Zhang produced in 2005 in Jinan, Shandong, in China. Although there

is no firm evidence to support this version, it must be admitted that this theory has gained some credence in certain circles in China and elsewhere. Given the uncertainty as to the actual facts, perhaps this hypothesis provided a succinct, rational and comprehensible justification for Zhang's surprising decision to release the captive leader. His actual motives for doing so, however, were probably far more complex and intricate. It is difficult to know whether he actually believed that Chiang's comments implied any willingness to follow the course demanded by his captors. If he did believe this, he never mentioned it.

Yang Hucheng, Zhang's co-conspirator, also played a role in his colleague's decision to release Chiang, albeit perhaps a negative one. From the moment that Chiang was held captive, it became apparent that Yang could not have the role of planning the future course of events. He was incapable of delineating a long-term path or of anticipating diverse scenarios and alternatives. How was he to act when the leader was held like a trapped bird gaping from its cage, while the world was embroiled in a storm following his detention – the Communists urging the captors to extract themselves from the upheaval, while the government threatened to bomb the rebel headquarters without consideration for Chiang's fate? After all, Minister of War He Yingqin had already issued the order to besiege the area controlled by the rebels. He was determined to destroy them come what may. Under such circumstances, perhaps the only course of action was indeed to release the leader.

Moreover, the Communists – and their chief spokesman, Zhou Enlai – believed that the rebels' passivity and inability to make a daring and decisive move was eroding their achievements and impairing the desired strategic objective. Their preference was that Chiang Kai-shek should be allowed to lead the nation in its struggle – a position strengthened by the fact that Stalin and the Comintern, for their own reasons, also wished to see Chiang Kai-shek at the head of the Chinese regime.

From Moscow's perspective, the 'compromise' reached in Xi'an was welcome and opportune. The show of force by Zhang and Yang had served its purpose – Chiang had softened his harsh approach towards the Communists, and a new political reality emerged in China that focused all of the Nationalist forces on the struggle against the Japanese. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek – potentially a strong ally of the Soviet Union – remained in power. In the short term, it was hoped that Chiang would serve as an instrument for advancing Soviet military and political interests. In the long term, and in ideological and strategic terms, the expectation was that he would play a historic role in consolidating the rising bourgeoisie in China. According to Marxist–Leninist theory, this

was an essential stage in the development of the Socialist revolution in an agrarian country, as China then was.

Under these complex circumstances, the rebels were therefore inclined to listen to the voice urging the release of the leader. Relations between the two rebel generals and Zhou were closer than ever before. Zhang and Zhou had already become particularly close, as the following story illustrates.

While the armies of Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng were still fighting the Communists, Zhang, a passionate lover of flying, would go out on sporadic sorties, launching attacks against Communist bases. In his own private plane, an American pilot at his side, he would drop bombs on selected targets. In one such foray, he observed a large Communist force and, as usual, released one of the bombs. The Communists were familiar with his airplane. Their forces responded with anti-aircraft fire, and a bullet penetrated Zhang's cockpit, between his own seat and that of the pilot. Miraculously, neither man was injured. This story now cropped up in conversation in Xi'an. 'You almost killed me with your bombing attacks,' Zhou Enlai commented. The Young Marshal replied: 'And you almost killed me with your anti-aircraft guns.'

To all this we must also add the influence of Madam Chiang Kai-shek, Soong Meiling, in encouraging the rebel leader to back down. Her influence over Zhang was almost abnormal. It would be wrong to describe the relationship as one of love; they were bound by profound and subtle emotions. Enchanted by Soong, Zhang had a deep and abiding admiration for her. He took the secret of their relationship with him to his grave, seven decades later.

An additional aspect, and again one that is difficult to unravel, is the atavistic dimension: the imperatives and qualities of previous generations with which their descendants are 'programmed'. Each culture acts in this way, binding those who come to follow such rules according to a 'code of life'. In the case of China, the traditional political culture imposed an unwritten command on every Chinese person of Zhang's generation: obey the leader, for he has supreme authority. Zhang did not act according to this code, and this was unforgivable. Only after the event, perhaps, did the rebels realize this fact. In the Chinese ethos, as also illustrated in the case of the unsuccessful attempt by the Taiping rebels in the mid-nineteenth century, the failure to overthrow a dynasty, displace the ruling emperor and install an alternative regime actually served to strengthen the right of the existing establishment. The primeval permit does not pass to one who has tried and failed.

5
The Wheel Turns, 1936–7

This chapter deals with the events that occurred at the end of 1936, between 25 December – Christmas – and 31 December – New Year's Eve – the night that Chiang Kai-shek was released from captivity in Xi'an.

* * *

On 25 December 1936 at 3 p.m., two vehicles left the compound where Chiang Kai-shek had been held. The compound was buzzing with excitement, tension and political and military intrigue. In one vehicle, Chiang Kai-shek and his wife were sitting in the back seat, while Zhang Xueliang sat next to the driver. In those particular circumstances, the seating order had a clear significance and it signaled that the tables had turned and Chiang was once again the commander. The other vehicle carried Yang Hucheng, T. V. Soong and Henry Donald. They left secretly, and even Zhou Enlai, who was party to the most delicate diplomatic contacts throughout, knew nothing about these events. The two cars passed the houses of Xi'an on the way to the airport.

Ironically, the airport was full of people at the time because of the impending arrival of Fu Zuoyi, a senior commander in the Nationalist Army (who in 1949 peacefully surrendered Beijing to the Communists and eventually defected to their ranks). Fu was flying to Xi'an especially to visit the Generalissimo. Chiang Kai-shek waited, nervous and tense, with no one knowing that he was so close, afraid of last-minute developments that could delay his release. As if he were trying to prevent any delay or cancellation in the plan, he repeatedly promised the Young Marshal that he would live up to all the conditions that they had agreed on. 'If I do not fulfill the conditions', he said, 'you are free not to see me as your leader!' He repeated his promise that the army would

leave Tongguan, that internal fighting would stop and that all forces would unite to fight the joint enemy. Moreover, he promised to initiate government reforms and that an anti-Japanese policy would be duly encouraged. In addition, there would be a reorganization of foreign policy in which China would ally itself with all the countries that supported its approach; the patriotic Communists in Shanghai would be freed; and, of course, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng would take command of the area in which the city of Xi'an was located.

Moreover, Chiang admitted that he had erred by starting a war against the Communists while the country was in danger, but at the same time demanded that his adversary admit his own mistakes. Before the two boarded the plane, Zhang left Yang – who had remained in Xi'an – written instructions in the spirit of what he had told him earlier. Yang was supposed to be in charge of all of the forces in the Xi'an area and serve as his representative for all purposes.

At 4 o'clock, the two cars stopped next to Zhang's giant American airplane that was waiting on the runway. The Generalissimo and his wife, Zhang, Donald and T. V. Soong got onto the gangway, the doors closed and the plane took off without further delay to its destination, the city of Luoyang. As opposed to what the leader's wife and members of the government said later, there was no ceremony at the airfield nor were any speeches made. There was no time for that. Nor did the atmosphere, heavy with mutual suspicion, allow for such a pause. The Generalissimo said curtly to Yang Hucheng and a number of other functionaries who stayed behind, 'I recognize my mistakes. From the twelfth of the month up to today, responsibility for the internal conflict was yours, from now on it is mine. I do not want any more civil war in China.'

When it was learned that the Generalissimo and the Young Marshal had left Xi'an hastily and secretly, passions ran high in Zhang Xueliang's camp. His supporters were stunned. One of them wondered: 'Is this a dream?' Gao Chongmin, who was at the time running the staff meetings in the city, immediately stopped what he was doing and gave Zhou Enlai the information he had just received. Zhou, although surprised, came to his senses, inquired when the two leaders had left the city, asked for a car and started chasing after them. When he got to the airport, he discovered that he was too late.

A few minutes before six, the plane landed in Luoyang. There, far from Zhang Xueliang's power base, it was evident that a new conflict had broken out, and the characters returned to their original sizes. The dramatis personae had undergone a deep psychological change. Chiang Kai-shek

was a leader again, confident, alert, commanding and guiding. His tone changed radically. No longer whining, no longer moaning that he did not want to live because of his intolerable humiliation. The leader's beautiful, strong and authoritative wife stood by his side again, and would stand by him as a source of strength for the rest of his life.

One of the first things that Chiang did in Luoyang, a stopover on the way to Nanjing while the plane refueled and was checked, was to demand that the Young Marshal immediately release all of his men who were detained in Xi'an. From that moment on, the rebel was no longer in a position to dictate terms and make demands and was at the mercy of his teacher, his leader, whom he often regarded as a father.

That night, after receiving explicit instructions, Yang convened a meeting with his men. He consulted Zhou Enlai and other colleagues and they all agreed that there was no point in refusing orders from the Young Marshal who was being held, unofficially, by Chiang Kai-shek. The very next day, on 26 December, Yang went to the government army detainees, apologized to them for their detention and invited them to a large liberation party. A day later, the freed detainees boarded a plane that took them back to Nanjing. Thus ended one of the most important chapters in this historical event.

On landing in Nanjing, Zhang Xueliang was placed under close guard by internal security agents and military police. He was arrested and waited at the home of T. V. Soong for the Generalissimo's decision concerning him. From that moment on, Chiang-Kai-shek's government took both legal and political measures. Contrary to the spirit of his promises just a few days earlier, Chiang Kai-shek was determined to settle accounts with his former right-hand man, not only out of revenge, which definitely had a place in his decision-making process, but also in order to deter anyone who dared challenge his authority. He had a mission now and it was an all-out war against the Japanese, as he had promised Zhang, and to that end he had to take demonstrative action with a clear message of deterrence. Anyone who dared even consider the slightest act of defiance, criticism or action against the government and its leader would know that their fate was sealed. Indeed, the situation contained a cruel tragedy. It was clear that the more that the leader oppressed Zhang Xueliang, the more he humiliated him, the more his own glory would be restored. And only his renewed prestige and strengthened charisma could empower him to do what he had promised his captor. That was the ultimate significance of the great and unusual show of force in Xi'an. It was to signal the path that the Young Marshal's life would take in the next six decades.

He would have to pay a full and even excessive price for the sin that he had committed.

On his very first day in Nanjing, Zhang Xueliang wrote a letter to Chiang Kai-shek asking forgiveness for his actions. The letter was classic Chinese in its content and form. With typical humility, Zhang presented his own stubborn and supposedly incorrigible character, and explained that it was his character that had led him to commit the terrible crime against the ruler. He went on to explain that his awareness of the severity of his actions and his treachery led him to the decision to come to Nanjing and prove his loyalty to the government and its leader. In his letter, the Young Marshal indicated that he was prepared to accept the punishment he deserved. This way, his disgrace would be on public display and no one would dare copy him and contest the authority either of Chiang or of the government. If the lesson were learned, it would be for the good of the nation and for its fortitude. 'Think not of our personal relationship,' Zhang asked his judge, his former prisoner. 'Do what you must do – punish me!'

Chiang Kai-shek, in the meantime, sent a letter to his party, the Guomindang, and his government, explaining that since he too was at fault in the Xi'an Incident, disciplinary measures had to be taken against him as well. At his request, the Standing Committee of the Guomindang's Central Committee held a meeting about the incident on 29 December 1936, but it ended with no criticism of the leader, only praise for him and his conduct. Chiang was not pleased about that. In an act of protest, he immediately submitted his resignation as head of the Executive Yuan and of the Party's Military Commission. The next day, the authorized institutions gave him a one-month leave.

Meanwhile, the Party's Political Committee decided that Zhang Xueliang would be tried in accordance with martial law and that the tribunal's head judge would be Li Liejun. The other members would be Lu Zhonglin and Zhu Peide, who were appointed by the Party's Military Commission. Before the trial began, and contrary to proper legal procedures, Li Liejun met Chiang Kai-shek, who presented questions about the conduct of the trial. Li defined Zhang Xueliang's act as an act of mutiny, one that was meant to make him the supreme commander in the place of the legitimate commander, Chiang Kai-shek. However, he added that Zhang had regretted his actions and mentioned that he had even personally accompanied the leader back to the capital. Therefore, he said, he would be pleased if Chiang were tolerant of the rebel, forgave him, declined to punish him and released him. This, he stressed, was what several Chinese emperors had done before.

Chiang was cold and unappeased. Li then changed his tone and stated pointedly: 'I will act according to martial law!' Many years later, Li testified that Chiang told him that Zhang must not be freed and that it was merely a showcase trial. 'I was merely an actor playing the hero under instructions and orders,' he said.

At 10 a.m., on the last day of 1936, the Young Marshal's trial began. The information about what happened in the courtroom is based on Li Liejun's memoirs and court records. Zhang Xueliang looked confident and fearless. When asked whether he knew what his crime and punishment were, he answered in the negative. Then Li opened the ground forces' law book and read out to him several sections about mutiny and disloyalty to the homeland, repeatedly scolding him. 'How did you dare commit such crimes?' he asked angrily. Zhang replied quietly and directly. He explained that he admired Chiang, but added 'we are all patriots and we were sad to lose parts of the homeland to the Japanese and that there were so many traitors'. The patriots, he claimed, were suppressed with even greater force than the traitors, referring to those who actually accepted the Japanese invasion. 'Therefore, we had no choice but to express our views by actions. What we did in Xi'an was from our point of view the last resort to try to convince the leader to go in the right direction. Beyond that lofty goal, we had no ulterior motives. My men and I did not want to occupy any territory, we did not do it for money, we only wanted to see a fight against the Japanese! We believed that unless China defeated Japan, the problem of our exile from our homeland would never be resolved.'

When he was asked about his coming to Nanjing with Chiang and about the letter in which he wrote that he deserved a punishment, Zhang replied that he recognized the value of discipline and that disobedience could worsen the situation of the nation. The letter, he explained, was for Chiang Kai-shek's eyes only and was not meant to be made public. He did not mean to harm the leader that he so esteemed, which he even proved by returning with him to Nanjing. Again, he explained that he took full responsibility for the Xi'an Incident and its aftermath, and added that he really did deserve punishment. No, he replied to another question, he had no special personal request. Then he reiterated his position that the forces that support the national anti-Japanese campaign must be strengthened. As for his life and reputation, those meant nothing to him. He was willing to admit to his crime, even though the stand taken by himself and his colleagues was not wrong.

Judge Li cut him short and asked him: 'You threatened the supreme commander. Was that action dictated to you by someone or was it on your own initiative?'

'It was on my own initiative', replied Zhang, 'and I am prepared to take responsibility for it. Am I the sort of man who receives dictates? In 1913, you, Your Honor, led a rebellion against Yuan Shikai.[1] Was your action correct?'

'Yes!' replied Li.

'What I did in Xi'an', said Zhang, 'was actually an act of protest against the central government's arbitrary dictatorship.'

'How can you compare Yuan Shikai to Chiang Kai-shek?' Li cut off the defendant. 'That is nonsense! In Xi'an you dug your own grave.'

The second judge at the tribunal, Lu Zhonglin, who wanted to calm down the tone of the hearing, suggested at that stage of the proceedings that the court adjourn. When the trial resumed for a brief session, Zhang was asked a few more questions, which he answered briefly, and the judges then declared the hearings over. Zhang was asked to sign the court minutes, which were then sent without delay by Justice Li to Chiang Kai-shek for approval. The latter did not even bother to glance at them. Without saying a word, he handed Li a document prepared in advance with the help of the Party's Military Committee. It was Zhang's verdict, which Li was asked to read out in court without any amendments made to it.

The verdict detailed Zhang's crimes: abducting the leader and trying to force him to adopt a policy that he did not want and the fact that, because of the defendant, other people lost their lives or were arrested. Zhang was sentenced to ten years in prison. But that very same day, Chiang Kai-shek sent a letter to the members of his government, asking them to approve an immediate pardon for Zhang. It said that Zhang Xueliang had been misled during his action in Xi'an, and had since expressed total regret for what he had done. Here Chiang followed the tradition related to the *jian* (a remonstration intended to draw the ruler's attention to his subjects' distress). He accepted the subject's protest. Chiang was seemingly keeping his promise and ensuring the safety of the protester.

On 3 January 1937, T. V. Soong, Soong Meiling's brother who had accompanied her to Xi'an, told the members of the government that during the negotiations with Zhang Xueliang in Xi'an, he had guaranteed his safety as long as he repented for his actions and allowed the leader to leave for the capital. T. V. voiced his opinion that the Young Marshal had adhered to all the agreements. Moreover, he said, in retrospect it

turned out that he had no intention of hurting the leader. Considering those facts, T. V. suggested that the government approve the request for a pardon. And, indeed, the next day, the government decided to approve the request for a pardon and the sentence was canceled.

However, the government, undoubtedly with Chiang's orchestration, made a supposedly administrative–technical stipulation, which eventually proved to have deep historic significance: Zhang would remain under the Party Military Committee's close supervision and the civil rights stripped away from him would not be restored. The practical significance of the restriction was that from that moment onwards, Zhang was under protective detention. It was a cynical move, because under Chiang's orders he had supposedly been extracted from the verdict of the court-martial but was in the meanwhile placed under 'detention', of which no one could imagine its true nature or how long it would last.

Zhang felt that, without the intervention of Soong Meiling, Chiang would have ordered his execution. There is no evidence for that hypothesis, but it is clear that Zhang's very subjective feelings in this regard were of special significance. It is very likely that in the special relationship between them, Soong felt some sense of guilt because of the promise that she had given Zhang in Xi'an, largely through her mediation, which was not honored.

At a certain moment during all these events, Zhang concluded that his fate no longer depended on his active mutiny but on the contrary, on his repentance. He had to amend his ways, receive amnesty, repent and accept the sovereignty of the leader. The fact that Moscow (through the Comintern) had rejected his request to be accepted as a member of the Chinese Communist Party, a request of which the details came to light only after his death, apparently further heightened his awareness that he would receive no succor from the Communists, whether Chinese or Soviet. The release of the captive leader, therefore, and joining him in humility and surrender were supposed to secure his future.

From Moscow's point of view, the 'compromise' reached in Xi'an was welcome and convenient. The 'demonstration' staged by Zhang and Yang left its mark. Chiang changed his tough position against the Communists and a new political reality emerged in China, focusing all of the Nationalist forces on the fight against the Japanese. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek, who could serve as an important ally of the Soviet Union, remained in power. In the short term, he was supposed to be an instrument to advance its military and political goals; and in the strategic–ideological long term, he had a historical role as the consolidator of the Chinese national leadership. After all, dialectically, that

leadership headed by the bourgeoisie was a condition for the success of a Socialist revolution.

From Chiang's point of view, considering the fact that equipment, weapons and ammunition from Germany were late in arriving, Japan and Nazi Germany were growing closer, and Tokyo was pressuring Berlin to stop supplying China with official and unofficial aid, Moscow's sympathy (and possibly aid) appeared to be vital.

6
A General as a Drifting Leaf, 1937–46

In July 1937, full-scale war broke out between the invading Japanese forces and the Chinese Nationalist Army. Beijing was conquered within the month, Shanghai was besieged and subsequently fell, and in early December the Japanese entered the capital, Nanjing. Upon entering the city, they massacred the citizens, killing over 200,000 men, women and children, and brutally raped about 20,000 women. By the end of 1937, the Japanese occupied most of northern China. A year later, Japanese forces pushed south, taking key cities along the Chinese coastline and the large city, Guangzhou (Canton), capital of the south.

After desperate campaigns and attempts to halt the advance of the Japanese forces, the Nationalist government headed by Chiang Kai-shek was gradually forced to retreat westwards, finally establishing its seat in Chongqing, further up the reaches of the Yangzi River. About one third of the Chinese land mass was under foreign occupation. Free China was under siege and supplies reached the citizens in roundabout ways, either via Vietnam and Burma, until they, too, succumbed to the Japanese, or by land and air via India.

Politically, the Nationalist government was divided and unstable. Two competing governments were created in two different capitals, displaying two alternative models to the rule of Chiang Kai-shek. In Nanjing, the Japanese created a puppet state headed by Wang Jingwei, formerly among the leaders of the Guomindang. This government touted the ideal of 'Asia for the Asians', which, if realized, was supposed to create prosperity in the region under Tokyo's leadership. The Communists, on the other hand, were formulating a radical model with ever-increasing confidence in the northern soviet that they had created around their capital of Yan'an. According to their slogans, this model was supposed to sweep across the whole of the Chinese citizenry and release them from the burden of imperialism and the slavery and impoverishment of feudalism.

Crucial changes were taking place in greater Asia, in Europe and in the international arena at large. The Sino-Japanese War merged with the war that broke out in Europe in 1939 and spread, drawing in Soviet Russia and the United States in 1941. There was no longer any doubt as to the fact that this war had now become international.

The Sino-Japanese War ended after eight years, in August 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Japan to the Allies after nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In retrospect, it turned out that it was not possible to call the initial armed conflicts between the Chinese forces and the Japanese expeditionary force mere 'incidents' – the 'Manchurian Incident' of 1931 and then the 'China Incident' of 1937, the latter being the major Japanese attack on China – nor was it possible to explain the Japanese push south of the Great Wall as an attempt to recapture the Manchurian glory of old.[1] *This war took place in China proper.*

From 1946 onwards, both the vanquished and the victor began trying to recover and rebuild after the destruction and desolation caused by the war. However, local disputes, wars of liberation and civil wars continually broke out and took their toll. Forces of change tried again and again to gain another piece of land, have another accomplishment to compensate for the price paid in blood. As the war in the Pacific and in East and Southeast Asia came to an end, a civil war broke out between the Nationalist government forces and the Communists, the latter having spent the previous two decades strengthening their position among the agrarian population of China's outlying regions.

Throughout this entire period, the Young Marshal was kept in 'mobile custody', detainment and under house arrest.

* * *

On 1 January 1937, in the midst of Zhang's trial, Yang Hucheng lashed out at the government for taking his friend into custody and imposing strict conditions on him while he was held. After the trial, when it became known that the sentence had been replaced by the strange 'pardon', it was clear that Zhang's liberty had been taken away for an indeterminate period. From Yang's point of view, this was a clear provocation. There was talk of national reconciliation, but how was this supposed to take place without restoring Zhang's civil liberties and without him being permitted to return to Xi'an to resume command of his forces? And as though that were not enough, the promises made in Xi'an were not kept and the government army was pushing west and threatening the rebels and their supporters.

In those early days of January 1937, Chiang Kai-shek was in the process of carrying out his intention to wipe out the Dongbei Army, Zhang

Xueliang's Manchurian army. This army had been sent to the center of China, where it was separated from the rest of the government's army, and was intentionally worn down so that it no longer stood as a consolidated military unit in its own right. This move by the government had repercussions on the country's internal politics as well as within the army. Manchuria, an autonomous region with a special status, was being crushed not only by the Japanese but by the Chinese central government as well. Zhang was incarcerated, at the mercy of a wounded head of state unwilling to let him return to the region of his birth, even when this became possible. On 7 January, Chiang again commanded Zhang Xueliang to order Yang Hucheng to obey only the government's instructions, that is, to obey only Chiang's commands as the Generalissimo. Yang carried out these orders.

Zhang's imprisonment followed a well-established custom in China: his liberty was not taken from him in a regular prison. For the first few years he was in 'mobile' custody. The prisoner, along with his wardens and guards, was moved around on the detailed instructions of Chiang Kai-shek, who was usually not very far away from where Zhang was held. A few decades earlier, Dowager Empress Cixi had done the same when she arrested the young Guangxu Emperor whom she accused of instigating reforms in 1898. She made sure that he was always close to her court and under her constant supervision.

For about the first two weeks of Zhang's 'imprisonment', he stayed at the home of T. V. Soong in Nanjing. He was guarded by military police and members of the Military Committee of the Guomindang Party. Fifteen special agents under the command of Dai Li were charged with following Zhang's every move.[2] During this period, the Young Marshal continuously looked out of his window, almost all day and all night, and saw agents keeping close watch on him. Zhang was tense and constantly anxious. His mood deteriorated and he smoked heavily. Only Dai Li and some of his top agents were permitted into the room. Every so often, Zhang, his quarters and his belongings would be searched meticulously, including his underwear, to make sure that he did not possess any items that he was not permitted to have.

In January, Chiang Kai-shek left the capital and moved temporarily to his hometown of Xikou in the province of Zhejiang. His prisoner was soon brought along, and a special detachment of wardens led by Liu Yiguang was placed with him. He was kept in a guesthouse near a school in Xikou. Zhang became certain that his long period of hardship had finally come to an end and that he was at last calm; but he was mistaken: he had been designated a criminal. He was now to be transported

from one place to another. Liu and his family were destined to live with the Young Marshal for a very long time.

Several days after the new arrangements were put in place, Zhang was joined by his first wife, Yu Fengzhi, who remained imprisoned with him until the winter of 1939–40. Zhang, who, as was previously mentioned, had a vast fortune, met a great deal of the expenses that were involved in keeping him, which was also a Chinese custom. The authorities, it turned out, did not stop him from continuing to enjoy his financial assets. When he needed cash, he would sign a check for the American bank where he kept his account. Whenever the transfer of money was delayed, he would borrow from Dai Li. In China during the 1940s, this kind of prisoner–warden relationship was not considered out of line.

On 1 February 1937, a messenger on behalf of General Yang Hucheng arrived at the place where Zhang was being held prisoner. The two discussed Yang's position and several issues related to the situation that had come about. As for the chances of the Young Marshal's release, the messenger made it clear that despite all efforts to set Zhang free, Chiang Kai-shek refused to keep the promises that he had made in Xi'an when his own release from Zhang was impending. The messenger said that each time that the matter of Zhang's release was brought up, the Generalissimo would reiterate that his back had been hurt jumping off the wall of the compound where he had stayed in Xi'an, implying that the pains in his back were a national problem! If so, then, not only was the offense caused to Chiang by the way he had been treated in Xi'an now a stumbling block in Zhang's path to freedom, but so was the recurrence of the leader's physical pain. Chiang would mention again and again that Zhang Xueliang chose of his own free will to join him on his journey to Nanjing after his release from captivity, he had not forced him to do so. He said that Zhang himself had probably realized that he was not disciplined and educated enough, and thus chose to stay close to the leader to learn from him and improve his ways in his presence.

It then became all the clearer to Zhang that his confinement was proof of what would happen to anyone who hurt or opposed the leader. During the conversation with Yang's messenger, another, more pragmatic, consideration was discussed: that freeing Zhang would strengthen the last of the rebels under the leadership of Yang Hucheng. As the faction that refused to deal with those rebels had grown stronger within Chiang's party, despite the alliance between the government and the Communists, releasing Zhang might be perceived by many as a form of surrender.

The conversation with this messenger did not improve Zhang's mood, but it was he who tried to console his guest. 'Please tell Yang to have

patience, I may yet be freed,' he said. Zhang believed that once it became clear that the conflict with the Japanese was lasting longer than expected and that China's various factions were insufficiently coordinated in their struggle to repel the invaders, Zhang would be called on as a last resort. In the meanwhile, his lieutenants were to wait quietly. In fact they had been strictly obeying his orders to remain loyal to the government and follow its instructions. Although imprisoned, the Young Marshal was well informed about Chinese military and government tactics in the fight against the Japanese.

Zhang was also visited by Chiang Ching-kuo (Jiang Jingguo), the son of the Generalissimo, who returned from a long stay in the USSR. This turned out to be the first of many and increasingly regular meetings that took place between them, which brought the two very close together, and they became friends before long. This friendship, strange as it was, was the backbone of relations between the authorities and the Young Marshal. The friendship, with all its obvious inherent obstacles, had to survive another challenge, this being the highly strained relationship between the leader's son and his stepmother, Soong Meiling, the woman that Zhang admired.

On 19 September 1937, with the war by now raging against Japan, preparations were being made for the approaching autumn festival, the Chinese holiday of the moon. Liu, the main warden in charge of Zhang's security and needs, erected three tables for the feast. The festivity was almost a family event. Liu and his family took part in it together with the Zhangs, with whom they shared quarters and provisions. Zhang was in a sentimental mood during the meal and drank hard liquor and, against his own custom, talked endlessly. He summarized the turn of events that brought him to his confinement and mentioned his great financial means, and prophesied confusedly about his future and the future of the Chinese people.

He pondered about the future, saying out loud, 'I may be a prisoner, though I am known and famous all over the land and all over the world. When the Japanese conquer the land, I will be called to duty, to lead the nation to victory.' His boast was diluted in the fumes of his drink. His words were written down and handed over unaltered to Chiang Kai-shek. Three days later, the guesthouse where the prisoner was staying went up in flames seemingly inexplicably, and no water could be found to put out the fire, nor any firefighting equipment. The structure burned down entirely, leaving only embers behind. No evidence was found to indicate that there had been a conspiracy in the cause of the fire.

Zhang Xueliang and his wife were not harmed in the fire. Liu sent them, under guard, to a temple on a nearby mountain. Liu received immediate instructions from the capital of Nanjing to transport the prisoner to Huangshan (the Yellow Mountain) in Anhui province. One November evening, several trucks arrived at the temple and took Zhang, his wife and the entire detachment of guards along with their equipment to Huangshan, a five-hundred kilometer journey that lasted about a week. When they arrived at their destination, the head of the district greeted them and they were taken to a local guesthouse that had already been cleared of all its guests in order to house the famous prisoner. The area of the guesthouse was designated a closed military zone and although there was a rivulet on the premises, citizens were not allowed near it without a special permit.

In December that year, the capital, Nanjing, fell to the Japanese. The Chinese government had already relocated its base of operations to Wuhan, which was further inland, a retreat that was an important achievement for the enemy. The conquest of the capital city by the Japanese forces was followed by more that two weeks of massacres, rapes and extraordinary acts of cruelty, an event that came to be known as the Rape of Nanjing. Even in this chaotic period of turmoil in China, with one region after another falling to the enemy, unbearable hardships being endured by the population and the Nationalist Army rapidly collapsing, Chiang Kai-shek would not let his prisoner be. New instructions were given to Liu – this time for his relocation to Pingxiang in Jiangxi. Further orders would be given upon his arrival there.

The drive to Pingxiang took two days. When the entourage arrived at its destination, its members found the place in total disarray. Thousands of refugees from the areas conquered by the Japanese had crowded into the place. It took several days until Liu Yiguang was able to find somewhere for them to stay. Located 4 li (2 km) from Pingxiang, the two-story house was supposed to serve them as a temporary shelter. The house was owned by a professor at the University of Qinghua who was not known to have any political tendencies that might endanger the group. Zhang and his escorts waited three months for instructions from the government about their next location. These three months proved unbearable. The weather was stormy and the quality of the food that Liu managed to get was very poor. Zhang and his wife were in low spirits. His feet were badly swollen and his health started to deteriorate. The whole experience was one of the most depressing for him since his arrest a year earlier.

At the end of January 1938, around the time of the Chinese New Year, Zhang asked Liu for permission to go into the center of the town

to find out about the local customs. Liu hoped that such an excursion would improve the prisoner's mood and that of his wife as well, and so agreed to the request. He had to make sure that Zhang would not be recognized, because although he was a well-known figure across China, nobody knew that he was staying near the town at the time.

A simple solution was found in having Zhang dressed up in a driver's uniform, with his escorts wearing suits like businessmen who happened to find their way to the town. For a moment it seemed that the masquerade held up well, but as the strange troupe toured the town, a cry of surprise was heard. Someone called out in a Manchurian accent, 'It's the Young Marshal!' Unthinkingly, Zhang turned his head and saw a familiar face and while the two stared at each other, Liu came to his senses and called out to the northerner, 'You are mistaken! This is our driver, not the Marshal!' and hastened the entourage back to the place where they were staying. As they were leaving, Liu signaled one of his men to follow the stranger, who had recoiled as though admitting his mistake. The agent followed him then stopped him and asked him who he might be. He turned out to have been the personal hairdresser of Zhang Zuolin, governor of Manchuria, father of the Young Marshal. Even then, years after his service in Manchuria, he remembered the governor's son.

After this incident, Liu became restless. Chiang Kai-shek was in Chongqing, his new capital. Contact with him, through Dai Li, was difficult and often disrupted. Liu awaited instructions for his next move. Finally, the order came to transport Zhang to Chenzhou in the province of Hunan. Here Liu located a temple, Suxianling, which was a tourist site, and turned it into the next station for the entourage.

Zhang and his escorts lived apart from the local population. Organizing life under these conditions was very difficult. Even small errands were not easy for Liu Yiguang. For instance, it was hard to find a hairdresser for the entourage and for Zhang, who was particularly meticulous about his hairstyle. When he was in command in his Shenyang headquarters in Manchuria, he was known to reprimand his subordinates whenever their hair was not perfectly trimmed. Liu was now cautious about bringing in a hairdresser from the nearby town for fear of Zhang's identity once more being discovered. In the end, a member of the group volunteered to cut the Young Marshal's hair.

Likewise, bathing was also difficult. Zhang was used to taking a hot bath, and even when his guards took him to a natural warm spring that was found in the area, he was not satisfied and demanded to be taken to a proper public bathhouse. He insisted on it, and Liu was left with no

choice but to demand that the proprietor of the local bathhouse vacate the place at set times so that Zhang would be able to bathe, uninterrupted, and without any threat to his security.

On 2 March 1938, Zhang was on his way to the bathhouse as usual, accompanied by twelve agents, when an artillery officer passing by recognized him and stopped and saluted the Young Marshal as though he had bumped into him at an army base, and then continued on his way. Zhang did not respond and kept on walking, but as had happened with the previous similar incident, this made Liu very cautious and he demanded that the entourage immediately return to their residence. At the same time, he ordered one of his agents to follow the officer and inquire about his identity. The agent found out that the man had been under Zhang's command and had served nearby as second-in-command in a regiment outside of Manchuria. Zhang asked that no harm come to the officer.

About a month later, another incident occurred that made Zhang's wardens ill at ease. A group of soldiers along with their lieutenant suspected that something suspicious was going on in the isolated location where Zhang and his entourage were staying and decided to investigate what was happening in the mysterious house on the outskirts of the town. Liu's agents stopped them and the two groups, each representing a different authority, quickly clashed. During the confrontation, Liu had to present a secret document to convince the soldiers that it was indeed a legitimate military installation and that they had no right to enter it. It was not long before another squad of soldiers arrived, this one masquerading as tourists. They only left after Liu's agents fired warning shots into the air. These incidents clearly showed how strange the position was of the Young Marshal as a mobile prisoner.

In light of these events, Liu Yiguang decided to move the entourage to a location not far from his own birthplace, Yongxing, approximately thirty kilometers from Chenzhou. A few days later, Liu was commanded to take the prisoner to yet another place, this time to Yuanling in the west of Hunan. Liu sent out a few agents as scouts ahead of the rest of the camp, and they selected a temple at the top of Fenghuangshan (Phoenix Hill).

For the entire duration of Zhang's confinement, the government was worried that his men would act to free him either by a daring commando-style raid or by bombing his location. For this reason, Chiang ordered Liu Yiguang, as usual via Dai Li, to arm his group with anti-aircraft guns and even to prepare shelters in caves or trenches against impending attacks. Once, when Zhang was in one of these caves, he carved the word 'Vengeance' on a wall. Despite the extent of his suffering, he did not

mean vengeance on his captors, with whom he lived in harmony, accepting his sentence, but rather vengeance on the Japanese. Perhaps there was also a subconscious double-message there as well. At any rate, the matter of the struggle against the Japanese gave him no rest.

On a winter day in 1938, the regional governor sent a representative to visit the Young Marshal. He asked if he could help somehow, and Zhang requested that a structure be built for him at the top of a nearby mountain, a kind of pagoda. Such a structure was indeed built, and from there the Young Marshal could gaze out on the river and its surroundings. Perhaps the Marshal hoped that this place would give him some kind of constancy and allow him to be alone, away from the entire entourage, to enjoy some peace and privacy.

In those days, Zhang was engrossed in the study of the Ming dynasty. The subject fascinated him but did not keep him away from the hope bubbling up deep inside him of personally taking part in the struggle against the Japanese. His topic of study was supposedly removed from current events, but was also anchored well within them. The story of this dynasty was a classic example of the fall of a Chinese government caused by an internal rift and conquest by foreign elements. There has always been a tendency in China to study history – especially the history of governance and the dynasties of emperors – as relevant to the vicissitudes of the present. It may be, then, that the psychological and intellectual isolation provided by Zhang's interest in distant historic events allowed him some relief and even gave him hope for his fate as an individual and as a leader.

On a visit to Zhang, General Zhang Zhizhong, the governor of Hunan province, was impressed by his library and reassuringly promised him that he had reached a place of tranquility and would be able to proceed with his studies undisturbed. He gave his word to help him with anything that he wanted.

Zhang thanked his guest, but stressed how frustrated he was that although the second year of full-out war with the Japanese had begun since their crossing of the Beijing line and their major push southwards, in the summer of 1937, he had remained an observer on the sidelines and had not been called to the banner.[3] Indeed, he said, 'I cannot forget the murder of my father by the Japanese and all that they did to us in 1931. All of my subordinates look to me and ask where I am in this campaign.'

In that matter, the guest was unable to help. The conversation turned, naturally, to the future of the province and what would happen to it when Wuhan was conquered by the Japanese. Zhang Xueliang cordially announced that he would be pleased to be of assistance in the struggle

against the invading forces and would be grateful if his guest could convey that message to the Generalissimo. General Zhang Zhizhong advised the Marshal to write directly to the leader, and indeed, Zhang took his advice. However, Chiang Kai-shek did not reply to his prisoner's petition. This depressed Zhang, the 'Deputy', as he was wont to be called by his wardens. 'That term of address does not fit me', he would tell them, 'for all my powers have been taken away from me.'

During the fall of 1939, the situation in Hunan became worse. The Japanese were marching towards Changsha. Again orders were received for the urgent relocation of Zhang, to be done with the utmost of care, this time to Guiyang. Even the route to be used to transport Zhang was dictated by the authorities. There was a growing concern in government circles that Zhang might be kidnapped, either by his supporters or by the Japanese. After all, he was a political and military asset that could be utilized against the Nationalist regime.

More than ten trucks were used to transport the prisoner and the entourage to the new location. Guards were placed at the front and rear of the convoy, and machine guns were installed on the trucks in the eventuality of an attack. The route went through difficult terrain, with narrow passages and mountain ridges. When the party finally arrived at Guiyang, it was lodged at a hotel for a short time before being relocated to the Yangming Cavern, which, so local tradition held, had been turned into a residence as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In the winter of 1939, Yu Fengzhi was diagnosed with breast cancer. Zhang wanted to send her to the United States for treatment, and asked Dai Li that when his wife left, his friend and the mother of his ten-year-old son, Zhao Yidi, be allowed to come and stay with him. Chiang Kai-shek did not immediately agree. Only stubborn intervention by the Generalissimo's wife helped alleviate the situation, and the leader acceded to Zhang's request. Once again, the strange friendship between Soong and Zhang proved strong.

The decision taken by Zhao to join Zhang was not an easy one. Zhao had to abandon her child. Still, she decided to join the man who needed her so much. She traveled briefly to the United States in order to leave her son there with a friend, and in February 1940 returned to China and joined Zhang. She was to become a solace to him in times of continuous war, decades of imprisonment and years of old age in exile.

At the beginning of 1940, Yu Fengzhi left for the United Sates. She bid her husband a final farewell, never to see him again. Some claim that before she left, she asked Zhang to give her the secret telegram from 1931 sent to him by the Generalissimo, instructing him not to fight

the Japanese. This command, written by the leader, seemed to her an ultimate guarantee for her husband's protection, a last resort that could ensure that Zhang would not be executed as a traitor. In 1990, exactly fifty years after they parted, Yu Fengzhi died in the United States. Her epitaph was composed of lines from a poem that Zhang had sent her, praising her as a good and caring wife. If, as has been previously mentioned, the telegram was truly sent by Chiang, then Zhang had not betrayed his nation by not actively fighting back against the Japanese invaders, and was in fact following orders.

In late May 1941, Zhang felt a pain in his stomach and needed to be hospitalized. During this period, Zhang contracted appendicitis and became seriously ill and his life was endangered. Despite there being no proper medical facilities on the site, he was saved at the last moment. Liu was not prepared to move him from his close confinement without consent from Chongqing, the temporary wartime capital. As he received no reply from Chiang, Liu decided of his own volition to have him hospitalized and prevent the Marshal's untimely demise. He conferred with the governor of Guizhou province, Wu Dingchang, who had the prisoner taken up to the surgical ward of a hospital in his province, under a false name. Zhang was kept in complete isolation and was closely monitored. None but those involved with his care were permitted to visit him without the explicit consent of the authorities. During his treatment, Zhang twice required surgery. His entire medical treatment carried over a period of several months.[4] Before his release from hospital, he told Liu that he wished to stay in Guiyang itself and not to return to the cavern, where conditions were very hard. The two finally reached a compromise, that Zhang would be relocated to a different cavern, Qilin (the Unicorn), which was closer to the provincial capital.

In November, Dai Li came to visit the prisoner, for whom Chiang Kai-shek had made him responsible. He had lunch with him and with Zhao Yidi. Zhang asked after Yang Hucheng and Dai Li answered him that Yang was now residing outside of the borders of China. This information was not correct. In fact, Yang had been confined by Chiang Kai-shek. His pregnant, ill wife was put behind bars as well and gave birth to a daughter in prison.

In February 1942, the command was again given to relocate Zhang, this time to the township of Luyuxiang near Kaiyang, about eighty kilometers northeast of Guiyang, the capital of the province (Map 6). There the prisoner was housed in a local school. The town was the site of the Guomindang's headquarters and was considered the focal point of loyalty to the leader. This was supposed to become the place of the

Map 6 Zhang Xueliang's 'mobile custody', 1937–46

prisoner's permanent confinement. Unlike during his previous imprisonments, this time Zhang's mail was carefully checked and he was given a defined area, a kind of ten-kilometer radius, in which he was allowed to move freely. A great number of agents, sometimes as many as fifty, guarded him and watched his every step. Zhang's contacts with the outside world dwindled to a trickle and he received no more newspapers.

Under these conditions, it should come as no surprise that his mood deteriorated and he often seemed depressed. Liu Yiguang became worried about his prisoner. Was not he, as the one in charge of Zhang's security, also responsible for his well-being? Liu had his agents engage Zhang in conversation and play games of chess and mahjong with him and it seemed that Zhang's condition improved somewhat.

In April 1944, the Japanese embarked on Operation Ichi-Go, in which over a million soldiers took part. The operation, intended to tighten the siege on free China, was carried out in northern and central China. In the first phase of the operation, the invaders drove the Chinese forces back over a vast area between the Yellow River and the Yangzi and secured the railway line from Beijing to Hankou, and then the railway lines further south. The Chinese Air Force bases of Hunan, Guangxi and Jiangxi were captured, and over the course of this operation important cities fell – Changsha, Hengyang, Guilin and Liuzhou. These were extremely trying times for the Nationalist government and the ruling party. The Japanese were crushing the Nationalist government, its forces and its institutions led by Chiang Kai-shek over and again.

On 7 December, because Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou, was at risk of falling to the Japanese, Liu received urgent orders to relocate Zhang to Tongzi, near Chongqing. Again the entourage was housed in a cave, Tianmen (Heavenly Gate) Cave, where a weapons and munitions factory was placed. The site was strategically important and guarded by a regiment of soldiers. Zhang's life there was relatively quiet and became seemingly stable. He spent much of his time as before, reading and studying the Ming dynasty, as well as practicing his new hobby – fishing.

In February 1945, Mo Dehui of Manchuria was permitted to visit the prisoner. Mo had been a crony of Zhang Zuolin, Zhang's father, and he was a survivor of the train that was hit by a Japanese mine placed under a bridge near Shenyang, the same mine that had killed Zhang's father. In time, Mo was appointed to a position by the Generalissimo. During his two-week visit with Zhang Xueliang, both of them avoided discussing matters of internal politics, until one day, while taking a stroll together, Mo asked Zhang when he expected to be released.

Zhang listed two events that might enable his release. One would be a Chinese victory over Japan, the other a congress of all of China's political parties held to unite the entire nation under Chiang Kai-shek. Before Mo left the complex, Zhang handed him an expensive Swiss watch and asked that he give it to Chiang as a gift from him. It was an idea of Zhao's, intended to remind the leader that it had been eight long years since his imprisonment and that he was still incarcerated without

a clue as to his future release. This was the only kind of protest Zhang permitted himself. The watch would no doubt remind the leader that it was time to fulfill the agreement made in Xi'an.

On another visit with Zhang, Mo Dehui tried to find out whether the Young Marshal would be willing to accept his release under three conditions. Mo posed this tentative question to Zhang at one of the most difficult times for the Nationalist government and the ruling party, as their infrastructure was being battered over and again by the Japanese. The proposed conditions were as follows: that Zhang admits that Chiang Kai-shek's capture in Xi'an was the result of the Communists' planned deceitfulness, trickery and misinformation; that he return Chiang Kai-shek's telegram to him of September 1931 ordering him not to fight the Japanese (this demand makes it likely that the telegram did, in fact, exist, and was probably with Zhang's wife in the United States); and that after his release, he would leave China and live elsewhere.

'I will not go free under those conditions!' Zhang replied without any hesitation.

'If so', Mo replied, 'you will not, indeed, be set free.'

'How could I accept these conditions? Before the Xi'an Incident I did not confer with the Communists, and only afterwards did I invite Zhou Enlai to talk. I can only proclaim that the Communists set me a trap. As for the last condition, how can I, Chinese by nature and by birth, leave my country? If I accept these conditions I will not be myself, I will not be Zhang Xueliang!'

The Young Marshal did not mention the telegram. This indicated that he perhaps did not want to deal with the matter of Manchuria's fall to the Japanese.

In August 1945, following the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered. Japanese forces all over China and Manchuria received orders from the Allies, led by the United States, to surrender to Chiang Kai-shek's army in China proper and to the Soviet Red Army in Manchuria. The Japanese defeat in the end did not come about as a result of conventional warfare on the Chinese mainland, but because of unconventional weapons used far away from there. The end of hostilities with Japan signaled the opportunity for Chiang Kai-shek to realize one of his political goals. He was now free to turn to the struggle with his internal enemies the Communists. And, indeed, in the months following Japan's capitulation, China saw a full-scale resurgence of its civil war. The fragile national front, formed in order to create a united coalition against the enemy, simply collapsed.

On the night between 14 and 15 September 1946, Zhang was taken to a new location in Tongzi. Two months later, instructions arrived to fly him to the island of Taiwan by way of the capital at Chongqing. Because by Chinese custom the prisoner was supposed to keep following the leader, the 'emperor', whose authority he had challenged, the act of sending Zhang to the island so early on may be interpreted as an indication that Chiang Kai-shek knew that his defeat by the Communists was inevitable.

At the end of October, the entourage was on its way once more, this time from Tongzi to Chongqing. The truck convoy entered the city at the crack of dawn and was intended to pass unnoticed. When Zhang asked where they were headed, he was told that he was being taken to Chongqing as a station on the way to Nanjing. Based on this false information, he inferred that now, after a decade of being incarcerated and following the victory over Japan, he was about to be set free.

Zhang Xueliang and his partner were housed in the western quarter of Chongqing and stayed there for about a month. One day, Mao Renfeng, a key officer of the Chinese intelligence system, came and told them that they would shortly be flown to Nanjing. Release seemed to Zhang closer than ever. Finally, he told himself, Chiang Kai-shek was free to keep his promise. Zhao Yidi, however, did not hide her suspicion that the Generalissimo was cooking up a nasty surprise. Zhang refused to accept this conjecture. 'Many people, good friends, have worked on my behalf', he tried to explain, 'and now Chiang must consider their recommendations. Besides, China won the war and Chiang's prestige is at its height. So why should I worry?!'

On the eve of the flight, Liu prepared a farewell party for Zhang, and the participants, including Mao Renfeng and other key figures in intelligence who were connected to the prisoner, all saw it as a party in honor of the Young Marshal's release, because to the best of their knowledge he was about to fly to Nanjing and there be set free. Zhang himself was in high spirits and drank copiously.

7
Prisoner and Philosopher in Taiwan, 1946–90

The violent upheavals and their aftermaths caused by the Korean War, the Vietnam Wars and local wars in Southeast Asia and the Middle East affected the next four decades of Zhang Xueliang's life. There was a constant tension between the People's Republic that had established itself in China and Chiang Kai-shek's government in Taiwan, which Beijing viewed as a seceding and betraying province. The residents of the island defined it as the Republic of China, the Republic that genuinely reflected the vision of Sun Yatsen, father of the reemerging nation. Communist-ruled mainland China underwent major political and ideological changes. From a formula of 'leaning to one side', namely relying on the Soviet Union, the People's Republic moved to a policy of self-reliance and seeking a new socialist path, whether by the 'Great Leap Forward' or by the 'Great Cultural Revolution'. With the death of the leader Mao Zedong in 1976, China adopted the 'open door policy', which in the following decades marked the start of an impressive economic success.

Only for Zhang Xueliang, time stood still. He remained under arrest and his nickname, the Young Marshal, stayed with him even as he grew older. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Xi'an Incident was attended by Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, Yang Zhangmin, the son of Yang Hucheng, and other figures who were involved in the event. Zhou spoke emotionally about Yang Hucheng and the injustice done to Zhang who was imprisoned in Taiwan. According to witnesses, tears filled up the eyes of those gathered.

* * *

On 2 November 1946, an American C47 freight plane stood in Chongqing Airport ready to take off. The pilot was sure that his destination was Nanjing and had no idea what his cargo consisted of. Shortly before takeoff, he received secret instructions from the airport command, for his eyes only, that the destination of his flight had been

changed and that he must fly to Taoyuan in Taiwan. He was ordered not to tell anyone about the change.

At the airport, some twenty-five kilometers from the center of Chongqing, the flight's organizers planned their course of action carefully and secretly. Nobody in Zhang's entourage knew the exact destination of the special flight. When the pilot noticed what he thought was an elderly couple walking with their escorts towards the gangway, he did not understand why information about his flight had been shrouded in secrecy. Only as the two approached the plane somewhat wearily did he understand who his passengers were.

Visibility was good over Fujian. The island could already be seen. Zhang, who was sitting by the window, sensed that something was wrong. He looked out and wondered about where they were, confused at what he saw. Was that the quiet bay near Taiwan? What was the blue sea doing between the cities of Chongqing and Nanjing? He wondered about the flight path but was not yet suspicious. When he finally turned to Liu, he knew that he had been deceived. Liu, his main escort for the last decade, a friend, of necessity, both jailer and prisoner, did not know how to respond. Telling Zhang the truth seemed the only option. 'Indeed', he confessed, 'we are being taken to Taiwan on Chiang Kai-shek's instructions.' He had tied their fates together. The flight to Taoyuan Airport should have lasted five hours, but because of radio communication problems between the plane and the control tower, the pilot digressed from his charted course and landed in Taipei (Taibei).

The entourage was received by the head of the police in Chenyi, who had come from Manchuria twenty years earlier and knew both Zhang, the father and the son. Zhang and his wife were taken to Caoshan, and three days later were sent on to Jingshang Wenquan in the township of Zhudong near Xinzhu.

Zhang's new place of detention was in the mountains, and a magnificent view lay beyond the house where he was to stay, which had been a Japanese police guesthouse on the island during the occupation. It was actually a fenced compound surrounded by armed guards. Nobody was allowed to come near it without explicit permission. Here, in the place that seemed to be the wandering entourage's last stop, Zhang began realizing that he was under a life sentence.

Forty-five years old and having by then been imprisoned under mobile custody and kept in confinement for the past ten years, the Marshal was also troubled by small, seemingly negligible things. He had already been living with Liu Yiguan's family, which had grown and become a particularly noisy lot, for several years now and the children had become

an unbearable nuisance. They ran around the compound and its rooms and the prisoner and his wife knew no peace and had no privacy. The members of both the Zhang and Liu families took their meals together and every single thing was done with Liu's approval and with everyone's knowledge. Zhang's world revolved around Liu, his decisions and his whims, while for Liu, guarding Zhang was the axis around which his own life revolved, in fact, his entire career.

On 28 February 1947, a popular revolt against the island's regime broke out. The revolt began as a conflict between civilians, mostly residents of the island, and Guomindang military forces, most of which came from the mainland and enforced their rule on Taiwan after the Japanese surrender. Indeed, the Nationalist government headed by Chiang Kai-shek was received in Taiwan with suspicion. Already severe domestic economic and political problems deepened the rivalry and tension between the island's original occupants who had lived under Japanese occupation for fifty years (since the Japanese victory over China in 1895) on the one hand, and the government forces and its supporters, who were at the very same time fighting for their survival against the Communists on the mainland, on the other. Chiang Kai-shek's regime was perceived as oppressive and corrupt. Tens of thousands of unarmed demonstrators were killed during the suppression of the revolt.

Liu Yiguan, like the heads of units, sections and various commands in Taiwan – which was in the process of individuation from the mainland – received information about the developments and was instructed to tighten security around his camp. His prisoner was no longer granted freedom of movement even within the boundaries of the compound, and was denied information about the events. Zhang's situation was made worse when it turned out that among the demonstrators were anti-government elements who wished to free the Young Marshal no matter what, because to them he was the symbol of the only legitimate opposition to the national leader. There were reports that activists among the rebel groups approached the compound in order to collect information about its security measures and general conditions. It was apparently the local topography that prevented the demonstrators from carrying out their plan to liberate Zhang. The compound was well secured and only one gate served as both entry and exit. The famous prisoner was guarded as a genuine national treasure.

Years later, Zhang recalled the events of those February days. Liu began taking a tougher stance towards his prisoner. He stepped up security and even stopped talking to him. 'Guards paced near my house, and even at night I could hear Liu directing his men, as if an extreme

emergency had arisen in the compound,' Zhang said. He did not mince his words when he spoke of his relationship with Liu during those days. Among other things, he said, 'He could have killed me and claimed that I was killed by the demonstrators,' and Zhang admitted that he often toyed with the idea of killing Liu first.

When the protests against the island's government subsided, Zhang's situation improved a little, but his life next to Liu and his family became no easier. There was also a food shortage and there were times when Zhang and his wife, Zhao, were given rations of only a portion of rice a day like the rest of his entourage.

In October 1947, Zhang Zhizhong, the former governor of Hunan province and now a military man, came to visit Zhang. It was their first meeting in a long time. The Young Marshal again recounted his story and examined his situation in front of his old friend. 'Look, the nation has now stopped fighting the Japanese,' he told his guest. 'People are living well now and building up their lives, while I live as a prisoner under difficult conditions. I have no military force, the Dongbei Army no longer exists, and there is no danger that I will seize power.' At the end of the visit, he made two requests of his guest: first, that he helps him secure his freedom as a private person. He promised that he would not be politically active and would not trouble the government. He would live his life in which every place was chosen for him. In the meantime, he asked that he and his wife be separated from the Liu family, with whom he could not continue living. He expected his guest to convey his requests to Chiang Kai-shek's wife, who was always attentive, and hoped that she would find a way to influence her husband.

When the Generalissimo heard the message, he made it clear with a dismissive gesture of his hand, witnesses say, that Zhang should stop making requests of him. Soong Meiling tried to persuade her husband to agree at least to separating his prisoner and his wife from the Liu family, but her efforts were in vain. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek announced that no one was to visit the Young Marshal without his explicit permission.

In January 1949, Chiang, who was then still in mainland China, resigned as president and his successor, Li Zongren, was appointed as acting president and remained in that post until a new president was appointed (in 1950, Chiang was restored as president, but he now only ruled over Taiwan). In December 1949, the government forces lost the battle in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. Chengdu was the last city on the mainland still under the control of government forces. Chiang

Map 7 The Communist advance, April 1949

Kai-shek and his son abandoned the mainland and relocated their base to Taiwan (Map 7).

During the brief period that Li Zongren held office as President of China, he tried to take measures to free Zhang, who was a prisoner in Taiwan, as well as to free General Yang Hucheng, who was a prisoner on the mainland. But when he inquired about Chiang Kai-shek's position on the matter, he met with a wall of silence. Chiang Kai-shek insisted that Zhang remain in the tightly guarded castle of Shoushan in

Gaoxiong so that no one could free his prisoner. He gave Liu an award of 10,000 yuan, which was a fortune that served to motivate the jailer and tied him to the leader with bonds of obedience. It was now clear to Li Zongren that he could free neither Zhang nor Yang and so he abandoned the effort.

In September 1949, shortly before the Communist Party took control of most of China, Yang Hucheng and all of the members of his family were brutally murdered – they were beheaded, on Chiang Kai-shek's orders. In the meanwhile, the chaos in China continued and the supporters of Chiang Kai-shek rushed to leave the mainland before the central Guomindang government's complete collapse. In the following years, in the face of the advancing Communist forces, Chiang's vast number of supporters began escaping the mainland by any means possible. Over 2 million of them succeeded in finding refuge in Taiwan, where most of them settled. They came to comprise some 20 per cent of the island's population and became the ruling elite in Taiwan for the next five decades.

Zhang learned of his close friend's murder indirectly through his guards. Liu concluded that he must increase the security around the Young Marshal. He was afraid that his prisoner's sympathizers, on learning of Yang's fate, would now make determined efforts to free their beloved leader. Relations between Zhang and Liu and his family became increasingly strained, but Liu remained attached to his prisoner until 1962, totaling over a quarter of a century.

At the end of 1949, Zhang's friend, Xiao Chengen, a professor at Beida, the University of Beijing, gave him a summary report that he had written about the war against Japan. Xiao, who during the war served as an intelligence officer and remained a loyal friend and admirer of the Young Marshal, asked Zhang to read the manuscript and comment on it and wanted him to write an introduction for it. Zhang was happy to comply, but when Chiang found out, he tried to prevent the book's publication. He also gave specific instructions to check any piece of mail going to or from the young Marshal.

Years went by and then one day in May 1955, Zhang was transferred to Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. Years later, he spoke of how he was brought to a luxurious building and left to wait in a reception hall. He did not exactly know where he was. Then he heard footsteps from the direction of one of the corridors, the door opened and in came Chiang Kai-shek himself.

'I had not seen him for years,' Zhang remembered emotionally. 'I was surprised, he had the same charm I remembered from the past. I saw in

his face his goodness and compassion. He turned to me and asked me about my life. I answered "Everything is alright, don't worry." I asked him to take good care of himself for the nation.'

To a large extent, that dramatic scene captured the relationship between the greatest couple of friends–enemies that China had known in the twentieth century. The perfectly commonplace exchange of platitudes between the two after some twenty years embodied an ancient culture that is China itself. The concern over losing face, the speaker's own face or his fellow's, was and remains a foundation stone of Chinese culture. The avoidance of an embarrassing and unpleasant confrontation is also one of the foundations of the traditional generations' ethics. Instead of taking advantage of the moment, the singular and long-awaited opportunity to further his personal desire for freedom, Zhang selected a more traditional course, which is perhaps less understandable to a Westerner: he did not embarrass the leader but came to his senses and acquiesced to the idea that he must accept his fate, he showed optimism, contentment and concern for others and for the nation.

During the conversation that took place between the two, Chiang explained that Zhang must be patient. 'Your imprisonment is a testimony of love,' he said, indicating that everything he did was not out of personal vindictiveness but due to deeply felt formal consideration. 'The state', he promised, 'will yet need your services. Take care of yourself.' And then he added: 'I will ask my son to stay in touch with you. From now on, you will live in Taipei and you can consult him about an appropriate place of residence for you.' However, no less than six years would pass until that promise was fulfilled.

Chiang also tried to find out whether the Young Marshal had changed his attitude towards the Xi'an Incident in any way. But Zhang, who avoided revisiting the affair that completely changed his life, said nothing. He had a dilemma about this issue. Had he implied that he had acted under pressure, he could have been condemned for not being 'calculating' and for serving as a tool for a force hostile to the Nationalist government. However, had he emphasized the point that he did what he did on his own initiative and out of his own free will, then he would have drawn all the criticism solely to himself. Moreover, had he implied that he had to arrest Chiang, it would have shown that he was not sorry for his actions and was unwilling to admit that they had been a mistake. And worse yet, if Chiang had to be arrested in Xi'an, why did he ultimately release him? And if the release was for the people, why did he rebel in the first place? Why did he impugn the authority of the leader of the nation? From every side, the issue was complex

and laden with military, national, psychological, tactical, ceremonial and emotional layers.

Chiang Kai-shek, who at the time was writing his book about Soviet involvement in China,[1] wanted to examine new angles on the affair, to present a sort of historic study in which he was supposedly not a key player in the events. 'When you have some time', he told Zhang, in what could be considered the epitome of irony, 'please write down your memoirs and the information that you have. I will need that to write my history.' Zhang responded that he had no more interest in studying the details of the Xi'an Incident. 'I am going to take that with me to my grave,' he said, but then immediately added: 'Since you asked, I will write a few things.'

That was the end of the meeting that Zhang had undoubtedly frequently dreamed of, without him asking for pardon from the only person who could have granted it. He was partly guided by his dignity and his feeling that the leader must not be embarrassed.

Two more years went by. In September 1957, on Chiang Kai-shek's birthday, Zhang again sent a watch to his rival and jailer, the Generalissimo. The latter responded with a gesture of courtesy and sent his prisoner a walking stick. As he delivered the gift, the President's secretary said: 'Chiang says it would be good for you to walk a lot. That would make your heart feel better.'

At another stage during his imprisonment in Taiwan, Zhang, who liked to spend many hours watching the island's birds, said that people were not as good as birds. Once he caught a bird, trapped it in a cage and sent it to Chiang Kai-shek. The latter, in response, sent him an even bigger bird than the one he received and wrote in an accompanying letter: 'Please continue to catch birds, I have plenty of cages […].'[2]

Eventually, Zhang did begin to write his memoirs, but a cataract operation on his eye and the impaired vision that attended the treatment made this task impossible and he never finished them. What he did manage to write was sent to Chiang Kai-shek, who in turn interrogated him about certain statements in the manuscript. 'How is it, Hanqing', he addressed him by the nickname of his youth, 'that you say this while it was really like that.'

And so Zhang's written work was cut and changed, rewritten and edited. It was also annotated by Chiang Ching-kuo, the leader's son. Wang Sheng, the deputy director of the Political–Military War Committee, also saw the manuscript and shortened it by thousands of words before sending it, rewritten, to the party's political division. There, a number of military people went over it yet again. All told, the text was heavily edited and only thirty copies were authorized for distribution among

a handful of members of the party and state political and military leadership. However, during the process of its being edited, proofread, examined, cut and corrected, information about the manuscript leaked out and became known as 'Zhang's Confession'. And that is how it was published in the periodical, *Wangshi* (Past Events) in January 1964 and later on also in the *Minzu wanbao* (National Evening Post), a newspaper that came out in Taiwan. Zhang came to recount this story in different ways.

When Chiang Kai-shek learned about the publication, he became angry and called for his son and ordered that all copies of *Wangshi* and *Minzu wanbao* that had published the 'confession' be destroyed. But the order was never carried out because copies of the newspapers were already on their way to Hong Kong and to Chinese communities overseas. Chiang Ching-kuo could only reprimand those responsible for the 'mishap'. He was mainly irritated that the published 'confession' implied that Chiang Kai-shek had supposedly treated the Chinese Communists as equals to members of the Nationalist camp and had given them political legitimacy.

Earlier on, in March 1959, Zhang was visited by a former friend, now working with the President, who told him that it had been decided to lift some of the restrictions imposed on him in his imprisonment. However, he stressed, Zhang must still remain under 'protection'. It appeared to be nothing but a semantic change. In reality, almost nothing had changed in the life of the Young Marshal. Anyone who wanted to see him still had to register with the authorities to receive permission to do so and had to walk past a heavy guard and be inspected. Under the regime that ruled Taiwan at the time, this all meant that anyone who wanted to visit the famous prisoner was well advised to think carefully. Two years later, in 1961, Zhang Xueliang and Zhao Yidi were finally allowed to move to a suburb of the capital, Taipei.

It appeared that Zhang had now come to terms with the fact that he would spend the rest of his life with restrictions as a prisoner. And while in the previous two decades he would become agitated, hope, take political action and believe that his imprisonment was temporary or 'technical' and that the nightmare was nearing its end, in the following three decades he gradually learned to accept his fate. He was less angry and had turned inward and was constantly absorbed in thought.

For Chiang Kai-shek and his son and heir, Chiang Ching-kuo, the perpetually imprisoned Zhang was living proof that anyone who brought trouble and disaster on the Nationalist movement would pay the full price; had it not been for his treachery, the Communists would have been uprooted in time and the yoke of the regime would not have been

placed on the neck of the Chinese nation. And so Zhang could serve as an effective tool in the hands of his captors and help in the continuing struggle against the Communists. He could be used as a tool against those who were presented as the thieves of government and power. That narrative remained the official version in Taiwan until recently.

In one of Zhang's letters to Chiang, he compared the Generalissimo to the biblical Moses. The straits between Taiwan and mainland China became the Red Sea. On the day of reckoning, the water would stand like a wall and then Chiang and his armies could cross the dry passage and conquer the mainland (the other possibility, that the disappearance of the water barrier between the two entities of China could have the opposite result, was not raised).

The relationship between Chiang and Zhang was complex and cunning tactics were often used. It was a mixture of friendship and deep resentment, there was a shared awareness of a common fate and tensions arose that had elements of violence and boundless humiliation, love and hate, compassion and jealousy.

Chiang's order to arrest Zhang was merely tactical, intended to ensure obedience and internal cohesion in China. The extension of the imprisonment after the victory over the Japanese appeared to be less logical and understandable. It is possible that had Zhang been freed, the Manchurian Army could have assisted in the fight against the Communists. But Chiang Kai-shek was afraid to trust Zhang and arm him with resources and let him have command of fighting forces. He was unable to overcome his feelings and his vindictiveness and free the Young Marshal. The Communists apparently suggested that Chiang do so, but he repeatedly refused to.

As with other such instances throughout history, boundless revenge was part of what drove the relationship between these two figures. The idea of revenge has had different manifestations throughout the ages in the literature and classical drama of Western culture. An act of revenge is considered a perfect punishment, the closing of a circle. In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the idea of revenge infuses the play and takes a turn when Hamlet, who is supposed to avenge his father's death, hesitates and torments himself about accomplishing the deed. His delay in carrying out the deed and his inner turmoil causes serious harm both to himself and to those around him. It is the case of a person, hurt at the beginning of a cycle of violence, who suspends the act of avenging, leaves the matter unresolved, refusing to exact revenge until finally doing so at the bitter end.

In other cases, by the potential avenger not completing the act of revenge to its finality, he allows himself to open a window onto a horizon

of freedom and liberty, thereby avoiding inner turmoil. In that way he restores his dignity and honor in the eyes of the public. This less radical path does not imply forgiveness of the offender, but a choice of a different and less common course of action in cultures that, for instance, require accounts to be settled through blood vengeance. It also satisfies and compensates for the injustice done at the outset of the cycle of violence, because that injustice receives a sort of public recognition.

In the story told here, Chiang, as the avenger, resorts to the ostensibly more moderate way thus perhaps restoring his dignity and honor in the eyes of the public. He certainly did not forgive Zhang, the offender.

Unlike Yang Hucheng, Zhang Xueliang was not executed. Chiang Kai-shek left Zhang suspended, in a state of uncertainty, waiting for years either for further punishment or a pardon. He suffered. The leader's revenge on him was cruel and unusual, and seemingly unresolved.

In East Asian culture, this approach seems to coexist with the ultimate revenge of beheading the rebel, which is closest to the dichotomous doctrine of the Judeo-Christian ethos. The underlying assumption is that justice will ultimately be done, albeit circuitously, with opposites and contrasts coexisting by way of Ying and Yang.

In the specific context discussed here, it is noteworthy that in traditional China there was also a place for remonstration, protest and complaint (bing jian) that the Emperor was certain to be informed about. The Emperor may have had a 'divine license', a sort of unlimited mandate to act, but he, too, had to accept to live with restraints and restrictions typical of Chinese culture. A subject of the Empire could protest in words as well as in actions, and the protest could not remain unanswered. As long as the protest was made in the accepted manner, then it was not regarded as mutiny and did not carry the death penalty. The ruler had to consider the matter. Therefore, if Zhang's action had constituted a form of protest, it could definitely have been seen as an expression of legitimate complaint and not warrant severe punishment. The creation of a sanction in the form of a life sentence designed to 'guard' him, even when he reached eighty years of age and even when he passed ninety, was undoubtedly punishment by a prolonged process of torture with an element of exceptional revenge.

In 1961, Zhang Luying, Zhang's daughter from his first marriage, visited Taiwan. They had not seen each other since the family trip to Europe when she was 18 years old. Now, at the age of 45, she came with her husband, who was a professor at the University of California, in order to attend an academic conference. This conference had been organized

by the government of Taiwan in an effort to mobilize Chinese expatriates living outside of the island to support the separate Taiwanese entity of Nationalist China, as it was then called, or the Republic of China (as opposed to the People's Republic of China on the mainland).

For Zhang, his daughter's visit was a moving experience. Of his five children, four sons and a daughter, only two were still alive: his daughter and his son Lulin, who was known in the United States as Robert Zhang (or Chang) and was the son of Zhao Yidi. He was sent in 1940 to the United States when his mother joined Zhang in his imprisonment. After completing his studies, he became an academic. He visited his father in Taiwan in 1965. As for the three others, one son, Luqi, had died in infancy, and Zhang Lugan was fatally injured in a car race and died in 1952. The eldest son, Zhang Luxun, lost his mind following the German bombardment of London, where he lived during World War II. He died in Taiwan after much suffering two years after the death of his brother in the car race.

It stands to reason that the tragedy of losing his sons, in addition to the tribulations of his life, laid the groundwork for his seeking comfort in religion. During the 1960s, Zhang knew that he was destined to be cut off from the world and that his personal freedom had been taken away from him forever. And so he moved towards Christian fundamentalism and devoted himself to the study of the New Testament, with the encouragement of his old friend, Soong Meiling, the leader's wife. Up until the time that their friendship deepened, Zhang, as with the vast majority of the Chinese, was a Buddhist (as problematic as such a sweeping definition may be). Soong repeatedly warned him that he was not following the correct path. The documents do not clearly show what exactly brought him to Christianity. Was it out of pragmatic political considerations, that adopting Soong's foibles would free him from his prolonged imprisonment? Was it the long political, personal and family crisis that led him to Christianity as an opening for hope and redemption? At any rate, it is clear that at the time, through meditation and introspection into his tormented soul, Christianity slowly became an addictive drug, perhaps a life vest.

What is known is that while Zhang's daughter was in Taiwan, Zhang and his partner, Zhao, met with Soong Meiling after she had introduced them to a Christian clergyman. At that meeting, Zhang expressed his wishes to be baptized and to marry Zhao. However, Madame Chiang explained to him that he could not marry Zhao as long as he was still married to Yu Fengzhi and having conjugal relations with Zhao. 'It is impossible for a devout Christian to have two wives,' she stressed.

'If you want to become a Christian, you must first of all dissolve your marriage with your lawful wife.' Zhao interjected that such an action could hurt Yu Fengzhi. But Soong Meiling did not hesitate to preach to Zhang on the importance of morality, religion and ethics. She reiterated the prohibition against adultery and warned that he must avoid alcohol, and he thanked her repeatedly for the instructions that she had been so kind to give him, as if she were an incontestable spiritual counselor. Her demands were planted deep into his heart and he found solace in the idea that he could now finally become a good Christian. He therefore wrote a long letter to his wife, who had been living in the United States for many years, explaining his wish to marry Zhao and the necessary precondition for realizing it. Zhang gave this letter to his daughter to deliver to his wife. According to testimonies about this incident, his daughter waited about two years before delivering the letter to her mother. Zhang Luying had deliberately avoided delivering the letter as she did not want to hurt her mother. But the latter pressed her many times, asking whether her husband, Zhang, had sent any message with her. Finally one day, Zhang Luying gave in and delivered the letter to her mother.

Zhang's wife, loyal as always, wrote back to her husband, expressing her regret, that under the conditions that had been forced upon them she could not serve him properly as his wife. She felt no resentment towards Madame Zhao Yidi and agreed to begin the divorce proceedings immediately.

The relationship between the women had been close. In the past, Yu Fengzhi did not object to Zhao Yidi being Zhang's 'secretary'. Now she sent her regards and added that she knew that the love between Zhang and Zhao was pure and true, and that Zhao had sacrificed everything dear to her for Zhang. 'You must marry,' she stated, leaving no room for doubt. And so, at the age of 63, after having lived with her for a quarter of a century, Zhang wed his loyal friend who was ten years younger than him. The guest of honor at the nuptials was none other than Madame Chiang. Among the guests were her husband's secretary and many other dignitaries from Taipei.

The relationship between Soong Meiling and Zhang Xueliang was, as previously mentioned, very special. It is hard to imagine such a relationship in other circumstances in another place, in a different psychological environment. It lasted decades, from the early 1920s (when they first met at a party in Shanghai, where – according to some accounts – Zhang tried to woo Soong Meiling), before she had met Chiang Kai-shek and before he had united China, right up until before Zhang's death at the

beginning of this century. The leader's wife comforted his soul, but there were also elements of control on the part of the woman who forced her terms and wishes on the Young Marshal. For instance, at a certain point, she demanded that their correspondence be in English, a language that she knew well but that he could not master. She heaped instructions on him about what she desired to be his daily schedule, thoughts and beliefs. The communication between them shows an almost willful subjugation by Zhang to the assertive and authoritarian woman. Sometimes it looked as if Zhang was merely a pawn in the hands of the whole family: Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling and, also in his own way, their son, Chiang Ching-kuo. They humiliated him for years in insidious and hidden ways, until fate exiled the two friends, Zhang and Soong, to the new world. The documents that Zhang left behind, including the correspondence that extended over decades, attested to a consistent, prolonged, strange and unique relationship with a rare woman whom he called his 'confidante'.

In a letter dated 22 January 1960, when Zhang was a prisoner in Taiwan, Soong wrote to Zhang that he would soon be visited by a man from the President's office who would give him any household help that he needed. She sent him a Bible in Chinese and a Christian book called *Streams in the Desert*.[3] At his request, she also sent him her picture and apologized that her husband appeared beside her. She thanked him for the roses that he had sent her and wrote that she would always be happy to help him and that all he needed to do was to ask her.

On 29 August 1941, when Soong was in the Chinese wartime capital, Chongqing, while Zhang was still on the mainland being tossed about from one place to another, from a makeshift dwelling to a cave, a hotel to a remote roadside inn, she heard about the appendectomy that he had undergone. Yes, she reported, she was told that he had recovered. The weather in Chongqing, she wrote, was sticky and humid, the city was suffering from continuous bombardment by the Japanese. She had come down with malaria in the past month and felt weak. Soong was waiting for the war to end in the hope that all the suffering had not been in vain. She did not forget to end her missive with the words 'Yours truly, and best wishes, Soong'.

In a letter in the early winter of 1946, dated 15 November, after the war, she is in Nanjing, China's official capital. She reports that she has sent Zhang's letters to Donald, their mutual friend who had been his assistant as well as her husband's. In the intervening period, Donald had passed away, she reported, but before his death he had the opportunity to enjoy reading Zhang's letters to her. No, he must not worry; Donald

did not suffer any pain awaiting his death. She visited him during those difficult days and they actually managed to joke together sometimes. So, for instance, they had concluded that the difference between a woman and a soldier is that 'a woman powders her face, the soldier faces the powder'. She read to Donald from the Bible, especially Psalms 23 and 96, and had received a Siamese cat as a gift and was enjoying its company. She hoped to visit Zhang soon at his place of imprisonment.

William Henry Donald could have been an irreplaceable source of understanding Chinese history in the twentieth century and could have contributed to understanding the personalities that he had worked with for so many years. Donald apparently kept a journal in which he recorded his rich experiences in China. According to Zhang, before Donald's death the journal was given to a trader named Li, who promised that its contents would remain secret for fifty years. The journal has yet to be published and it is doubtful whether anybody knows of its whereabouts. In the absence of Donald's testimony, the surviving unpublished letters of Zhang Xueliang and Soong Meiling are a rare treasure that add a personal dimension to the main historic figures of this narrative.

In a letter from 25 July 1957, Soong reiterates to Zhang that through her he may send letters and packages to those members of his family in the United States. She thanked him for remembering her birthday and for sending her a scroll as a gift. As a gesture on her part, she sent him an album with her drawings and two books in which she had collected her speeches. She added two packages of candies to sweeten his isolation.

Months later, in the follow-up to Christmas, Soong sent to Zhang a fir tree and gifts. In April 1958, she thanked him for a drawing that he had sent her for her birthday. Indeed, among Zhang's papers that were only recently opened to the public, the letters of the first lady of China, the wife of the President who had him arrested and had withheld his freedom, play a prominent part. They included expressions of honor and respect, thanks for gifts, regards and salutations, and what can be seen as honest expressions of concern for his welfare and well-being. In July 1959, Soong sent him a reading lamp that she had brought with her especially from the United States after learning that he suffered from impaired vision. She also brought with her letters from members of his family, from his daughter whom she had even visited and from his 'well-behaved' grandchildren, and passed them on to him. In another letter, she wrote that she had slipped in the bathtub and hurt her back. She repeatedly sent him his favorite sweets, mangos that she had bought in the Philippines, melons from Japan, an album of Mozart's

works, to which she added the comment that 'the violin melodies are wonderful', newspapers and journals.

Zhang sent his loyal friend his regards and gifts for her birthday (such as an elegant book on art). He would occasionally ask her to send his regards to President Chiang Kai-shek and even to commend him for his achievements, such as his reelection as president in 1960. He would tell her about his routine and describe his day in almost tedious detail. He woke up at 6 a.m., prayed at 7 and read and studied *Streams in the Desert*. At 9 a.m., he immersed himself in reading the prayer book that she had sent him, *The Upper Room*, translated into Chinese. At 3 p.m., he read the Bible and studied the works of Martin Luther, whom he admired. In the evening as well, he stressed, he studied, with a friend.

The impression created is that Zhang not only informed Soong of each of his activities but also made an effort to please her, appease her, stressing over and again that he was living in accordance with her precise instructions. His priorities were first of all spiritual–religious, as were hers. For her part, she made sure to encourage and strengthen him. Indeed, he devoted himself to the study of the Bible. To that end, he contacted American institutions that specialized in correspondence classes on biblical studies, especially a well-known school in Nashville, Tennessee.

In his letters, he noted that he had not repaid her for all that she did for him and in the spring of 1960 even wrote to her to that effect, stating, 'you are so good to me and remember me, while I give you nothing. God bless you and the President.' Later in the same letter he invited her to dinner, although it is not possible to know from the documents whether or not she accepted his invitation.

The correspondence between the two continued into the 1970s and 1980s. The contents repeated themselves, the exchange of gifts, reports of sicknesses, birthday greetings and regards from the imprisoned Marshal to the President and other gestures of courtesy and appreciation.

Rumors of the special prisoner were occasionally published in the press. So, for instance, the *Herald Tribune* reported in February 1961 that the Marshal had been released after twenty-five years in prison. Five years later, thirty years after the Xi'an Incident, the *New York Times* retold the affair, giving explanations for the readers, some of whom had not been born at the time of the event. Taiwan's deputy foreign minister, who was asked to comment on rumors of Zhang's release, clarified that it was not at all a 'detention' but a 'willful withdrawal', and the press reports were therefore baseless. Another newspaper reported that Zhang occasionally went downtown, accompanied by guards and official cars and had even

visited the cinema, the opera and bookstores, and frequented the small Protestant church near the President's house.

In 1962, Liu Yiguang, Zhang's almost eternal jailer, left him and his family after they had all lived together for twenty-six years. At the farewell party attended among others by Chiang Ching-kuo, Zhang spoke in praise of the guard who was like a shadow to him. He said that he owed him his life. 'We have lived together for long years,' he said. 'He oversaw my life and often rescued me.' Zhang solemnly promised to give him a sum of money in appreciation and thanks. Liu lived for another twenty years and died at the age of 84.

During his imprisonment in Taiwan, Zhang managed to grant journalists who visited him a few 'semi-underground' interviews. In those conversations, he revealed a modicum of his beliefs and feelings about the Xi'an Incident and other events in his life. He repeatedly stressed that a person only lived for others. In retrospect, it is hard to determine whether Christian philosophy dominated his thinking, or whether it was something in his nature that drew him towards Christianity and led him to appease others. In general, he said little about matters that captivated the Chinese public and intrigued researchers. He delved into the study of the Ming dynasty and Christian philosophy. Sometimes it appeared as if he steeped himself in those subjects in order to escape the bitter reality that surrounded him. Another hobby that captivated him was cultivating orchids, which was an additional way to pull himself out of the depths of despair into a wondrous, wonderful world. The orchid was considered a flower of the privileged, the wealthy and the connoisseurs, and was even a symbol of the purity of the scholar. Guy de Maupassant wrote about it with great passion, because the flower is not only aesthetic but also has erotic traits, and taking care of it may be addictive.

One of the first journalists to interview Zhang was Yu Heng. Having discovered where Zhang was being held, Yu was able to outwit the Young Marshal's guards and make contact with him, and continued to communicate with him during the 1970s and 1980s. His first contact with Zhang was on 25 June 1969, when the latter was hospitalized in Taipei. The medical staff asked Yu to leave, but before he did he managed to obtain from Zhang the number of his PO mailbox and his telephone number. 'We can talk about orchids,' Zhang managed to call out after the guest, in an attempt to clear himself of any prohibited intentions. After Zhang's discharge from hospital on the morning of 1 July, he and Yu were able to find different circuitous ways to meet in order for Zhang

to be interviewed. The two met a total of eleven times between 1969 and 1986. On the basis of these conversations Yu Heng published a book, which became a sensation among readers of Chinese. The Xi'an Incident was conjured up again, and again Zhang's behavior in the fateful days of 1936 was publicly debated.

During the 1980s, Zhang gradually abandoned his study of the Ming dynasty, which had helped him maintain his sanity during his prolonged isolation, and signed up for a correspondence course in theology. He began publishing essays about faith and theology and worked on the translation into Chinese of a book about Christianity.

Previous to that, in the mid 1960s, Zhang had been permitted to build himself a house and live in it, on condition that it was guarded by a special intelligence unit. He even received a piece of land for the purpose. In interviews given late in his life, Zhang said that the owner of this plot of land refused to sell it to him. Chiang Ching-kuo promised to settle the affair but Zhang was determined in his own refusal to receive any help in the matter. If the man did not want to sell, he said, so be it. Another plot of land was found, which this time Zhang was able to purchase. He invested a large sum of money in the construction of his new house and the completed structure reminded him of his home in Beijing.

One of the most fascinating friendships attached to Zhang's prolonged imprisonment was that with his jailer's son, Chiang Ching-kuo, who was about ten years younger than Zhang. Chiang considered the Young Marshal to be like an older brother and he greatly respected him. He first met Zhang when he returned to China from the Soviet Union in 1937, shortly after Zhang's arrest, after having spent ten years there, first as a student at the central political military academy and later as a worker in heavy industry. In fact, the young Chiang was a hostage in the hands of the Soviet Communist Party and the ruler, Stalin. During all those years spent in the Soviet Union, Chiang was kept under the strict supervision of the party and domestic security authorities and did not enjoy total freedom. His return to China was only made possible due to the political rapprochement between Nanjing and Moscow and the creation of a national front between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party. Chiang Ching-kuo returned to his homeland with his Russian wife and his two sons. The close relationship between him and the Young Marshal extended for over fifty years, until the death of Chiang in 1988, when he was serving as President of the Chinese Republic on the island of Taiwan.

Chiang visited his father's prisoner regularly and encouraged him as much as he could. According to one version, he also occasionally took

him out staying well into the night for some 'gentlemen's entertainment', including drinking and visits to houses of pleasure. The two had a special understanding and they were very open with each other. Chiang Ching-kuo continued visiting Zhang even after he was appointed head of China's secret services on the death of Dai Li. The special political unit that handled Zhang's detention was subordinate to him. After Zhang had been made to stay at a number of different locations, Chiang ordered the unit to treat the Young Marshal well and even instructed them to have him moved to a more permanent place, Yangmingshan in northern Taipei. However, also at his new residence the tight guard kept around Zhang remained in place, although it was presented as 'protection' for the prisoner. A sort of moat surrounded Zhang's house, separating Zhang from the outside world. Even as he climbed the ranks of the Nationalist administration on the island of Taiwan, before his father's death, until he became the minister of defense, Chiang continued visiting Zhang regularly. He also often invited both him and Zhao to his house. In 1961, Zhang was invited with Chiang Kai-shek's knowledge to watch the military parade for the anniversary of the Republic of China from the dignitaries' reviewing stand. In long conversations into the night the two discussed personal and national issues. In one such conversation, Zhang went as far as advising his friend to focus on building the new Taiwan. 'After all', he reminded him, 'you cannot, despite your financial resources and power, rule over the entire mainland again.' And so, to an extent, Zhang became part of the conception of the idea of a separate economic development of Taiwan.

Chiang Kai-shek died on 5 April 1975. So ended an era of more than twenty-five years of him as the incontestable leader of the Republic of China. With the encouragement of Chiang Ching-kuo, the leader's son, and Soong Meiling, the leader's wife, Zhang came to bid farewell to his friend and rival of the past decades. In the condolence book, he wrote a eulogy praising the deceased person and stressed that he was a blood relative (*gu rou*) of his. In the authoritarian regime that prevailed in Taiwan it was only natural for the next president to be none other than the son of the previous one, and in 1978 Chiang Ching-kuo was formally elected President. However, the death of the Generalissimo and the appointment of a new president, Zhang's friend, did not lead to his awaited release. The son was loyal to his father's request 'not to release the tiger to the mountain'.

Henceforth, Zhang avoided burdening his friend Chiang Ching-kuo with frequent meetings, but their relationship remained close. In 1979, Zhang participated in the mid-autumn traditional Chinese harvest

festival and even attended the first anniversary of Chiang's election as President of the state. The most prominent personalities of Taiwan came to the event. On Taiwan's National Day, known also as Double Ten Day – 10 October 1911, the tenth day of the tenth month that is commemorated, particularly in Taiwan, as the anniversary of the Wuchang Uprising that marks the beginning of the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China – Zhang was again invited to the President's residence. These increasingly frequent invitations testified that the state's most famous prisoner had become a desirable persona in the Republic's corridors of power. However, this did nothing to change the fact that Zhang remained a prisoner in his home and was devoid of certain basic freedoms.

In 1980, a few days after the national holiday, to whose central events Zhang and his wife were again invited by the President, in a rare gesture, Chiang Ching-kuo allowed his prisoner to go to the island of Jinmen (Quemoy) near the island of Mazu that was close to mainland China. The entourage was accompanied by Chiang Tzu-yi, the deputy secretary-general of the President's house, and Ma En-lan, the deputy chief-of-staff. They all took a special flight to the island. There, on the most important military base of the Republic of China, Zhang visited military units. It was a semi-official visit with national and even patriotic dimensions. It largely signaled the beginning of Zhang's rehabilitation after all those decades in which he was an outcast and isolated. It was also the first time in more than thirty years that Zhang's eyes saw the Chinese mainland. The civilian and military press and the Chinese press in the United States covered the visit, and one of the articles carried a photograph with the caption: 'Zhang Xueliang looks at his homeland'.

The Young Marshal was so touched by the visit that he quoted especially for the occasion the poem of Yu Youren, Taiwan's national poet, *Yearning for Home*:

> Bury me on the high mountains,
> So that I can look at my mainland from afar,
> I can't see the mainland,
> Thus my sufferings are harsh and many.[4]

In 1984, Chiang Tsao, one of Zhang's biggest admirers, wrote a poem in honor of his continuing torments and his unfair treatment by the Generalissimo. 'We, your friends, are of no avail, | Even the trees that you planted in your homeland await you motionless,' Chiang wrote. When Zhang received the poem, he did not show any identification with it nor

even any appreciation of it, as could have been expected. 'I am old and my hair has grayed,' he said. 'Your struggle cannot help me. God's grace is as high as the heavens, what is on the earth passes, sails away, sails away.' Thus, he again emphasized his disinterest in domestic Chinese politics and its intrigues, which for him had lost their meaning. As if he were an indifferent son of the gods, Zhang refused to play the games of mortals. A few years later, Zhang wrote Lu Youren a poem of his own in simple words: 'I am clean and what I did for my people I did as did our national hero who liberated the island of Taiwan from the Dutch and returned it to us.[5] | I acted for the country, and not in order to appease anyone.'

On 13 January 1988, President Chiang Ching-kuo, Zhang's close friend, passed away. The next day, the leaders of the nation visited Chiang's home to comfort his family. Among them was the Young Marshal, now aged 87. He entered the condolence hall leaning on his wife's arm. Few of those present identified the guest. Even reporters and sensation-seeking members of the general public did not realize who stood before them. Zhang told those present that when he came to Taiwan the island was not developed and prosperous, and now it was a model of success thanks to the acts of Chiang Ching-kuo.

A month after the death of Chiang, reports began to appear in the Taiwanese press about the impending day of Zhang's release. Although on the whole newspapers in Taiwan were quite cautious in their reports on Zhang and the historic rift between him and Chiang, there was now a growing criticism of the excessively long imprisonment. The government, wrote one newspaper, must correct the historic injustice. In March, several members of the legislative assembly brought the matter up with the government. It was the first time that anyone had dared to raise the idea publicly of freeing the aged prisoner, and this sparked off enthusiastic reactions among wide circles in Taiwan. Soong Meiling sent a representative on her behalf to visit Zhang in his enclosed residence to inquire about his mood and whether he meant to take advantage of the new atmosphere in order to further his cause.

That year, 1988, the alumni of Dongbei University sent Zhang an invitation on behalf of their organization asking him to honor them with his presence at a ceremony that was to take place in Washington, DC on 16 April to mark the university's sixty-fifth anniversary and the sixtieth anniversary of his appointment as its president. The alumni expressed their willingness to come to Taiwan especially to deliver their invitation to Zhang.

Dongbei University in the city of Shenyang in Manchuria was surely one of the most unique projects in which Zhang was involved until

the Japanese occupation of 1931. Although he had at first considered opening a new university with his own money, when the heads of the institution came to him asking for his help, he donated large sums to the university and was immediately appointed its president. As president he treated the university as if it were his private estate. He was, after all, its chief donor and the strongest man in the province. In one case, the professors went on strike, demanding elections for the various offices in the institution and an end to the appointments made on behalf of Zhang. In response, Zhang sent soldiers from his army to the campus and explained that there were three options: for the university to close down altogether; for him to resign and for the institution to cease operating because of a lack of financial resources; and for the army to maintain order at the University, which would operate on his orders alone. According to one testimony, he even considered executing the professor who led the strike, and only avoided doing so after his personal secretary intervened. As previously mentioned, after Manchuria fell into the hands of the Japanese, the university was relocated to Shaanxi province.

Zhang Xueliang's new and strong position in Taiwan was now a fact. Invitations from Chinese organizations and institutions all over the world flowed into his house. He became a sought-after and accepted figure in the Chinese world and its diasporas.

In an open letter published on 25 March 1988 that Zhang dictated to his niece (referred to by Dou Yingtai in his book on the clan of Zhang Xueliang), he gave another window on his life story. In it, Zhang wrote:

> Since I moved to Taiwan, my days have been simple. I live with my wife, plant and cultivate flowers, go fishing and read. I am very happy. Many years ago I became a Christian and learned to understand many things, but did not study world events. Recently, the general public has begun to show interest in me and my family. I am glad and grateful to everyone, but I must note that some of the things published about me are not true. I have always maintained a silence and did not want to speak now either. But since many people have come to visit me lately and this has caused me to lose my serenity and my family's serenity, I would like to stress that my wife and I are free. We are under no constraints and we are not interested at all in changing our lifestyle. I am getting older, my eyesight and hearing are impaired, many of my friends have passed away. Therefore I do not want to receive guests and I ask those who care about me not to bother me. A few associations of Chinese overseas have recently invited me to

> speak to them, but under doctor's orders I must refuse. May I add that my state of mind today is as described in the New Testament, when the apostle Paul said that he spoke from the bottom of his heart, and I ask you to please forgive me.

Zhang's Christianity was unique to him and not necessarily the teaching of any particular school of thought. Those Christian elements that he had absorbed and interpreted were undoubtedly influenced by Chinese culture and his special fate. As an expression of part of the philosophy that he had adopted and created, he tended to belittle the importance of money and honor and to consider material things as marginal.

Once the letter was published, the press began discussing his lifestyle and the question of the extent of his real freedom. After the death of Chiang, Lee Teng-hui became the ruler of Taiwan. Lee belonged to a different group than that of the Chiang family. Even though he was a Guomindang member, the local Taiwanese element in his biography was significant. Lee was a Christian and religious precepts played a central role in his life. He testified that he had read the Scriptures from beginning to end many times over. Belief in God, according to him, did not depend on seeing God with one's own eyes or on a logical proof of his existence. God was invisible, but he exists if one believed that he exists. The most important thing that he learned from Christianity was the idea of love.

Lee seriously deliberated over the balance between Christianity and Confucianism but his personal conclusion was clear: unfortunately, Confucianism lacked attention to the concepts of death and resurrection. For him, adapting Christianity was a sort of a breakthrough. His baptism was a turning point in his life.[6] It is no wonder then that along with the dawn of a new era in the life of the Chinese political entity on the island of Taiwan, Zhang Xueliang now had a close and special partner in the President. Officially, Lee continued the tradition of his predecessors and kept the Young Marshal under a sort of house arrest. But, in actuality, he did not avoid inviting Zhang and his wife to his home, where they discussed various issues related to Christian philosophy and theology.

In December 1988, Zhang and his wife celebrated Christmas at the President's house. Over a year later, they celebrated Zhang's ninetieth birthday (according to the Chinese calendar) with him, and Zhang received a presidential gift. In 1991, they celebrated the Chinese New Year together, and the President expressed an interest in the Marshal's life and the well-being of his family. Zhang was moved by this and told

the President that he was well and happy with his quiet life. However, he took advantage of one of their conversations and expressed his desire to travel to the United States to visit his relatives. Lee agreed and even made sure that the Marshal received help in making the arrangements for the trip. That gesture, though, did not constitute an official and unequivocal release from the prolonged punishment. As strange as it may sound, the Chinese logical paradox remained intact – the President of Taiwan could do a lot for his friend, including letting him leave the country, but he could not release him officially and publicly from the bonds of his eternal imprisonment. It was as if Lee himself were bound by invisible chains to the Guomindang ethos and the mythological leader's wish to avenge his humiliation. Therefore, Zhang's status did not change. That was supposedly not a problem because the Taipei establishment had claimed all along that Zhang was a free citizen and under no constraints, so that there was nothing to release him from. If Zhang chose a life of abstinence, then that was his right and he was free to do so. The aged Zhang did go to the USA on a family visit but he then returned to Taiwan.

What was the meaning of freedom in a society that itself lived under a stranglehold and under siege, unknown to many in the world? Actually, Taiwan was now a political system that had been created on the island by refugees from the mainland. It was managed semi-militarily. Like its famous prisoner, it too had no formal legal basis and was hung between hope and despair, waiting desperately for the international community to establish its status.

One fact became crystal clear: Zhang's public letter temporarily took the wind out of the sails of those who wanted his immediate release. The public campaign for his freedom nearly stopped, although there were some who persisted in believing that it should continue. In December 1988, like a genie refusing to return to its bottle, the Xi'an Incident returned to the headlines. It was on the anniversary of the historic event. Again the well-known call on the authorities to free the prisoner was voiced.

Soong Meiling did not stay for long on the island after the death of her adopted son, Chiang Ching-kuo. She left Taiwan and went to live in the United States but maintained her correspondence with Zhang. Now, too, she wrote to him in English. According to one explanation, it was more comfortable for her to write in English than in Chinese, even though it remained not so for him.

A year later, in 1989, Dongbei University's alumni once more invited Zhang to visit the USA, this time to celebrate his eighty-eighth birthday (his eighty-ninth according to Chinese tradition). Zhang, who was born on

3 June 1901, had since his father's murder by the Japanese on that date in 1928 brought forward his birthday celebrations by two days. But this time, again, as with the previous year's invitation, Zhang refused to attend.

In March 1989, Professor Wang Zhi, the head of the China Department at New York Public Library and the son of one of Zhang's supporters, traveled to Taiwan to meet Zhang and his wife. Wang knew the details of Zhang's life and had waited for years for the opportunity to speak to him and interview him. In their conversation, Zhang explained that there were things that he did not want to talk about. 'If I say I am good', he claimed, 'they will say I am boasting. If I justify myself I will be harming others, and that is why I rarely speak to people or meet them.' As far as Zhang was concerned, his life story was not even worth being written about.

'I studied the Ming dynasty', Zhang told his guest, 'and I discovered that history is subjective and not objective.' Then his wife interjected, 'Don't say that, only God knows.' The two discussed Christianity and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Zhang said that even though he did not agree with Khomeini's methods, from the point of view of a devout Moslem, if Khomeini really was the leader, then he had the right to fight for the religious principles that he believed in. Zhang explained to the professor:

> My approach to religion is open, and I am influenced by the Lamaist approach. In Hankou I met a Lama monk, a 'living Buddha', who was eating meat. I asked him, 'How dare you?' And he replied: 'Why are you surprised? In the northwest of our country there is not enough grass and vegetation, and eating meat is a necessity. We are allowed to eat animals and are strictly forbidden to be restricted by the principles of religion. To survive, Buddha is even allowed to kill a human being. It is the intention that matters.

When the two started talking about politics in Taiwan, especially about the Progressive Party, one of whose principles was the independence of Taiwan, Zhang made harsh accusations against the professor. He said that the party and its activists did what they did for the sake of oppositional defiance and that they lacked a worthy national awareness. 'They want independence in the name of democracy!' he posited. When asked about the Nationalist Party, the Guomindang, Zhang laughed and said: 'I am an old Party member but I left long ago.'

In 1990, the Taiwanese newspaper, *Zhongguo Shibao*, marked Zhang's ninetieth birthday according to the Chinese calendar. Zhang refused to

participate in the planned public festivities to mark the occasion, but his friend, Soong Meiling, sent him a messenger with an impressive bouquet of flowers that spoke for itself. Warm regards also came from the mainland, from Deng Yingchao, the widow of Zhou Enlai, the senior leader. Lee Teng-hui, the President of Taiwan, and his deputy were among those who wished the Marshal a long life. Zhang then decided to agree to cooperate but his wife objected, and according to testimony that he gave a few years later, he convinced her to change her mind, realizing that the public birthday festivities could have led to his full independence.

The event had a dual significance. One, that it was the first time that the Young Marshal's birthday was being celebrated publicly, and two that this time it was clear to all that Zhang had been rehabilitated. There were even some who interpreted the widely publicized celebration as an indirect confirmation of Zhang's release from his prolonged imprisonment.

Indeed, Zhang's imprisonment seems simply to have gradually melted away. As early as his sixtieth birthday in 1961, there were some who said that the Young Marshal was no longer in prison. Then as now, the statement was only partly true. Now the turning point could be seen much more clearly, but full liberation could not be discussed yet.

At the party that was held in his honor, Zhang thanked everyone for their greetings and especially noted those who cared about him during his long years of loneliness and hardship. He said that the compliments heaped on him were not true and added, 'I wasted my life away. I contributed nothing to society or to the nation.' In the spirit of the religious belief that he had adopted over the passing years, he stressed that he was nothing but 'a sinner of the first degree' and was not worthy of the honor being bestowed on him. 'I am embarrassed, after all without the mercy of Jesus I would never have come this far. I never believed that I would live to be ninety. I cannot hear well and my vision is limited but thank God I am not blind.' He promised to try to serve the nation as he had wished to do in his youth.

Nobody brought up past events at the party but there were those who asked Zhang why he did not write his memoirs. Zhang responded that he learned from his studies of the Ming dynasty that the history written by those who were players on the stage of public life is inaccurate. 'If I write I will be criticized by the members of my generation, and in response I will have to praise myself. Anyway, a return to the past would be too difficult for me emotionally, and I cannot do it.'

His words were steeped in Christian religious formulas. To him, the existence of God could not be contested. According to Chinese tradition,

it did not occur to him that there was a conflict between his practicing Buddhism, being well rooted in Confucian ethics and being steeped in Christianity, which he saw as the highest level of human faith.

As for his personal life, Zhang confessed that his wife scorned him for eating too much. 'But how can I help it when she is such a good cook?' he asked. He stated that he would have liked to read more, but it was hard for him and he needed to use a magnifying glass. Watching television was not easy either. However, he did not avoid criticizing the media. He felt that the journalists did not examine the subjects of their reports in the right context and that they lacked proper historical perspective.

8
Twilight and Death in Hawaii, 1991–2001

In the last decade of his life between 1990 and 2001, Zhang Xueliang witnessed the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the changes in the Balkans, the rise of a global economy with its political effects and consequences and the increasing grasp of internationally organized terrorism. He lived in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, under government supervision, at least officially, and then moved to Hawaii in the USA. There, he still showed interest in world affairs and in the attack that destroyed the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001. About two weeks later, he was hospitalized in Honolulu and died there.

* * *

In early 1991, more than fifty-four years after he was imprisoned, Zhang was permitted to travel abroad for the first time. He flew to the USA on 10 March and returned to Taiwan on 25 June. Before his trip he met with the President of Taiwan, Lee Teng-hui, who already knew that Zhang wanted to meet the members of his family who lived in America. 'Yes', the President told him, 'a trip abroad would be good for you.' Indeed, after the death of Chiang Kai-shek's son, a new regime emerged on the island and conditions ripened to ease the life of the old man who stood at the threshold of his tenth decade of life but was still called the Young Marshal. He could now be interviewed as much as he wanted and lead his life however he wanted.

Zhang then traveled to visit his daughter and son who lived in the United States. His first wife had died just before he arrived on the American continent and was buried in Los Angeles. A burial plot was reserved for him next to her. On 8 April 1991, while he was on his family visit, Zhang spoke at Columbia University. When he mentioned Chiang Kai-shek and his son, Ching-kuo, he added that many people urged him to write his memoirs. He admitted that he did have a draft of his memoirs, but

when he read it he realized that he had been too sincere and honest in his words. He thus believed that he could not publish what he had written. Zhang noted that he used to say that he hated Japan, but that did not mean that he hated the Japanese. He also recounted that when he was young he wanted to be a doctor, but instead from the age of 22 he found himself to be a military man trained to kill people. When he was asked about the abduction of Chiang Kai-shek, he reiterated the version that he had voiced many times over that he, and he alone, was responsible for the act.

On 30 May, while he was still in America, he celebrated his ninety-first birthday in Manhattan. At the same time, during the fourth conference of the People's Seventh Congress, a declaration came out of Beijing that Zhang was a unique figure in Chinese history and that he was invited to return to the mainland at any time. Through Lu Zhengcao, who was a personal friend for decades and who lived in China and came to New York for a visit, Zhang was given a message in the last days of May confirming that the authorities in the capital would indeed welcome him. Lu even gave him a letter from Deng Yingchao, Zhou Enlai's widow, saying that the invitation to come to the People's Republic of China was made on behalf of the leader, Deng Xiaoping. Zhang was emotional when he expressed his gratitude for the gesture and he praised the late Zhou. He added that he would be glad to return to the mainland and include a visit to his homeland of Manchuria, but because of his poor health he could not make the trip. Such a journey, even though it had been suggested by friends during the last years and was in keeping with his desire to visit his father's grave, did not seem desirable to him in the complex political reality of relations between Beijing and Taipei. There may have even been a tacit agreement that the permission granted to Zhang to leave Taiwan depended on his not visiting the mainland.

There is no doubt that Zhang understood that a visit to China could complicate relations between the two entities on either side of the Straits. He often stated that there was no place for Taiwanese independence and that a Chinese person living in Taiwan should not say 'I am Taiwanese,' but 'I am Chinese!' He supported the unification of China, namely attaching Taiwan to the great Chinese 'empire', and even expressed his willingness in principle to help such a process to be realized. In so doing, he remained faithful to the classic position of the ruling party in Taiwan, the Guomindang.

Until his death in the autumn of 2001, Zhang avoided creating a situation that would make the authorities in Taiwan or the Beijing government uncomfortable. His hesitant behavior might have been a result

of his prolonged imprisonment, during which it looked as if he had lost his ability to make decisions, in the same way as he had lost the right to run most aspects of his own life. His basic character traits, which had made him a warrior until the Manchurian Incident, and maybe even the Xi'an Incident, had diminished. Now, at his advanced age, he was less decisive.

In 1994, Zhang and his wife decided to leave Taiwan forever and to sell the house that they had lived in for thirty years. They also sold their unique art collection through Sotheby's, for a few million dollars, and made an official application to become American citizens.

In 1995, the two left for the USA and chose to live in a luxury apartment at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Honolulu, Hawaii. From his new home, the Manchurian general could watch the surfers on the waves gliding towards Waikiki Beach.

In the last years of his life Zhang's Christian faith grew even stronger, and in an interview given to the Voice of America radio station he said that his belief in God had strengthened him and allowed him to survive for such a long time in prison. 'I owe thanks to God,' he said. He often explained that while in his youth he was restless and faithless, at least in that respect he had changed for the better. 'Indeed', he joked, 'for years before my imprisonment, I often imagined that a long imprisonment would give me the quiet and introspection that are not possible in the usual course of life. And then, as if by invitation, this came along and completely changed me.' He now often tended to blame himself, quoting St Paul's epistle from the New Testament, 'I am the sinner'.

At the end of May 1999, Zhang celebrated his ninety-ninth birthday (according to the Chinese calendar) in a church in Hawaii. A new century dawned. The Young Marshal had only two more years left to live, somewhere on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, far from the homeland that he had not seen for more than fifty years. Now at a ripe old age and ill, he sat for most of the hours of the day in a wheelchair. And as he often said, and for an outsider this might seem like a contradiction of the appeasing Christian spirit that he had embraced, 'I used to hate the Japanese generals and I had no greater desire in life but to fight Japan. I am very sorry I did not have the opportunity to face them and fight. If I could have done that I would have, and I may have died on the battlefield.' When asked whether he would have done what he did if he had the opportunity to relive his life all over again, he answered in the affirmative with no hesitation. For the protest that he had staged in Xi'an for his ideal, he would be willing to sacrifice more than five decades of another cycle of life. Indeed, as he said before leaving for the USA, his act of forcing

the government to confront the Japanese invaders was in accordance with his understanding of the situation and was a historical event that had freed the nation with a single blow from the entanglement in which it was in. For some time at least (until the outbreak of the Civil War in China following World War II), things became simpler and everyone was mobilized to fight the external enemy.

On 28 September 2001, Zhang Xueliang was hospitalized in Honolulu with pneumonia. His wife, Zhao Yidi, was no longer alive, having died a year earlier. On the night of 9 October his condition deteriorated. His son, who was at his bedside, and other relatives, and even Zhang himself, asked the doctors during his last days to avoid any invasive treatment. On the evening of Sunday, 14 October, the Young Marshal passed away.

When they received word of Zhang's death, the diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China immediately sent their condolences to the family. Jiang Zemin, the Chinese President, included in his message words of praise for the deceased, portraying him as a patriot and a national hero. The People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing also sent its condolences.

About five-hundred people attended the funeral on 23 October 2001. Most of them had been connected to his long personal history. The Foreign Minister of Taiwan, Tien Hung-mao, journeyed from Taipei as the representative of President Chen Shui-bian, the fourth president of the island republic. Wreaths were laid on his grave on behalf of Jiang Zemin and the Chinese Communist Party's Standing Committee.

At the time that Zhang Xueliang was laid to rest, Soong Meiling was an elderly woman of 103, and all that she could do was to send a personal emissary on her behalf to the funeral of her friend of more than seventy years. Soong, 'the Empress of China', 'the Dragon Lady', died two years later at the age of 105. World leaders such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill and other men who knew her had been entranced by her charm. She was beautiful, alluring, strong, rich and intelligent. However, Eleanor Roosevelt was not above mocking Soong, and said that 'she can talk compellingly about democracy, but she does not really know what democracy is'. Joseph Stilwell, the American general who helped China in World War II, was very close to the Chiangs, but was also a critic of the Nationalist government of China. He said of Soong that she was 'direct, aggressive, energetic, loved power, fame and flattery. She can charm anyone and she knows it.' Domestically, in China, the criticism was harsh. The names of Soong and her family were often connected to huge corruption scandals involving money and power. In fact, from the outset, the match between Soong Meiling, the daughter

of a wealthy family often called the 'Soong dynasty', and Chiang Kai-shek, who was the symbol of military power and authority, drew bitter criticism and protests. In terms of the 'verdict of history', if there is such a thing, it can be stated that the Guomindang Party, under the influence of the Soong and Chiang families, failed to provide a suitable treatment for China's ailments. The interests of large property-owners and other landowners were paramount for the government, and it feared economic, agrarian and political and administrative reforms. Many would say that it paid a heavy price for that: losing legitimacy.

After Soong Meiling's death, Jonathan Fenby, Chiang Kai-shek's biographer, published an unusual and unknown account of an event that was connected to her. In the Chinese wartime capital of Chongqing in the winter of 1942, she met Wendell Willkie, the Republican who was running against Roosevelt in the American presidential elections that were going to take place in 1944. Like many others before him, Willkie too fell into her clutches, she enchanted him. She was the symbol of modernity in the torn and traditional exotic country. She drove a car on the Shanghai bund wearing trousers, negotiated for arms, munitions and military equipment with generals from all over the world and promoted the affairs of the Chinese Air Force, for which she was responsible for quite some time.

She was over forty-five years of age and at her womanly prime when she appeared wearing a heavy Air Force marshal's coat thrown about her shoulders at a tea party for the American guest, who was a candidate with good chances to be elected as the next president of the superpower. When she met the 50-year-old Willkie, she told him briefly after a conversation between them that he had 'astonishing power'. That flattering comment made the guest lose his emotional balance. He asked one of his associates to replace him at the handshaking ceremony and disappeared from the party. Perceptive observers noticed that Soong, too, was no longer circulating among the guests. Only at four in the morning did Willkie return to his quarters, and not before the Generalissimo himself went looking in vain for his wife and the guest. 'When Willkie returned,' a traveling companion testified, 'he walked around arrogant, boastful and as merry as a college student after a successful date with a girl.'

When Soong Meiling visited America about two months after the event, she courted Willkie vigorously. She told his good friend, in Antony and Cleopatra style, that if Willkie did win the upcoming elections she would rule the East and he, Willkie, would rule the West. A year earlier, when she had accompanied her husband to the Cairo Conference on the continued fighting in Eastern Asia, she had stunned the high-level

conventioneers, including Churchill and Roosevelt, with the generous slit in her black satin skirt, which, according to the testimony of one of those present, revealed 'a beautifully shapely leg'.

One cannot help but wonder about the exceeding longevity of the lives of Soong and Zhang, and at the fact that the two ironically ended their lives far away from China, in the United States, a short time apart. Zhang was buried next to his wife Zhao in a family burial plot in the Valley of the Temples, Hawaii, which had recently been purchased by his family. The gravestone was designed in accordance with instructions found in the deceased's will.

An assessment of Zhang's activities was and still is a topic of discussion on websites, in articles and in lectures. It seems to be an issue that never goes off the agenda in China, Taiwan and of Chinese communities around the world. A warlord who had participated in local wars, he was the general who never fought in the great wars of China that overtook his country during his lifetime – against the Japanese invaders and in the civil war between the Communists and Nationalists. On the one hand, some praise him without reservation and defend his decision to abandon Manchuria in the face of the Japanese assault. One Web surfer asked:

> What could the man have done when he was facing the Japanese force? After all, he was only the warlord of one force and it was not his job to defend the entire nation. Even if you did want to protect greater China, what would have been the point of marching towards a foretold death, an actual suicide, without the support of Chiang Kai-shek? Even the Red Army, which spoke so loftily of the need for an uncompromising fight against the Japanese, was unwilling to face them alone.

On the other hand, there are those who spare no effort in criticizing the Young Marshal and think that he should have been tried for not firing even a single bullet at the Japanese who had invaded Manchuria. 'You took your soldiers with you and abandoned your homeland of Manchuria,' one writer accused the dead Zhang.

In Taiwan, where an internal debate broke out at the beginning of the twenty-first century over the island's status and the question of local nationalism compared to that of mainland China, the evaluation of Zhang's action has a current political aspect. The 'green' bloc opines that the rule of the Guomindang and its leader, Chiang Kai-shek, was merely a 'foreign power' forced upon the island. Zhang Xueliang is identified with that rule. The 'blue' traditional bloc supports the Guomindang

line. In this case, the criticism of Zhang comes from a different direction: were he loyal to the Nationalist Party and its leader, the Communists may have not come to power on the mainland. Researchers from the young generation in Taiwan do not tend to join the existing camps. They try to reevaluate Zhang Xueliang's activities objectively. His contribution to the unification of China, the hypothesis that he caused the defeat of the Nationalist regime and his definition as a 'playboy' who did everything for his own self-glorification and to carve out an independent path for himself, are all lumped together.

And in any case, it is evident that one of the historic contributions (accepted in retrospect) of Zhang and his father is the inclusion of Manchuria in the new China under Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist rule. Even the temporary disconnection of the province from China, from the Manchurian Incident of 1931 until the Japanese surrender in 1945, did not dispel the idea that both parts of China are one. There are those who still credit the development of the province back then to the Young Marshal (even though some of the projects were in fact started when his father, Zhang Zuolin, was the ruler): building the extensive transportation system; building the Huludao port in southwestern Liaoning province that competed with the Dalian port; the exploitation and development of mines and forests; and, of course, standing up to the Japanese and the Soviets who plotted against the province's autonomy.

As for the Xi'an Incident, the critics are many. Even when the Young Marshal was under house arrest in Taiwan, Hu Shi, one of China's leading intellectuals and critics of the Communist Party, said that if it were not for the Xi'an Incident, the Chinese Communist Party would have simply disappeared. Even General Chiang Wei-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek's second son and a friend of Zhang, held a similar opinion. He often said that when Zhang was drunk, he would burst out crying and say of the Xi'an Incident, 'Little brother, I made a very big mistake!'

One Web surfer agreed with that opinion after the Young Marshal died:

> You deserted and did not properly fight the Communists as you were ordered to do. Chiang Kai-shek's imprisonment only helped the Red Army and led the leader to fail in his mission. You were a bad person, a playboy, a spoiled son who threw away his father's money and managed to ruin everything he built. Your disloyalty attested to your impertinence in Confucian terms. Had you come to your homeland China a wave of protests would have swept the land.

The critic wondered why this man was ever called a hero.

A few weeks after Zhang's death, his niece, Zhang Luheng, who lives in Hong Kong, summarized her uncle's life by saying that he lived in a tragic reality:

> He suffered and had no freedom; he went to heaven like a star never having managed to return to his homeland for decades of prison and exile. He did not control his destiny. Even days before his death, when he felt ill, he did not complain and sometimes even made jokes. He tried not to be a burden on those around him. After the events of September 11 he went to the trouble of asking where my sister and I had been at the time of the explosion.

Indeed, the Young Marshal, until his emigration to the USA, had aged without his freedom. There was something surrealistic about the connection between him, a son of the first days of the twentieth century, and international terror, accelerated globalization, the world's courtship of the emerging Chinese power and the rest of the events connected to China. To someone studying the story of Zhang Xueliang's life, it might look as if the man stood on the stage of history, was permitted to deliver a single line at the beginning of the play, attract the audience's attention for a short moment and then later recite only a single lame line. He was then ordered to return to the corner of the stage and watch his fellow players and analyze their moves and disappear. One group of players came and another went and he was forbidden to take part in the play. He was destined to be one of those history makers who are not as well-known as perhaps they should be. And he, in resignation and with philosophical stoicism, stayed quiet, accepting his fate.

Notes

Introduction

1. Zhang's story can be better understood in the context of modern Chinese history and its connection to world events. Each chapter of this book is prefaced with a few lines describing events in China and the world during the period expanded upon in the chapter.
2. Xi'an ('western peace'), capital of the province of Shaanxi, was one of China's most ancient capitals and was considered the biggest city in Asia, and possibly in the whole world, in ancient times. For hundreds of years the city marked the beginning of the Silk Road that connected China, the Middle East and Europe. In its environs is the tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang, who united China and died in 210 BC. The tomb is guarded by thousands of terracotta soldiers who represent real soldiers. In northern China there are two provinces with names that sound alike. One is Shaanxi (on the first syllable the tone dips and rises, on the second syllable the tone is neutral), containing Yan'an and Xi'an. The meaning of the name is 'west of the mountain pass called Shan Xi An'. The other province is also called Shanxi, but in this case both the first and the second syllable have neutral tones. The name means 'west of the mountains' and the reference is to the Taihang Mountains that run down from north to south between this province and its neighbor, Hebei province. The events described in this book took place in the province of Shaanxi, not Shanxi.
3. The reference is to a sort of traditional spiritual authorization, decree or mandate, given by the heavens to the ruler to rule. It was a rhetorical political element meant to emphasize a new emperor's right to govern by the grace of a higher power. Naturally, it was frequently explained that a ruler failed and fell because that divine grace was removed from him.
4. Confucius, or by his Chinese name Kong Fuzi (K'ung fu-tzu) the wise Kong, was born in the year 551 BC in the state of Lu in eastern China, today the province of Shandong. He served in different offices in his homeland and reached the rank of minister, retired from affairs of the state and devoted himself to teaching, editing classical books and writing an essay about the history of the state of Lu. Confucius' Analects are considered a reliable source for the study of his own philosophy, as opposed to the philosophy that developed after his death throughout the generations. See, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Dim Cheuk Lau (New York: Penguin, 1979).
5. Ibid., 13:20.
6. Ibid., 4:18.

Chapter 1

1. The uprising was named after a secret Chinese society, whose members instigated it. They combined physical and spiritual warfare and operated to expel

foreigners from the Chinese Empire and eradicate their cultural, religious, commercial and technological influences.

2. A distinction is being made here between the Manchu people – members of non-Chinese tribes (non-Han) – who established their power on the northern borders of China in the sixteenth century, threatened the Ming dynasty that ruled China and ultimately conquered China in 1644, turning Manchuria into their homeland, and the Manchurians – Chinese (Han) – who immigrated to the provinces of Manchuria ('Dongbei' in Chinese). The Manchu had their own language. They established the Qing dynasty, which ruled over the whole of China before the dynasty collapsed in 1911. The Chinese gradually entrenched themselves in Manchuria and the Manchu became a small minority.
3. Between the years 1928 and 1949, the capital of China was Nanjing and the name of Beijing was changed to Beiping, meaning 'northern peace'. In this book, the city will be referred to as Beijing, even when dealing with the period when it was officially called Beiping.
4. Years later, Zhang Xueliang would testify that the wars between the warlords, despite the serious efforts invested in them, were not 'serious'. Indeed, it appears that in the spirit of Chinese tradition, the rivals maintained social relations in the midst of fighting. The wives of the commanders who were fighting one another even met often to play mahjong.
5. The term 'soviet' was intentionally used by the Chinese and meant in the sense of a 'council'. Based on the workers' councils elected after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The reference here is to the territorial base that the Communists established in the countryside.
6. This term refers to the senior commander of the joint forces of land, sea and air. In the period reviewed here, this title was used by Francisco Franco, the head of the Spanish state, and by Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader.
7. The powerful explosion is currently illustrated by audiovisual devices in the Museum of Shenyang (the city's name today) to mark the Japanese occupation and killings in Manchuria. Considering the material that has been collected, the theory about possible Soviet involvement in the assassination does not seem to be sufficiently reliable.
8. A Chinese game named after a downy bird, usually for four players. Tradition dates it back to the days of Confucius. The game includes 136 or 144 pieces, sometimes made of ivory.
9. A daughter, Lu-ying, and three sons, Lu-xun, Lu-gan and Lu-qi (also spelled as Luying, Luxun, Lugan and Luqi).
10. According to the doctrine of Sun Yatsen, the father of the modern Chinese nation, government in China should have been characterized by what may be called 'guided democracy', namely democracy guided by the Nationalist Party that he founded. Such a form of democracy was the second of the Three People's Principles mentioned above.
11. In his conversations with interviewers as part of the Columbia University oral history project.
12. During the years of Zhang's addiction until the rehabilitation he went through in 1933, he apparently did not reach such levels of opium consumption that would have completely immobilized him. It was widely believed that the effect of the drug dissipated after a few hours, during which the user feels relaxed, attains a state of euphoria, their pain is reduced, they

become less alert, but also then suffer from fatigue and other unpleasant physiological side-effects. The drug was supplied both as a liquid and as a powder. While Zhang tended mainly to inject the drug into his body, some people inhaled it through their nostrils. The more common practice, seen in pictures from the period, was to smoke it, whether while sitting or reclining, with a device resembling a water pipe.

13. It was Mei Lanfang who brought the genre of Chinese opera to the Western world.
14. Many years later, in an interview with two Chinese women in the USA when he was in his nineties, Zhang admitted that his passion for women had been central throughout his life, and that even when he was older and became a devout Christian he did not stop courting women. According to an unauthorized account of the interview, when his third wife, Zhao Yidi (Edith Chang) – who was usually present during his interviews – left the room, he shared some rather indecent stories with the two Chinese women interviewers (mentioned above). In response, they offered to buy him a famous erotic Chinese book, which he declined with the gentlemanly argument that such a purchase would embarrass them.

Chapter 2

1. This game of strategy, which originated in China, is considered to be one of the most ancient games in the world. It served as a sort of simulation game, an exercise in military training. The player's objective is to acquire territory from his opponent through sophisticated tactics, while defending his own territories. Each player has black or white playing pieces, which are placed on the board. They represent the players' areas of control.
2. Zhang Youkun, 'Zhang Xueliang was a CCP member', *Beijing Daily*, 25 December 2003, Beijing.
3. The Comintern was the Union of Communist Parties established by Lenin to encourage proletarian revolutions all over the world. Its headquarters was in Moscow.
4. Zhou Enlai, a member of Zhang Xueliang's generation, was appointed as China's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister when the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. In his youth, he was active in the May Fourth movement, and became one of the leaders of the Chinese students' associations both at home and in Western Europe. He was also one of the first members of the Chinese Communist Party. During the period of cooperation between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, the Guomindang, he was one of the main advocates of creating and maintaining this cooperation. After the schism between the two parties in 1927, he was one of the most prominent figures in the Communist base established in the south, where he was one of Mao's loyalists. He was active in the 1930s in the efforts to create a national anti-Japanese front, and to that end was one of the main negotiators with, and at times alongside, Zhang Xueliang in Xi'an. Paradoxically, at (almost) the same moment as the negotiations were being held between the two warring sides of Zhang and Zhou on how to deal with Chiang Kai-shek's stubbornness in refusing to fight the Japanese, Zhang's own plane was being used to bomb Zhou's base.

Chapter 3

1. See Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), pp. 163–96.
2. Christopher ('Christophoros' in Greek means 'Christ-bearer') is the name of a Christian saint, a mythical figure from early Christianity. According to one legend, he was a large man who lived on the riverbank and carried people across the river. One day, he was carrying a child on his back, when suddenly the weight became so heavy that Christopher almost keeled over. 'It is no wonder', the child told him, 'you were carrying the whole world. I am Jesus Christ.'

Chapter 4

1. In some instances in the course of the translation, I have taken the liberty of turning indirect speech into direct speech. The sources for the dialogue are various books on the Xi'an Incident listed in the Select Bibliography, and Zhang's original documents deposited at Columbia University, including the oral history and so on mentioned in the Archives section of the Select Bibliography.
2. According to a Chinese myth, this emperor, the founder of the Chinese nation, lived during the third millennium century BC. He and his descendants are credited with inventing the crafts necessary for human existence.
3. 'Now, the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us' (Matthew (1:18–23), King James Bible).

Chapter 5

1. Yuan Shikai, the second President of the Republic declared in 1911, followed Sun Yatsen. In 1913, he suppressed a rebellion against his rule in several provinces.

Chapter 6

1. The Japanese initially claimed that they seized Manchuria and indeed had the right to do so, because it was not an integral part of China, but rather a Manchu territory, the Manchus' homeland.
2. Dai Li, as noted by Frederic Wakeman, who wrote an extensive study on him, had a central and elevated position in the Chinese Secret Service until his

death on 10 March 1946. Among other things, he was in charge of Chiang Kai-shek's personal security. When the leader was arrested in Xi'an, Dai Li went to the city – thereby risking his own life – in order to help alleviate the situation as much as possible and secure the leader's release from captivity. Having failed in this task, he begged forgiveness from his leader and commander and going down on his knees before him, hugged his legs and burst into tears. From then on and to his very last day he served his master with unbounded loyalty.

3. Zhang was referring to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident that occurred on 7 July 1937, on the outskirts of Beijing. This was a Japanese attack on China proper, which is to say China south of the Great Wall. This incident marked the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the war that later overlapped with World War II. However, one must not forget that for many Chinese, 18 September 1931, the beginning of the 'Manchurian Incident', is still no less important a date than that of the Marco Polo Incident, and perhaps even more so.
4. In early 1999, Zhang's third wife, Edith Chang – who was also known as Zhao Yidi – told a Hawaiin church newspaper reporter that it was a miracle that her husband had survived and that God had wanted the Marshal to live. She also saw in her own recovery from sicknesses evidence of the occurrence of miracles and of the existence of a divine providence who guards over the lives of believers as promised in the biblical verse: 'Who keeps us in life and does not allow our feet to slip' (Psalms 66:9).

Chapter 7

1. Chiang Kai-shek's book came out in December 1956 with the title of *Soviet Russia in China* (New York: Noonday Press, 1957). It was translated under the direction of Soong Meiling.
2. See: http://www.gxqzdj.gov.cn/news/view.asp?id=1894 (accessed: 28 January 2008).
3. L. B. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert* (Los Angeles, CA: Oriental Missionary Society, 1925). The book is a collection of Christian essays, prayers and meditations that are meant to fortify and inspire the reader, especially in times of trouble and crisis. It was then and remains a bestseller in devout Christian circles.
4. Free translation.
5. This was a reference to Zheng Chenggong, who liberated the island from the yoke of Dutch colonialism in early 1662.
6. Lee Teng-hui, *The Road to Democracy* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, 1999), pp. 36–44.

Select Bibliography

I Archives

The National Archives, Kew, London

Foreign Office (FO) Documents and clippings related to General Chang Hsueh-liang (371 vols): FO17053–17056, FO17059, FO17062–FO17065, FO18046, FO18047, FO18083, FO20969, FO20970, FO22159.

Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Peter and Edith Chang Papers (Chinese and English), Columbia University, New York

Correspondence, manuscripts, notes, documents, artwork, calligraphies, study material, photographs, published material and clippings. Transcripts of two oral histories by Peter H. L. Chang, detailing the various stages of the life of Peter and Edith Chang (Zhang Xueliang and Zhao Yidi).

II Memoires, diaries and contemporary publications (English)

Chiang, Kai-shek (1957) *Soviet Russia in China* (New York: Noonday Press).

Chiang, Kai-shek (1968) *As Seen through the Eyes of Foreign Friends and Journalists* (Taipei: China Publishing Company).

Ching Ling, Soong (1953) *The Struggle for New China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press).

Fenby, Jonathan (2003) *Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the China he Lost* (Reading: Free Press).

Furuya, Keiji (1981) *Chiang Kai-shek: His Life and Times* (New York: St. John's University).

Li, Laura Tyson (2003) *Madame Chiang Kai-shek: China's Eternal First Lady* (New York: Grove Press).

McCormack, Gavan (1977) *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928: China, Japan and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

Mi, Zanchen (1981) *The Life of General Yang Hucheng* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co.).

Seagrave, Sterling (1985) *The Soong Dynasty* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers).

Selle, Earl Albert (1948) *Donald of China* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers).

Taylor, Jay (2000) *The Generalissimo's Son, Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Vespa, Amleto (1938) *Secret Agent of Japan: A Handbook to Japanese Imperialism* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.).

III Select books, chapters and articles on Zhang Xueliang, his era and the Xi'an Incident (English)

Bertram, James M. (1938) *First Act in China: The Story of the Sian Mutiny* (New York: Viking Press).

Iriye, Akira (1960) 'Chang Hsueh-liang and the Japanese', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1.

Israel, John (1966) *Student Nationalism in China 1927–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

Jones, F. C. (1949) *Manchuria since 1931* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs).

Lee, Chong-Sik (1983) *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese and Soviet Interest, 1922–1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California).

Shai, Aron (2009) 'Exile in his Own Land: The Case of Zhang Xueliang', in Raoul David Findeisen, Gad C. Isay, Amira Katz-Goehr, Yuri Pines and Lihi Yariv-Laor (eds), *At Home in Many Worlds: Reading, Writing and Translating from Chinese and Jewish Cultures: Essays in Honour of Irene Eber* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).

Stewart, John R. (1936) *Manchuria since 1931* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations).

Suleski, Ronald (2002) *Civil Government in Warlord China* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing House).

Wang, Chi (ed., trans. Robert Dunn) (1989) *The Xi'an Incident*, *Chinese Studies in History*, vol. 22, no. 3.

IV Select books on Zhang Xueliang (Chinese)

Bi Wanwen 畢萬聞 (2002) *Yingxiong bense—Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi jiemi* 英雄本色 張學良口述 歷史解密 (Qualities of a Hero: Secrets of History Disclosed in an Oral Account by Zhang Xueliang) (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe).

Chang Cheng 常城 et al. (eds) (1980) *Zhang Zuolin* 張作霖 (Zhang Zuolin) (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe).

Dou Yingtai 竇應泰 (2000) *Zhang Xueliang jiazu* 張學良家族 (The Clan of Zhang Xueliang) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe).

Li Yibin 李義彬 (1998) *Zhenjing shijie de yi mu—Zhang Xueliang yu Xi'an shibian* 震驚世界的一幕 張學良與西安事變 (An Act that Astonished the World: Zhang Xueliang and the Xi'an Incident) (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe).

Tang Degang 唐德剛 (2007) *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi* 張學良口述歷史 (An Oral Historical Account by Zhang Xueliang) (Beijing: Zhongguo dang'an chubanshe).

Zhang Yongbin 張永濱 (2000) *Bainian shaoshuai—Zhang Xueliang zhuan* 百年少帥—張學良傳 (The Centenarian Young Marshal—A Biography of Zhang Xueliang), 2 vols (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe).

Zhang Youkun 張友坤 (2005) *Zhang Xueliang huazhuan, 1901–2001* 張學良畫傳 1901–2001 (A Pictorial Biography of Zhang Xueliang) (Ji'nan: Shandong youyi chubanshe).

V Select Internet sites relating to Zhang Xueliang (Chinese)

http://forum.chinesenewsnet.com/showthre (accessed: 4 November 2005).
http://news.sohu.com/22/61/news147116122.shtml (accessed: 28 November 2001).
http://news.sohu.com/00/13/news147001300.shtm (accessed 21 November 2001).
http://www.cmilitary.com (various articles; accessed: 15 October 2001).
http://www.cmilitary.com (accessed: 16 October 2001).
http://www.cmilitary.com (accessed: 26 October 2001).
http://www.cmilitary.com (accessed: 29 October 2001).
http://www.creaders.org (various articles; accessed: 16 October 2001).
http://www.gxqzdj.gov.cn/news/view.asp?id=1894 (accessed: 28 January 2008).

VI Select documentary film on Zhang Xueliang (Chinese and Japanese)

Guo Guanying 郭冠英; Zhou Yuguan 周玉冠 (2001) *Shiji xing guo: Zhang Xueliang zhuan* 世紀行過—張學良傳 (English title: *1901–2001: A Century Memory of Young Marshal*), 4 parts, 2 DVDs (Taibei: Ximalaya yanjiu fazhan jijinhui/Lincom).
Isomura Hisanori Interviews with Zhang Xueliang (1999) 1. *Sino-Japanese War*; 2. *My China, My Japan*, Nippon Hôso Kyôkai 日本放送協會, NHK World TV (9–10 December).
Jiang Jieshi zhuanji 蔣介石傳記 (n.d.) (A Biography of Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek]), 2 DVDs (Shenyang: Liaoning guangbo dianshi yinxiang chubanshe).
Zhang Xueliang 張學良 (n.d.), 2 DVDs Production: Philcon/Guangdong Fuguang yingyin fazhan youxian gongsi 廣東福光影音發戰有限公司. Shenyang: Liaoning wenhua yishu yinxiang chubanshe (series Rang lishi gaosu weilai: Shijie junshi jiangling dadian 讓曆史告訴未來：世界軍事將領大典 (Let History Tell the Future: Collection about Military Leaders of the World).

Index

Chinese personalities

Places names in China

Non-Chinese names

Select terms

Plate I Zhang Zuolin in the 1920s, the strongest man in Manchuria

Plate II The entrance to the Zhang family residence in Shenyang, Manchuria

Plate III The Zhang family

Plate IV Zhang Xueliang, 1930

Plate V Zhang Xueliang (sitting, on the left) and his advisers; Donald is standing on the right

Plate VI Chiang Kai-shek

Plate VII Zhang Xueliang, Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Kai-shek, prior to the Xi'an Incident

Plate VIII Chiang Kai-shek, Roosevelt, Churchill and Madame Chiang Kai-shek at the Cairo Conference, 1943

Plate IX Chiang Kai-shek, his wife and General Stilwell

Plate X Zhang Xueliang, Taiwan

Plate XI Zhang Xueliang and his third wife, Zhao Yidi, Taiwan

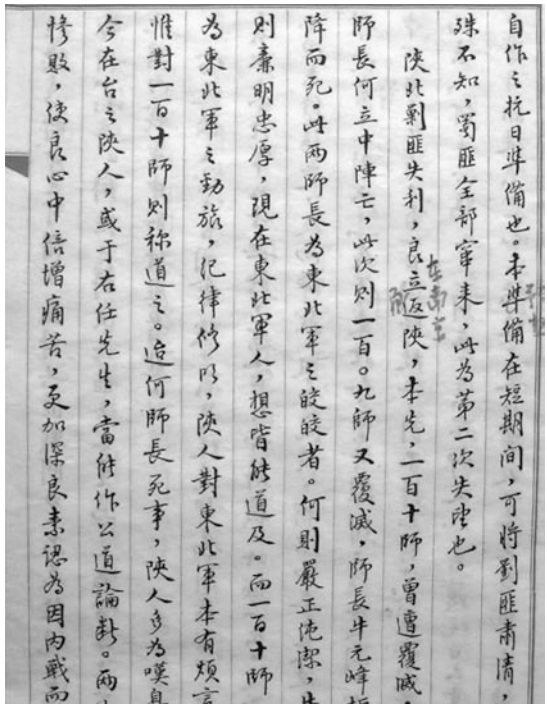


Plate XII A page from Zhang Xueliang's handwritten 'Memoirs'

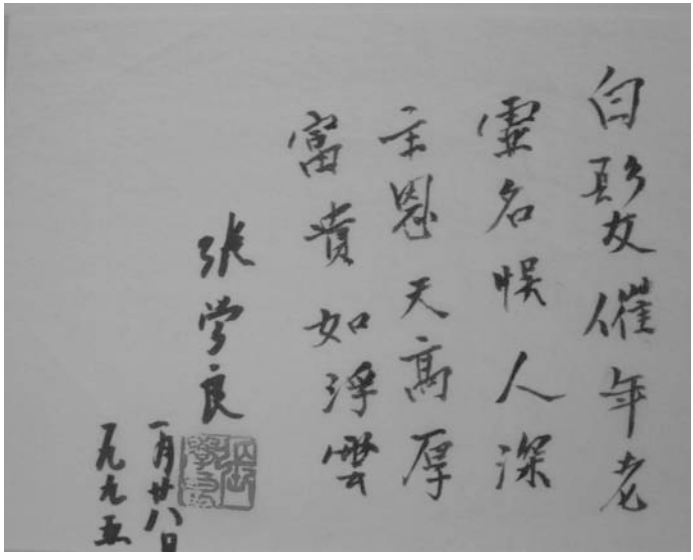


Plate XIII Zhang Xueliang's calligraphy, a poem that he wrote, 1995

Plate XIV Zhang Xueliang in old age, Waikiki, Hawaii