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REVIEW ARTICLE

MANCHUKUO AND BEYOND: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ZHANG MENGSHI

Ronald Suleski

Suffolk University, Boston
E-mail rsuleski@suffolk.edu

Zhang Mengshi 張夢實. *Baishan heishui huaren sheng* 白山黑水畫人生 (The Life of a Manchurian). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2014. Pp. 173. ISBN 13: 978-7-02-010503-8.[1]

Zhang Mengshi died in late 2014 at the age of ninety-two, shortly after his autobiography was published. He was born into a life of privilege because his father Zhang Jinghui was a close confidant of the Chinese warlord Zhang Zuolin. Mengshi was a boy in Harbin in the 1930s when Russian influences dominated the city, then when his father became prime minister of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in 1935 he lived with his family in Hsinking, the new capital. He studied in Japan in the early 1940s as war in the Pacific intensified. His father upheld the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, while Mengshi secretly worked with the Communist underground to undermine the occupation. When Soviet troops arrived in 1945 to take over from the defeated Japanese, Mengshi was also arrested and sent to Siberia, though he was willing to help the Russian Communists. In 1950 he returned to the new People's Republic of China, to work with the captured Chinese and Japanese from former Manchukuo, including his own father and former emperor Puyi, teaching them about the crimes they had committed. In this article Mengshi's fascinating autobiography is summarized and commented on.

Keywords: Harbin; Manchukuo; Chinese Eastern Railway; Zhang Jinghui; Puyi; Fushun Prison; Cultural Revolution

1 My translation of the title of Mengshi's autobiography as simply "The Life of a Manchurian" does not capture the poetry of the Chinese phrase "the white mountain and black river," a phrase that means "Manchuria" by referring to the white-topped sacred mountain of *Baitoushan* 白頭山 and the long, winding river called the Heilongjiang 黑龍江. The additional phrase *huarensheng* 畫人生 does not mean he was an artist, but should be taken to mean "an essay," or "the life of a person."

INTRODUCTION

Zhang Mengshi 張夢實 (1922–2014) lived in interesting times. Because he was born into wealth and privilege, his life was buffeted by the major events that shook China in a way that affected him more than many other Chinese of his era. The circumstances of his birth and early life set a stamp on him that determined the role he was compelled to play in the decades of his years on earth.

Toward the end of his life he wrote an autobiography, the book that is under discussion here. He died in December 2014 at the age of ninety-two just a few weeks after his book appeared, its publication overseen by his sons. I was fortunate to receive a copy of the book from Zhou Guixiang 周桂香. Currently a professor at the Dalian Institute of Technology (*Dalian ligong daxue* 大連理工大學), she spoke many times with Mengshi and has studied his life. I was also assisted in preparing this article by Sun Yan 孫嵒, an historian of China who lives in Tianjin. It appears that this article constitutes the first time the life events of Zhang Mengshih have been recounted in English.

My purpose in this article is to introduce English-speaking readers to Mengshi and to do so by setting out his life in the context of the times in which he lived. I am particularly interested in how he perceived the circumstances of his situation at a number of points in his life, as well as appreciating how he reacted to the cultural imperatives of each turn of events. This autobiography is a perfect vehicle for such a study because it is, after all, Mengshi recounting his life as he wished us to see it, and in doing so he justified his actions in each case. In this book we find the version of modern Chinese history as Mengshi understood it. I propose to allow Mengshi to tell us about his life. Although some background information is given for many historical events, I do not propose to provide an historical analysis of each of the historical events that touched his life.

In telling his story, Zhang Mengshi's recollections are often vivid, filled with specific facts set in the context of the wider scope of conditions at the time as they impacted him. In the paragraphs below I have summarized selected portions of his text that capture in colorful detail some of his adventures. Each of the topics covered in this article represented a step forward in Mengshi's life path as he progressed from youth, to adulthood, and finally into old age as a respected revolutionary. Each step is presented largely as he perceived it and I have kept my comments to a minimum. His autobiography contains more details on all of the topics covered, and from what is presented in this article we can identify a number of topics where Mengshi's interpretation of a situation can be questioned and where more research is needed to clarify actual events. That should not prevent us from seeing the world through Mengshi's eyes and from appreciating the energy and optimism he exhibited during his time on this earth.

ZHANG MENGSHI'S STORY: THE EARLY YEARS

Zhang Mengshi was born in Beijing in 1922. He was born into a household of wealth and privilege because his father was Zhang Jinghui 張景惠, then a confidant of the powerful warlord Zhang Zuolin 張作霖. Mengshi relates that his father was born in Shandong in 1871 into a poor peasant family, but managed to get three years of formal schooling and

learned to read. By 1901 he was in Fengtian 奉天 (now Liaoning 遼寧) province leading a local militia group organized by a wealthy landlord when he happened to meet Zhang Zuolin leading another, stronger, military group. Zhang Jinghui became friends with Zuolin and they, along with warlord commander Zhang Zuoxiang 張作相, in popular lore said to be Zuolin's cousin, became sworn brothers.[2]

Zhang Zuolin held Qing government military rank in 1904 when the Russo-Japanese War broke out with fighting in south Manchuria and, the story goes, he was recruited by the Japanese to gather military intelligence about the Russian deployments. It was then that Zhang Jinghui, along with Zhang Zuoxiang, Tang Yulin 湯玉麟, and Sun Liechen 孫列臣, each as officers under Zhang Zuolin, all became friends who went on to be members of Zhang Zuolin's trusted core of supporters.[3]

When Mengshi was born in 1922, his father Zhang Jinghui was vice-commander of Zhang Zuolin's powerful Fengtian Army. One day while in Tianjin, Zhang Jinghui was attracted to a young female actor of the Peking opera, and they were married in Beijing a year later. When they married, Mengshi's father was fifty years old, his mother had just turned twenty, thus there was a thirty-year difference in age between his parents. His mother, who was the seventh wife of Zhang Jinghui, not only joined the large household of the warlord commander, but brought along some of her relatives with her. It was an extended family in a feudal sense, with different wives living in different houses, though sometimes the two youngest, sixth and seventh, wives lived in different quarters of the same large mansion, each with their own entourage of relatives and surrounded by additional corps of servants.[4]

In June 1928 Zhang Zuolin was assassinated by the Japanese. Mengshi was six years old when this incident took place. While a boy at home, he never lacked for food or clothing or any toy he desired. As a child he was raised like an imperial personage rather than a normal boy. His father was usually busy with official business and, as his mother rose within the ranking of the wives and took on ever more responsibility for household finance and supervision of the servants, she was also preoccupied with adult responsibilities. The family lived in Harbin from 1928 to the early 1930s—from when Mengshi was six to when he was about eleven years of age. Mengshi's father was appointed Chief of the Special Administrative Region of the Three Eastern Provinces dealing with the affairs of the Chinese Eastern Railway (*Dong Qing tielu* 東清鐵路). The rail line ran through Manchuria from its northern borders with Russia to the southern Manchurian port of Dalian, and at that time the section from Changchun north was jointly operated by the Russians and the Chinese.[5]

2 Zhang Zuolin has traditionally been portrayed as a rough provincial bandit. For a significant re-interpretation showing how Zhang Zuolin was an ambitious young man who married into a locally prominent family, see Shibutani 2004.

3 Zhang Jinghui was trusted for his loyalty, but he did not become a major military commander. This can be seen in Hu 2005. On Zhang Zuolin's most trusted inner core of advisors see Suleski 2002, pp. 10–20.

4 Tianjin historian Sun Yan 孫郔 says that Zhang Jinghui did have seven wives, but Mengshi's mother was actually wife number six, while it was wife number seven who had been the Tianjin opera star. Personal communication from Sun Yan to the author, 16 December 2015.

5 To understand the international complication of this rail line see Chiasson 2010.

In Harbin the family's life of luxury continued. Their home was a three-storied Western style mansion made of cream-colored brick, the official residence of Mengshi's father representing the Chinese government's interests in the rail-line. It was located at No. 405 Huayuan Road, at the intersection of Haiguan Road, in the Nangang ward of Harbin (*Haerbin, Nangan-qu, Huayuanjie, Haiguan jie jiaocha lukou*, 405 *hao* 哈爾濱 南崗區 花園街 海關街交叉路口，405 號). The handsome structure is well preserved in Harbin today and is open to the public as the Far Eastern Art Museum (Yuandong yishu bowuguan 遠東藝術博物館).[6]

Young Mengshi was raised by a number of private tutors who taught him daily inside the mansion. One was a Russian lady who taught him to converse easily in Russian, a skill that would serve him well in the coming decades.[7] In his autobiography he also makes a point of recalling one of the servants who made a big impact on him. Li Chun 李春 had been his father's barber, and liking Li's open personality, his father hired the barber to mentor the young boy as he matured. Li Chun ended up imparting the viewpoint of the working poor to Mengshi, and that, Mengshi wrote, taught him to sympathize with those in society less fortunate than himself. Mengshi repeatedly states his orientation toward the working people in his autobiography, but other than the sympathy felt for their plight, he does not seem to have been involved with the working poor of China. Instead, his connections and daily interactions were usually on a more elite level, both while a student in Manchukuo and later when living in Beijing. Mengshi writes that he had very little contact with his parents during those years of life in the mansion, and was instead raised by Li Chun and the many other servants in the household.

Mengshi describes life in Harbin during his years there during which the presence of Russian culture and customs was strongly felt. His family had no ties to Christianity, but they began to set up a Christmas tree every year, just as did many people in the city. They also began to try Western food, which had not been served in their household before. For Chinese food, mealtimes were flexible, and the boy could eat in the kitchen or any of the nearby rooms. But as Western food and customs began to take hold, his father hired a cook to prepare Western dishes and had him move into the house. His father insisted they gather at a fixed time in the dining room. There the tables were covered with white tablecloths, all the food was served at the start of the meal by the servants, and loud conversation was not acceptable. Like many of the Chinese in Harbin, Mengshi learned to appreciate Russian dark bread and rich soups.[8]

During those years, Mengshi noticed how the males in his family were able to acquire any poor female they wanted as a sexual companion. One of his older step-brothers born to another of his father's wives announced one day that he had met a prostitute girl who had not yet turned nineteen years old. The girl was brought in to kneel before his parents, who told her that henceforth she should call them Father and Mother (*yeye* 爺爺 *mama* 媽媽) and that she was now part of the family, expected to obey all of the household rules. At that

6 A Tang 2011, pp. 15–16. Harbin in those times is presented in Victoir and Zatsepine 2013.

7 The dominance of Russian influences in Harbin in the 1920s and 1930s is fully presented in Bakich 2015.

8 Mengshi at that young age did not explore the more unsavory aspects of Harbin in the 1930s, such as the area of *daowai* 道外, known for its prostitutes and drug smugglers. This colorful section of the city is explored in Meyer 2014. On the problems of alcohol and drug use in Manchukuo, see Smith 2012.

time the older brother was in his forties, and increasingly given to heavy drinking and opium use. This new girl was very pretty, Mengshi thought, and she told wonderful stories. Menshi called her "sixth elder brother's wife" (*liu sao* 六嫂), but she died at a young age and was buried in Shenyang, where the Zhang family maintained its official family residence.

THE JAPANESE OCCUPY MANCHURIA

In September 1931 Japanese forces occupied Manchuria and began implementing their plan to set up the puppet nation of Manchukuo 滿洲國.[9] On the one hand, the Japanese created a series of modern cities throughout Manchuria, with efficient trolley lines, department stores, movie theaters, covered sewers and telephone networks, health clinics and comfortable hotels. They built a government of high-level Chinese officials controlled by Japanese bureaucrats, usually their second-in-command, who were in fact the officials in charge of Manchukuo. Just as the occupation of Manchuria was taking place, Mengshi's father commented to him that in Nanjing the Chinese president Chiang Kai-shek had ordered the Chinese forces not to resist the encroaching Japanese troops, and Matsumoto Masuo 松本 益雄, then working in the Japanese consulate in Harbin, told his father that Japanese forces had occupied Jilin province without opposition. Matsumoto was a Japanese adventurer (*rōnin* 浪人) who had learned to speak Mandarin with a northern accent and was then secretary at the Japanese consulate. Because Matsumoto's Chinese was so fluent, Mengshi's father always welcomed visits from Matsumoto. He later became Prime Minister Zhang Jinghui's Chief Secretary. Ōhashi Chūichi 大橋 忠一, the Japanese Consul General, also came to visit to discuss ongoing events. Ōhashi later was to serve as the Manchukuo Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1937 to 1939.

As the uncertain situation was unfolding in Manchuria just after the Japanese occupation, Mengshi's father Zhang Jinghui was equally uncertain about what his next move should be. The Chinese Chief of Police in Harbin, Yu Jingtao 于鏡濤, offered to get his father out of the city. Delegations of Chinese visitors came to his official residence urging him to oppose the Japanese as best he could, saying that living with the Japanese would be like "inviting the wolf into your home" (*yinlang rushi* 引狼入室). But one evening when his mother asked his father, "What will you do?", Mengshi's father answered, "I'll just see what happens and then decide (*Kankan, zaishuo ba* 看看再說吧), an approach he regularly seemed to adopt in the face of unfolding events, according to Mengshi's account. But soon, one by one, other Chinese officials fell in line to back the Japanese, men like Zheng Xiaoxu 鄭孝胥 who later was Manchukuo's first prime minister from 1932 to 1935";[10] Zang Shiyi 臧式毅 who became Speaker of the Manchukuo House of Councillors in 1935; Aisin-Gioro Xiqia 愛新覺羅 熙洽, a member of the Qing imperial clan who served as Manchukuo Imperial Household Minister and Interior Minister in 1936; Zhang Haipeng 張海鵬, a military officer who was promoted to full general in the Manchukuo Army in 1936, and others who were given high official posts. Finally

9 A very detailed and incisive account of Manchukuo is Yamamuro 2006.

10 The troubled emotions of Zheng Xiaoxu and of Puyi (discussed below) are thoughtfully documented in Zhou 2009.

Mengshi's father also agreed to accept the post of prime minister, a post he served in for ten years from 1935 to 1945. In agreeing to help the Japanese, Mengshi writes, his father became a traitor (*hanjian* 漢奸) to the Chinese people.[11]

When his father became prime minister, the family was living in Changchun, renamed the New Capital (Shinkyō 新京, sometimes then written in English as Hsinking). There was a grand official residence, always filled with guests and hangers-on who joined them for meals for a few days at a time, but who were often unknown to most of the people in the house. Mengshi's mother did not wish to live in the official residence, perhaps in order to preserve some sense of her own authority in an atmosphere otherwise ruled by bureaucrats. The family's private residence in Changchun was on Erma Road 二馬路 at a location currently listed as Changchun Road and Ziqiang Street (Changchun dajie, Ziqiang jie 長春大街，自強街). Mengshi respected his mother's decision to maintain a private residence in Changchun, in addition to the Zhang family residence in Shenyang. He saw it as his mother's determination not to totally disappear under the shadow of her powerful husband and the government employees who surrounded him. Still, as the PM's wife she did accept official posts with Japanese-orchestrated aid societies and she was willing to attend official functions, although as far as Mengshi could tell she preferred to spend evenings playing cards and gossiping at home with her Chinese lady friends.

STUDY IN JAPAN

In 1939, when he was seventeen, Mengshi decided to go to Japan for two years of university study in Tokyo. Although his father was the prime minister of Manchukuo and locked into the web of Chinese and Japanese officials in charge of the newly established country, in Japan Mengshi was largely free to live and study and explore as just another Chinese person studying abroad. All the students knew they were being watched by the Japanese secret police (*tokkōka* 特高課) so they were circumspect in their public actions. After Japanese language study at a private school, he matriculated into the prestigious Waseda University (*Waseda daigaku* 早稲田大学). His time in Japan was both important and memorable for Mengshi: he lived in boarding houses like a Japanese student; he ate inexpensive Japanese food in order to save money, but came to savor the taste of those popular dishes served in out-of-the-way but tidy small shops; he met other students, often Chinese like himself, for long talks about literature and ideas and art and influences from the West. His time in Japan had a stronger impact on him than he realized at the time as he came to respect the Japanese way of living in an orderly society.

A number of the Chinese students in Japan at the time were keenly interested in national issues and they hotly debated China's future in the midst of Japanese encroachments on Chinese territory, the worsening world situation, and the great inequalities of daily life for most Chinese people. Mengshi wrote that he found the most exciting ideas for change were those of the Communists who envisioned a society of equality for all Chinese, where the role of the government was to take care of all the people to ensure they were given the basics of life. He joined the Society for the Study of New

11 This issue is thoughtfully considered in Shibutani 2008. An account of Mengshi and his father is found on pp. 47–84.

Knowledge (*Xin zhishi yanjiuhui* 新知識研究會), a group for progressive students led clandestinely by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This organization, its membership, and their activities, is still not well known among most scholars of the period. Mengshi's account mentions the names of some of the members and their eagerness to acquire books on Marxism. It appears from Mengshi's descriptions that they always kept in mind their group's hierarchy concerning who was in charge of the group or responsible for leading a discussion, but it is not clear if they undertook any activity other than gathering for secret discussions. In Japanese those student groups were known as "research societies" (*kenkyū kai* 研究會), a type of applied-research seminar that is still widely seen in Japanese society today. It was a common practice at that time in Japan for college students to form semi-secret discussion groups called research societies where philosophical and radical ideas were hotly debated among the members. Trying to keep track of those groups kept the secret police very busy in pre-war Japan.

Books were treasures for the eager students, but all of the national governments involved regarded books as dangerous items. Manchukuo banned the import of many books about China, but those books were available in Tokyo at the Uchiyama Bookstore (*Uchiyama shoten* 内山書店), the well-known bookshop specializing in books about China that continues to operate in Tokyo today. On one occasion Mengshi wanted to smuggle into Japan some Chinese language books on Marxist thinking that were banned in Japan. Customs inspections at the first port of entry could be rigorous, and at any sign of irregularity, the dreaded military police (*kempeitai* 憲兵隊) would immediately take away the hapless traveler. Mengshi thought he could take advantage of his family's official position when his mother decided to send a gift of some cloth and a letter to the wife of Japan's prime minister Tōjō Hideki 東條 英機. He put his smuggled books into the very bottom of his large trunk, placing the gift of cloth on top, and on the very top a letter addressed in handsome calligraphy to the prime minister's wife. Like many travelers from Manchukuo, he rode the trains of the South Manchuria Railway through Korea to the port at Pusan, then took a ferry to the Japanese port of Shimonoseki 下關. At the Japanese port the customs official opened his trunk, but upon seeing the letter with the name of the prime minister's wife, quickly closed the lid, very politely bowed to Mengshi and waved him through the checkpoint, allowing all the banned books in the bottom of the trunk to safely pass through the customs inspection.

In 1944 Mengshi married the girl who would be his devoted wife for the next seventy years, Xu Ming 徐明. Xu was born in 1929 in Beijing. Xu Ming's mother died was she was seven, her father later re-married and did not want Xu Ming or her sister around. The family was then living in squalid conditions near the West Gate (Xizhimen 西直門) of Beijing. She and her sister were taken in by a neighbor who sold her elder sister into a traditional opera company in Tianjin to study opera, which was a euphemism for becoming a prostitute. In 1938 Xu Ming was taken to Changchun where she was introduced to the owner of a high-class brothel. She was only nine years old, a suitable age to act as a servant to the prostitutes and to begin learning the skills involved in the profession. While she was working there one of the young prostitutes said to her, "Don't envy all the glitter and noise that goes on here, this is not a good place. Listen to what I'm telling you, if you ever get the chance, get away from this hell." Two months later Mengshi's mother, who was looking for a young servant girl, bought her freedom and took her into the household as a low-level servant.

Xu Ming proved to be a quick learner and a capable young girl, but she had a determined manner accompanied by a stubborn streak. When she worked, she worked hard, and usually with a cheerfulness. But she did not take criticism easily. Mengshi's mother regularly yelled at the servants when they displeased her, and she could freely slap young Xu Ming. It was not long before Mengshi's mother grew impatient with the girl's independent ways and the small accidents she sometimes caused. Xu Ming was about to be released from the household and sent back to the brothel when a Chinese Christian friend of Mengshi's family took her in and enrolled her in an elementary school. Xu Ming, being slightly older than her classmates, did not persist with her studies at that school, and soon she was hired by yet another family with five children at home, so her life of servitude continued.

Mengshi was sixteen years old in 1938 when he first encountered Xu Ming as the nine-year-old servant girl in the household. He wrote that he immediately liked her independent and determined manner. She did not suffer fools gladly, yet she was often cheerful and smiling. He felt she had intellectual ability which showed through in spite of her hard life and manual work. During the time Mengshi was in Japan, his mother began the process of trying to find a bride for him, and the candidates obviously did not include their former servant girl Xu Ming. When visiting his family in Changchun or Beijing in the early 1940s, Mengshi had to undergo several arranged meetings with girls who had been chosen as possible mates. Xu Ming had managed to move to Beijing (the Chinese then called it Beiping 北平, but the Japanese referred to it as Beijing 北京, so both terms appear in the author's telling of his story). She had been studying in school and in 1942 was thirteen years old and about to take the examination to enter high school. She and Mengshi had been communicating by letter, while Mengshi in Tokyo took part of his generous family allowance and was secretly sending it to Xu Ming, the allowance being provided by his father, the prime minister of Manchukuo, presumably from the money he was paid for his service by the government of Manchukuo.

Mengshi decided to end the arranged meetings his mother had been setting up, and to tell her he wanted to marry Xu Ming. His mother's reaction was predictable outrage: She came to our family from a brothel! She is so much lower than us in social status! She was a servant here! What will people say! "I won't agree to that little fox coming into our home!" (. . . *bu tongyirang nage xiaohulu jingjin womenjia.* 不同意讓那個小狐狸精進我們家).

So Mengshi did what most children would have done in that situation. The following day he went to speak to his father, the prime minister, and found him sitting in the study, calmly smoking his water pipe. His father listened to Mengshi's story, thought for a moment and asked, "Do you like her?" "I like her," Mengshi replied. "Then, that's okay" (*Xing a* 行啊). And since his father's word was law in the family, the marriage was arranged.[12] There were many guests at the wedding, but since Xu Ming had no relatives, a friend of the Zhang family agreed that he and his wife would act as representatives of the bride. The new couple were not invited to live at the Zhang family private residence on Erma Road 二馬路, but they rented a small place of their own on Jianguo Hutong 建國胡同. The newlyweds shortly took off for Japan so Mengshi could continue his studies

12 On different occasions when he recounted this story, Mengshi quoted his father as using different words to agree to the match. This is the case in the interviews with Chinese journalists mentioned below in this article.

and show Xu Ming the life in Japan he had come to love. Soon Xu Ming was pregnant and she returned to Changchun give birth to their first child.

BACK IN CHANGCHUN

In 1943 the atmosphere in Tokyo was increasingly one of danger and, with the start of the American bombing raids, of the approaching war. Mengshi did not graduate from Waseda but returned to Changchun, which was considered safer than the Japanese home islands. He joined the underground Communist group the Society of Youth to Save the Northeast (*Dongbei qingnian jiuwanghui* 東北青年救亡會) and tried to gather what intelligence he could for the Communists. His father decided Mengshi should continue his university studies, and it was recommended that Mengshi enter Jianguo University (*Jianguo daxue* 建國大學), as being the most prestigious in Manchukuo.[13] Mengshi felt its purpose was only to spew out graduates who would tow the Manchukuo government line. Since his father was officially head of the school, Mengshi would of course be admitted. But Mengshi preferred the less rigorous Kingly Way Academy (*Wangdao shuyuan* 王道書院) because it would allow him more time for his intelligence-gathering work. Zheng Xiaoxu, who had preceded Mengshi's father as prime minister, was officially in charge of that school, so entrance was easily arranged.

Mengshi planned to take advantage of his father's official position by gathering intelligence about high-level affairs in Manchukuo that he could pass along to the Communist underground. When he was at home he looked for opportunities to rifle through his father's official papers or listen in on conversations between his parents in which they might discuss confidential matters. In frustration he realized that his father rarely brought official papers back home in his briefcase. When he did, he often put them on the table next to where he sat having a drink or smoking his water pipe. His mother seemed totally uninterested in national affairs and unsophisticated about political maneuverings, so when Mengshi was present as his parents chatted, in general neither of them touched on high-level affairs in their conversation. Mengshi's father never seemed to be aware that his son was trying to obtain intelligence information. Mengshi gathered what information he could and dutifully passed it on to his Communist contacts, but he was never sure the information he provided was of much use. Today the Chinese Communist Party sees his membership in this group as part of his contributions to the liberation of China, but from the examples he gives of the intelligence he supplied, the topics covered were so broad and unspecific that it seems doubtful they would have been of much practical use to the active Communist underground in Northeast China. When he was interviewed by Chinese journalists much later in life (discussed below), the documents Mengshi passed along were cited as part of his patriotic work, but the resulting articles and broadcasts were so heavily propaganda-oriented that the veracity of their claims is open to question.

In his account of those times, Mengshi mentions that the children or relatives of several top Manchukuo officials were then involved in gathering intelligence for the Communist

13 Under the Japanese, formal education was tightly controlled and restricted for all Chinese. The strictures in schools beneath the university level are enumerated in Qi 2004. The best account of Jianguo University is Yamane 2003.

underground. Among those were the two sons of Yu Chonghan 于沖漢, originally an official working under Zhang Zuolin who later assisted the Japanese in establishing Manchukuo. Both sons were associated with the underground: Yu Jingshun 于靜純 was an instructor at the Manchukuo Military Academy (*Manzhouguo junguan xuexiao* 滿洲國軍官學校), while his brother Yu Jingyuan 于靜遠 was named Minister of the People's Livelihood (*Minshengbu dachen* 民生部大臣) in 1937 and later Minister of the Economy (*Jingji dachen* 經濟大臣) in 1944. Wang Cheng 王誠, son of a general in the Military Legal Affairs Department, and his cousin Wang Qian 王謙, were also passing intelligence to the Communists. Manchukuo Emperor Puyi's nephew Xian Dong 憲東 was serving as an artillery commander in the Manchukuo Army but was also part of the underground network. Mengshi writes that many of the children of top Manchukuo officials, especially those who had studied in Japan and had been exposed to Communist critiques, were members of clandestine anti-Manchukuo groups.[14]

ARRESTED BY SOVIET OFFICIALS

In August 1945 the world changed for all of the top officials in Manchukuo. The Russians declared war on Japan on 9 August. On 10 August at an emergency meeting of the top leadership, the Japanese suggested they all retreat to Dalizigou 大栗子溝 near Tonghua 通化, in the south of Jilin province near the border with Korea, where they could regroup and prepare for an escape to Japan. When Mengshi's mother heard the news, she told her husband, the prime minister, that she wanted to go with him further south, but with some consternation he replied, "I already told you, I won't take you with me." On the evening of 11 August a number of official cars gathered at Changchun's East Station, reserved for freight, where Emperor Puyi and the top Manchukuo officials boarded a train secretly heading south, though some of the party, including Mengshi's father, shortly returned to Changchun to await the Russians. Emperor Puyi and other top Japanese officials were arrested by the end of the month before they could flee Manchukuo.

In the meantime, Soviet planes appeared in the skies above Changchun dropping flares to light up the night sky. Mengshi, who stayed in the city, recalls that one no longer saw any Japanese walking about. He ran into a fellow student from the Kingly Way Academy who reported that their Japanese principal had been attacked in the street and beaten to death, with his brains dripping out of his head. When Japan officially surrendered on 15 August, Chinese students at the Manchukuo Military Academy began beating and killing their Japanese officers when they found them on campus.

Puyi 溥儀 was one of the key figures in this drama, and of course his story is widely known. As the last Qing emperor ruling from 1908 to 1912, he was made to abdicate and in 1924 was forced by the new Chinese government to leave his residence in the Imperial Palace in Beijing. He moved to Tianjin and soon the Japanese began to act as his protectors. After 1931, they took him to Manchuria, and when they announced the new Imperial Manchuria (Da Manzhoudiguo 大滿洲帝國) in 1935, they made him

14 Among the Chinese in Manchukuo who found ways to resist the Japanese occupation were an active group of women writers who were often able to get their stories published in spite of Japanese censorship. See Smith 2007.

Emperor, with the reign title of Kangde 康德. His role was touted by the Japanese as one combining the traditional kingly virtues of China with the modern state of Manchukuo. Mengshi's father, as prime minister, often appeared at meetings and in photos with Puyi in the ten years from 1935 to 1945. On 16 August 1945 as the Russian forces were advancing southward in Manchuria and Japan had issued its surrender, Puyi announced that he was stepping down from office. He burned his ancestor tablets and said that the Great Qing Dynasty founded by his ancestors in 1644 had finally come to a close.[15]

By the end of August 1945 Soviet troops had arrived in Changchun and other areas of south Manchuria where they began to locate the former top Chinese and Japanese officials of Manchukuo. Each was taken into custody and questioned by Russian officers. As soon as he could, Mengshi approached the top Russian officials to tell them he had been working with the Chinese Communist underground for the liberation of Manchukuo, so he was happy to see the Soviets and was willing to help them. Since he could speak Chinese, Russian, and Japanese, he was a valuable assistant for the Russians to have. He helped interpret for most of the leaders of former Manchukuo, including his father, and was spoken to politely by the Russian officers. On the other hand, he was taken into custody by them and was also being treated as a prisoner. He didn't seem to realize that the Russians were still allies with the Nationalist Guomindang 國民黨 as well as with the Communists, and they were not sure which side would win the coming civil war. While Mengshi and his friends were rooting for the Communists, his father and other officials who had once had ties to the Nationalists wanted to see the Guomindang take control of Manchuria, hoping that fellow Chinese would be more sympathetic to them.

IN RUSSIAN SIBERIA

By the end of October 1945 the Russians had gathered Manchukuo's top leadership in one place and had sent them by train into incarceration in Siberia, eventually being held in the city of Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East, located in south Siberia to the northeast of Heilongjiang province. For Mengshi it was to be five years of being a prisoner, with no contact from his wife and no news about his two children. Equally, he had no way of contacting them in those final days in Manchukuo to give them any news, so he suddenly disappeared from their lives.

The top prisoner was the former emperor Puyi. He arrived with a retinue of nine people to serve him, and with chests of treasures and valuables that were eventually taken away from him by the Russians. Initially in Siberia he was assigned a large house that had been prepared for these most important Chinese prisoners. Puyi preferred to stay in his rooms on the top floor of the house acting as if he were still emperor. He had his meals brought to him by his servants or one of his relatives. He did not descend the stairs to use the toilet but used a chamber pot which his servants then took away. Initially Puyi seemed to be

15 In his last years Puyi wrote long accounts of his life that were published by the Chinese government. The exercise was part of the thought-reform campaign carried out by the government that involved recounting one's life in prose as a way of examining past events. The books were published in Chinese in the 1960s, with English language translations also appearing. The original Chinese title was *Cong huangdi dao gongmin: wode qianbansheng* 從皇帝 到公民: 我的前半生 (From Emperor to Citizen: My earlier half life); a condensed version of these in English is Kramer 1967; a complete translation is Jenner 1989.

spending a good deal of time writing, and Mengshi assumed he was writing a diary. But it turned out he was writing a book about the foods that were eaten in the former imperial palace and he was remembering the menus prepared for each meal of the day.

Later all of the top prisoners were quartered in the No. 45 Special Billet (*Sishiwu tebie shourongsuo* 四十五特别收容所), a former technical school with its own grounds. In that location, along with Puyi, the top former Chinese and Japanese officials of Manchukuo were housed. They were paid a small sum of money for living expenses and were provided with clothing and drink, much of which had been produced in Manchukuo. The younger prisoners like Mengshi, who was twenty-six at the time, were later "allowed" to join local farmers in the annual harvest. Mengshi wrote that this was like an outing for him, to be away from the confines of the camp and interacting with ordinary Russians. He could speak Russian so it must have been especially pleasant for him.

Of the top Chinese Manchukuo officials housed together were former emperor Puyi; Minister of the Imperial Household Agency (*Gongneifu dachen* 宮內府大臣) and fellow Manchu Xiqia; Mengshi's father, the former Prime Minster Zhang Jinghui; Speaker of the Manchukuo House of Councillors Zang Shiyi; and Minister of the Economy Yu Jingyuan. Several other former cabinet ministers of Manchukuo were also there, including Minister of the Manchukuo Army (in large part composed of Chinese soldiers and Japanese officers) Xing Shilian 邢士廉; Minister of Foreign Affairs Ruan Zhenduo 阮振鐸; Minister of Transportation Gu Ciheng 谷次亨; and Minister of Education Lu Yuanshan 盧元善.

All of the prisoners thought it was only a matter of time before they would be executed so they occupied themselves accordingly. Mengshi was happy to act as interpreter for the Russian officers, probably since it kept him busy and let him be privy to many of the goings-on at the camp. Puyi did not mingle with the other prisoners, but kept to himself and acted like an emperor. Manchu Xiqia practiced writing out ancient poems. Yu Jingtao practiced his Tai Chi (*taijiquan* 太極拳) exercises. Mengshi's father, whose feet hurt him, spent time soaking his feet in a basin of warm water and reciting the Buddhist Heart Sutra (*Bore boluomi xinjing* 般若波羅密心經). Other former Manchukuo officials like Yu Jingyuan, Xing Shilian, Ruan Zhenduo, and others spent their days talking and bantering. Through these comments and others that Mengshi included as part of his account, we are offered an intimate account of the top Chinese leadership in Manchukuo while under arrest by the Soviets, with a degree of immediacy that has rarely been heretofore available. Mengshi's account offers many details of this experience.

INTO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

Late in 1949 the prisoners were told of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, to which most responded with bittersweet smiles. As conservative anti-Communists, they might possibly have been "welcomed" back by the fiercely anti-Communist Nationalists, but it was doubtful the Chinese Communists would treat them well, and now the Chinese Communists would be in charge. Mengshi's father and most of the other top officials had been secretly hoping the Nationalists would win the civil war and take control of China. In May 1950 Mengshi was put on a train to be among the first batch of two hundred prisoners returned to China. He was thrilled to reach the PRC border at Sufenhe 綏芬河, and to see soldiers of the People's Liberation Army proudly guarding the border of the

New China. He transferred to a Chinese train to continue the journey onto China. In Shenyang he was told he would be able to work with the returning prisoners in thought reform to help them understand their crimes. By removing Mengshi from the ranks of the Chinese "traitors," the new Chinese Communist officials were acknowledging his prior work during Manchukuo times for the Liberation, so whatever value his intelligence-gathering efforts in the 1940s had, it was enough to have him receive a special status among the returned prisoners. In addition, his ability to speak Russian and Japanese must have also been a factor.[16]

In August 1950 another trainload of prisoners from Russia arrived, and among them were a number of Mengshi's former fellow prisoners. Many of the former Manchukuo top officials felt they were now about to be executed. Puyi felt this was certain to be his fate, and redoubled his chanting of Buddhist sutras, as he had started to do back in Siberia. Mengshi's father, then seventy-nine, said he had already lived a long life so was ready for death. Zang Shiyi, then sixty-six, also felt he had experienced many years on earth and so was ready for his fate, whatever it might be. He joined Mengshi's father in chanting the Sutra.

The Russians had taken nearly 600,000 Japanese prisoners to Siberia in 1945 (this is the figure Mengshi gives), where most were treated cruelly. They were made to work in the fields, lay railroad track, and labor in factories. They were provided inadequate clothing for the frigid winters and were never given much food, with the result that many perished from the harsh conditions. Mengshi wrote that probably only one-tenth of the prisoners survived to return to Japan. Clearly the Chinese prisoners in Mengshi's group had been given special treatment by the Russians, and although they may have grown tired of Russian dark bread and cooked cabbage, little fuel for heating, and endless days of being confined to their compound, according to this account they had otherwise not been mistreated.

The prisoner's train stopped briefly in Shenyang where the prisoners met several ranking Communist Party officials. Rumors had been circulating claiming that all of the first batch of two hundred prisoners who returned earlier in May had been executed. But the Chinese officials they were taken to meet, who included Chairman of the Northeast People's Government (*Dongbei renmin zhengfu zhuxi* 東北人民政府主席) Gao Gang 高岡, reassured them they would be treated well in the New China. The two top prisoners were Puyi and Mengshi's father Zhang Jinghui. Mengshi was made part of the group to meet with the newly arrived prisoners. Mengshi recalls that Puyi kept staring at him, because the returned prisoners were convinced that the earlier group had been executed. Yet here was Mengshi, whom Pu Yi knew well, working with the Chinese officials in Shenyang.

Among the others in that particular group that Mengshi recalls were Xing Shilian, former Minister of the Manchukuo Army (*Manjunshibu dachen* 滿軍事部大臣); Ruan Zhenduo, former Manchukuo's Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Waijiao dachen* 外交大臣); Gu Ciheng, former Manchukuo Minister of Economics (*Jingji dachen* 經濟大臣); Yu Jingtao, former

16 Most accounts of this period of determining policies for dealing with the prisoners from Manchukuo say that Zhou Enlai 周恩來 played a major role in setting the ultimate goals of re-education and forgiveness of crimes. Mengshi's account also credits Zhou's influence for the lenient way in which he was treated.

Manchukuo Minister of Labor (*Qinrong fengshi dachen* 勤勞奉仕大臣); Zang Shiyi, former Speaker of Manchukuo's House of Councillors (*Canyifu yuzhan yizhang* 參議府議長); Lu Yuanshan, former Manchukuo Minister of Education (*Wenjiao dachen* 文教大臣).

Mengshi worked at the Fushun War Criminals Management Center (*Fushun zhanfan guanlisuo* 撫順戰犯管理所) as a political instructor to both the Chinese and Japanese prisoners.[17] The prison compound was constructed in 1936 by the occupying Japanese and in 1986 part was converted into a museum open to the public. Mengshi's lectures were about Japanese imperialism and its creation of the state of Manchukuo. He gave an explanation that was based on class struggle, the oppression of subject peoples, and the injustice of what had taken place under the Japanese. The prisoners were not mistreated, but were forced to follow a very regimented schedule listening to the explanations of past events given by their Chinese teachers and discussing among themselves past injustices toward the Chinese people. Mengshi's father, Zhang Jinghui, became sick and died in the facility in 1959 at the age of eighty-seven. Mengshi did not have regular contact with his father during those years, nor with his mother, who had retired to live with relatives in south China.[18]

Mengshi worked at the Center from 1950 to 1956, when he was transferred to the Beijing Cadre School (*Beijing ganbu xuexiao* 北京幹部學校) that later changed its name to the Beijing Institute of International Relations (*Beijing Guoji guanxi xueyuan* 北京國際關係學院). He was thirty-six years old. During that time he learned about the difficult years his wife Xu Ming had spent living hand-to-mouth with their two children while he was in Siberia. He recounts her life of hardship from 1945 to 1950 in some detail. But happily for him his family was once again reunited.

Life was good for the family in Beijing. Mengshi with his working knowledge of several languages was an asset to the school. His work unit supplied an apartment for the family. His wife worked in the school's medical clinic, where, Mengshi wrote, she became a loved and respected medical practitioner whose gentle and effective way with patients won her both praise and friends. Two more children were born to the family, which then consisted of two boys and two girls. With pride, Mengshi joined the Communist Party whose ideals and goals he had supported since the 1940s. For him, the liberation of China under the Communists was a dream come true.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS BEGIN

Then came the political campaigns that began to alter and disassemble the daily routines. The Anti-rightist Struggle (*fan-you douzheng* 反右斗爭) of 1957, especially, was designed to weed out intellectuals and others who were casting a critical eye at their new Communist

17 For an outline of the Fushun Prison along with photos, see Arai 2003. Another account for propaganda purposes put out by the Chinese but containing many photos and details of the major Japanese prisoners is *Riben zhanfan de zaisheng zhidi* 2005.

18 Mengshi's father was kept in a hospital ward at the facility. The account by Puyi says Mengshi's father became senile. See Kramer 1967, p. 266. It appears from Mengshi's account that he made little effort to be in regular contact with his birth mother after he returned to China. It also appears he did not feel any special closeness to his father either.

rulers.[19] The campaign left Mengshi feeling rather exposed because of his "complicated" background. Yes, he had been born into privilege and his father was prime minister of Manchukuo. No, he had not supported the goals of Manchukuo or worked to oppress his fellow Chinese. Yes, he had helped the Communist underground. No, he had not been in one of the freedom fighter units in the Northeast. Further, he could be labeled an intellectual because of his higher education, and the books, theater, and music he loved. It was a campaign, he writes, based on guilt by association.[20] Everything had become more confused, according to Mengshi, when continuing political campaigns resulted in food shortages to the point of causing malnutrition.

The difficulties of the later 1950s only became worse with the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.[21] Among his children, the youngest girl was in elementary school, the two middle children—a boy and girl—were in junior high and high school respectively, and his eldest son was then twenty-one. Each of them quickly became embroiled in the political activities and hurling of charges and counter-charges. Soon such disruptive political activities took over all their lives as each of the children was sent off to the countryside to learn from the workers and peasants, while still struggling with the political accusations being made against their father. It was impossible to exercise control over these children or to instill the values of education, reading, and intellectual exploring that Mengshi esteemed. It was equally as difficult to stay in touch with each other even when rudimentary telephone or telegraph services were available.

Mengshi recalled that by 1971 the six people in his family were scattered in five different locations. He and his wife were able to be together in the countryside at one point in Hebei 河北 province in the countryside outside of Shijiazhuang 石家莊. The small house they shared together had their names posted above the door. His placard read "Capitalist Roader Zhang Mengshi," (Zhang Mengshi, *Zou zipai* 張夢實 走資派), while next to that was his wife's placard reading "Xu Ming, Urban Poor" (Xu Ming, *Chengshi pinmin* 徐明城市貧民). He writes that the term "capitalist roader" was given to 99 percent of those accused during the Cultural Revolution, so he was resigned to carrying that as his classification, but in his wife's case her accusers had been unable to find anything against her because she had, after all, been abandoned by her parents and sold into a brothel; she was an example of the oppressed and exploited in old China. In the countryside, however, the local farmers ignored his political label and treated both him and his wife well. He gives most of the credit for that to his wife's valuable medical work helping all the local villagers.

Mengshi was dismayed by the dirt and filth he had to experience daily while living in the countryside. The smell of human waste and animal manure permeated their home. The deplorably unsanitary conditions on the trains he had to ride occasionally made train

19 A review of the political campaigns of the 1950s, and through the Cultural Revolution mentioned below, is in Lieberthal 1995, pp. 98–121.

20 Because of his closeness to the top leadership of Manchukuo, Mengshi's past was a juicy target for criticism and he was bitterly attacked. After all, notorious war criminals such as Vice Prime Minister Furumi Tadayuki 古海 忠之 had attended Mengshi's wedding, as did Shimamura Saburo 島村 三郎, head of the Manchukuo Secret Police who in 1954 admitted to torturing many Chinese prisoners to death.

21 One of the most revealing and best-documented studies of the Cultural Revolution is MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006.

travel extremely unpleasant for him. In many respects the conditions that Mengshi suffered during those campaigns, being treated shabbily and forced to live in barely adequate housing with always a struggle for enough food; the lack of hygiene in the countryside, were typical for most of the "intellectuals" and "anti-Party" people under attack. He mentions these conditions at several points in his narrative.

In reflecting on the Cultural Revolution, Mengshi writes that the call of the Cultural Revolution was to destroy the "four olds" (*si jiu* 四舊), which were old thinking, old culture, old customs, and old habits. That was the greatest harm done to Chinese society, he felt, because the Cultural Revolution in effect rejected the cultural thinking of the Chinese people along with the customs and practices embedded in their lives. As a result, people were left to conduct their lives without a view of morality and without the rich culture that had developed over many centuries. Mengshi's orientation as a person who respected traditional culture, who liked books and intellectual conversation, is clearly reflected in his comments on this aspect of Cultural Revolution excesses.[22]

By 1979 the country and the Party began to right itself from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. Mengshi was invited once again to take up his duties at the Beijing Institute of International Relations and Xu Ming resumed her work in the Institute's clinic. By then, they even had a grandchild. In 1985 both Mengshi and Xu Ming had reached retirement age and so left their duties at the Institute.

AN INVITATION TO JAPAN

In 1985 Mengshi and his wife received a surprise telegram inviting them to visit Japan for an all-expenses-paid trip of fifteen days. The invitation was issued by Matsumoto Masuo 松本 益雄 on behalf of the Association for Neighborly Relations (*Zanrin kyōkai* 善隣協會). Matsumoto was the man from the Japanese Consulate in Harbin back in the 1930s. With his fluent Chinese and outgoing manner he had become friends with Mengshi's father, the prime minister, later becoming his Chief Secretary in Manchukuo's capital Shinkyō 新京. The invitation was also issued by Izumi Takekazu 泉 毅一. Izumi had been an intelligence officer in the Japanese Kwantung Army (*Kantōgun* 関東軍) that controlled Manchukuo, holding the rank of Captain (*Taii* 大尉). He had also been arrested by the Russians and spent five years in Siberia, and then was afterward transferred to the Fushun War Criminals Management Center, where he underwent the process of changing his ideas about Japan's role in Manchuria, eventually coming to the conclusion that Japan had been terribly misguided. Mengshi had been one of his teachers, and Izumi was grateful to him for having opened his eyes to what had taken place in the previous two decades. Izumi ran an organization called the China Returnees Liaison Association (*Chūkiren* 中歸聯). Both men wanted to honor Mengshi by inviting him as their guest in Japan, and Mengshi subsequently received permission from the Communist Party to undertake the visit to Japan along with his wife.

22 See especially p. 152 of Mengshi's book where he summarizes his criticisms of the Cultural Revolution because it discarded the traditional culture that had given meaning and guidance to people's lives.

Japanese intellectuals were divided in those years between right-wing and left-wing factions.[23] Matsumoto's group was part of the right wing. It was composed of high-level businessmen and bureaucrats who nurtured a strong feeling of distrust toward the People's Republic. This group supported the two-China policy of the United States, with its strong support for the Nationalist government on Taiwan. Izumi's organization represented the left wing. It wanted to see friendly relations between the PRC and Japan. Composed of those who took an anti-war stance, many of its members had suffered in Siberia but had formed a good opinion of the PLA after being transferred to China. The influence of both group orientations continues to be seen in Japan today, because strongly right- or left-wing groups are very visible and active in public debates. Izumi's old group, the China Returnees Liaison Association, was active from 1956 to 2002, when it disbanded after most of its original members had died.[24] A museum commemorating the work of this organization has been set up in Kawagoe 川越市, Saitama 埼玉県, Japan, known as the China Returnees Liaison Association Peace Memorial Museum (*Chūkiren heiwa kinenkan* 中歸聯平和記念館).[25] In 1985 Mengshi felt that several members of Izumi's group wanted to invite him to Japan because they had met him during their time in the Fushun prison. On the other hand, Matsumoto's group saw him as the son of the former prime minister of Manchukuo, and so wanted to honor that connection.

Either way, the group gave Mengshi and Xu Ming a wonderful experience in Japan. Everything was first class, from the visit to the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo to an exclusive Japanese-style inn (*ryokan* 旅館) in the west. Matsumoto's group hosted the Tokyo and eastern portions of the visit, Izumi's group arranged visits to the western cities of Kyoto and Osaka.

The elaborate and graciously served meals of Japanese cuisine had a significant impact on Mengshi. In his recollections he describes in great detail the many dishes set before him and Xu Ming in surroundings as genteel and representative of high Japanese culture as could be imagined. He mentions the sushi and sashimi dipped in soy sauce, the tempura with its own distinctive sauce, the succulent fish, shrimp, and shellfish. Always, the meals were accompanied by clean white rice and the soothing taste of excellent teas.

Mengshi wrote that experiencing these tastes for the first time in forty years brought back fond memories of his days as a student in Tokyo. He added that as a student he almost never ate expensive sushi or sashimi, and instead dined, as did the other students, on bowls of noodles or a simple meal of egg or vegetables served over rice (*donburi* どんぶり). The flavors of his meals as an honored guest in Japan carried the same subtleties and combinations as the meals of his student days. The politeness of the Japanese greatly impressed him. Mengshi's account presents in great detail those favorable impressions of Japan he received, and the power of the memories it rekindled in him. Those memories brought back his youthful days, a time of hope and determination, which his subsequent life events must have dulled considerably.

23 Without mentioning either of the groups referenced in this text, the ideological arguments of both right and left in Japan in those times is set out in Hoppens 2015.

24 See *Riben zhanfan de zaisheng zhidi* 2005, pp. 170–209.

25 The website of the memorial museum is http://npo-chuukiren.jimdo.com/. Thanks to Zhou Guixiang for this information.

I think there is another reason why the meals—along with the cleanliness of Japan which he noted repeatedly and the pristine conditions of the hotels he stayed in—made a big impression on Mengshi. In his mind he must have been contrasting it with his previous forty years in China, during the famine years of the Great Leap Forward, or the poor diet of the Cultural Revolution years, and the hovel-like conditions of the countryside where he spent years living with the poor farmers and with the ever-present smell of manure and closeness with animals, all aspects of those years that Mengshi recounts in his autobiography. It must have caused him to question what was gained by China's revolution and the lack of material return from Communist society. In the memoir, Mengshi is not a person given to complaining or extensively justifying his decisions, so he does not place his observations during the trip to Japan in the broader context of a comparison with conditions in China. It is clear, however, that the visit imprinted on his mind sharp images of everything he encountered in Japan. If we read between the lines of his recollection of the visit to Japan, we see him constantly contrasting the orderly society of Japan with the chaotic and somewhat primitive society of the China he had been living in.

RETIREMENT

After returning to China, Mengshi was safely retired and "put out to pasture" by the Chinese Communist Party. In 1990 he was made a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (*Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi* 中国人民政治协商会议). Mengshi refers to it in his autobiography by its colloquial abbreviated title as the "*zhengxie*" 政协. The organization is designed to be a political advisory body composed of people from a range of backgrounds and organizations. A number of other elderly cadres were also made members with him that year. But Mengshi and his elderly cohorts were never sure exactly what their duties or responsibilities as members of this political body were. Probably they were to review and provide the CCP with comments on new policies that would be put into effect. One friend quipped that the Party had never listened to their comments anyway and wouldn't do so now, so in that sense they had no responsibilities. They were treated well, given all-expense tours to scenic spots in China and allowed to see screenings of new movies before those movies were released to the general public. From his book, it seems clear that those trips must have been a great deal of fun for Mengshi and Xu Ming, as were the visits they could now easily share with their children and grandchildren. Finally, Mengshi was rewarded with a stress-free and unencumbered life.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

During his years of retirement Mengshi was mostly out of the public limelight. Between 1984 and 2000 he was interviewed by the Japanese photo-journalist Arai Toshio 新井 利男 who was collecting information about the Fushun War Criminals Management Center.[26] The materials collected by Arai were finally published in 2003 in Japanese. Mengshi's accounts of his life given in those interviews with Arai are similar to those

26 Arai's interview with Mengshi is in Arai 2003, pp. 166–84. As part of his interest in re-examining the motivations and actions of people during World War II, Arai visited the Fushun Prison several times between 1984 and 2000 and conducted interviews with many of the top staff members there. When he died of cancer in

appearing in his autobiography being considered here, with only a few minor variations. Mengshi was considered by the Party to be a loyal old revolutionary who had contributed to the building of the New China, so in May 2008 he was interviewed by reporter Zhang Suying 張素英, whose story appeared online at Phoenix news.ifeng.com (*fenghuangwang* 鳳凰網). In his autobiography, Mengshi questions whether any of the information he and his other young friends had managed to obtain from their well-placed fathers in 1940s Manchukuo had been of any real value to the Communists. In contrast, the purpose of the interviewer's story was to list all of the crucial intelligence the young people, including Mengshi, had managed to forward to their CCP handlers. Mengshi made rather few observations in the interview, but the interviewer did most of the talking and supplied what was needed to make it a positive story. It may have been a case of the reporter touting the anti-Japanese work of Mengshi, who may not have agreed with the laudatory remarks, but was mellow enough about those past events to refrain from arguing.

Phoenix Television broadcast another interview with Mengshi in August 2011 (rebroadcast in June 2015 a few months after his death) conducted by reporter Chen Xiaonan 陳曉楠. In that interview Mengshi was more his loquacious self, commenting in a relaxed and whimsical manner on a number of events in his life, especially about his relations with former Emperor Puyi, and with his father Zhang Jinghui. He also spoke about changing his name from his birth name of Zhang Shaoji 張紹紀 to Zhang Mengshi in1950 as a way of celebrating his re-birth into New China; the name "Mengshi" means to bring dreams into actualization. That story and the other information given in this interview are all in his autobiography, and it seems likely he was working on drafts of his book at the time of the interview. Mengshi's way of speaking was captured well in the interview and was the same as the narrative style in his autobiography.

From the book he wrote, from the interviews mentioned above, and from the comments of Professor Zhou Guixiang who was interviewing him in recent years, Mengshi emerges as an unassuming man given to enjoyment of music and literature, interests he could quietly pursue toward the end of his life but which were denied to him because of circumstances for a good many of his years. He was not confrontational or highly critical of others but rather was a person reacting as an interested observer to most of what he saw around him. He tended to have a quiet and a steady personality, and was somewhat of an optimist, not dwelling on setbacks and instead preferring to move forward with a positive frame of mind. His relaxed approach to life in the midst of many trials probably allowed him to live to a healthy old age.[27] The decision he made in 1942 to marry Xu Ming was the right decision for him, and he and Xu Ming remained together for the rest of his life. Today, she lives in Beijing today with her daughter. Mengshi seems to have been happy to leave the glare of major international events after 1985 in favor of a quiet retirement. A collection of photos in the book shows him both as a youth, with his children and grandchildren, and with his beloved wife in old age.

2000 these materials were left unpublished, so they were collected by his admirers and brought out in this volume.

27 This characterization of Mengshi that I formed from reading his book was confirmed as accurate by Dalian Institute of Technology scholar Zhou Guixiang 周桂香 in personal communications to the author, 6 October and 13 October 2015.

Mengshi's autobiography is a lively account of many major political events that he was fated to endure. Many of the events that touched him personally, however, have yet to be thoroughly investigated or understood. Mengshi has never been recognized as a major figure in modern Chinese history, yet he was intimately connected with the direction of Manchukuo at the highest levels of its political life. His name may be known more widely in China, but in Japan only among specialists in this historical period, and by virtually none of the scholars whose work is based on English-language sources. His observations and first-hand connection to Manchukuo from the 1930s on means his comments have a great deal of credibility. This article represents the first account in English of Zhang Mengshi and his involvement with the major leaders of Manchukuo.

My goal in this article has been to allow Mengshi to tell his own story in his own words and thus to give us his view of recent Chinese history. In selecting which episodes to narrate, I have been interested in those that had major social and cultural implications for Mengshi, rather than in the political ramifications they entailed. Each of the episodes mentioned above represents important episodes in Mengshi's life. Since his life was so directly intertwined with many major historical events of those decades, his own observations and experiences become all the more important as perspectives for historians to understand.

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