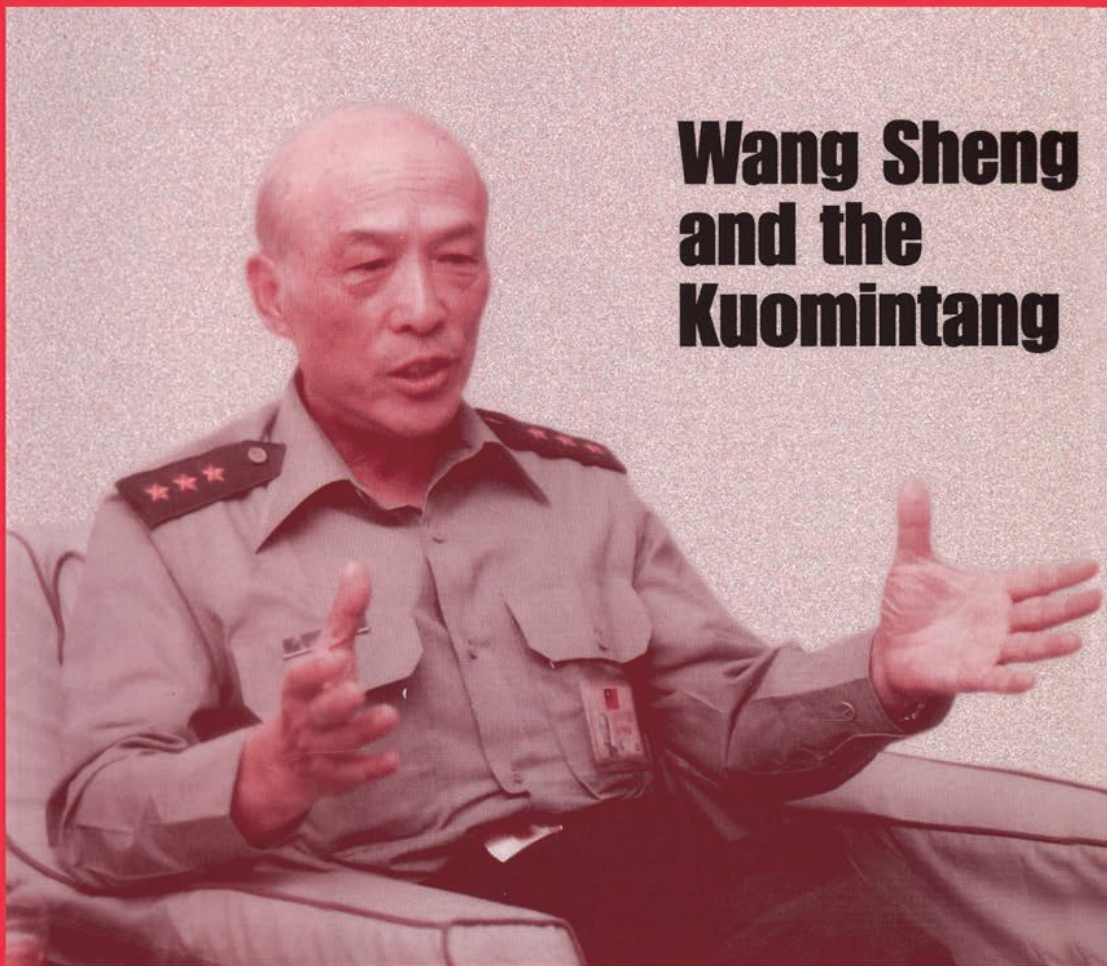


# COUNTERREVOLUTION IN CHINA



**Wang Sheng  
and the  
Kuomintang**

**THOMAS A. MARKS**

ROUTLEDGE  


COUNTERREVOLUTION  
IN CHINA

For those who made 1986 in Hong Kong  
the spectacular it was:

Monte Bullard  
Sterling Seagrave  
Denny Lane  
Ed O'Dowd  
Tony Paul

# COUNTERREVOLUTION IN CHINA

Wang Sheng and the Kuomintang

THOMAS A. MARKS

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## Preface

Few episodes have been as ill-served by historians as the effort by the Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT), to carry out a revolution in China. Long overshadowed by its victorious rival, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it is only in recent years that the KMT interlude has begun to attract more sustained examination. Few studies, though, carry their scholarship through to its logical end, Taiwan, where the KMT has succeeded in building the society and state it in many respects sought to create on the mainland. Indeed, small wonder – in a field where not a single adequate biography of such central figures as Chiang Kai-shek or Chiang Ching-kuo exists – that we find little of scholarly note on the revolution of the Chinese Republic.

It was this relatively unexplored state of affairs which I found so exciting when, in the summer of 1993, the opportunity arose to conduct a year's research under the auspices of the Asian Militaries Research Society in Carmel, California. Previous service in Taiwan during the Vietnam War combined with a fortuitous intersection of personal contacts to provide the opening for this biography of Wang Sheng. His association with key personalities and institutions of the KMT provides a unique vantage point from which to explore the KMT and its vision of revolution, particularly as embodied in Sun Yat-sen's *San Min Chu-i*.

This vantage point could never have been explored, however, without the cooperation afforded by the scores of individuals, not least of whom was Wang Sheng himself, who consented to the interviews which serve as my most important source of information. These discussions, in turn, would not have been possible without the translation and interpersonal skills of Shan Bullard; Wendy Tsai; Major Jerry Pang, PhD; and Major General Lee Tung-ming ('Tom'), PhD. The latter two individuals are active duty Political Warfare officers who gave unstintingly of their time in an effort to ensure the accuracy of the text, particularly the manner in which important translations were rendered. This, too, was a role assumed by Colonel (Retired) Monte R. Bullard, PhD, a former professor, without whose intercession and patient guidance this study would never have reached completion.

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# 1 The End of an Era



Inseparable duo: Chiang Ching-kuo (center front) and Wang Sheng (left) during 1967 inspection of the offshore islands.

ON 10 MAY 1983, a day apparently of no special note in the Republic of China, the country's president, Chiang Ching-kuo, asked Wang Sheng to come to his office in Taipei. The brief telephone call to Wang, the general who headed the military's General Political Warfare Department, or 'GPWD' as it was often termed, was a normal thing.<sup>1</sup> The two men had known each other for half a century. To many, in fact, they were the numbers one and two – respectively – in the political hierarchy of the Kuomintang, the Nationalist Party, 'the KMT', which, in exile from China, had constructed and ruled the *de facto* island-state of Taiwan.

As he entered the room, Wang, then 67, saluted and said, 'Mr President, how are you?', to which Chiang replied, 'Director Wang'. It was a ritual which had been repeated innumerable times. Only five years apart in age, they were nonetheless separated by an immense gulf. For all the talk of relative positions in the KMT hierarchy, it had always been like this, one the teacher, one the dutiful pupil, the very relationship of their meeting those long years ago in China's Jiangxi province, cradle of the communist revolution of which they were both firm foes.

So much had happened in the intervening years, yet so much had stayed the same: two figures whose personal relationship remained defined by their relationship to their country. For the previous eight years, those during which Wang Sheng had been the official head of GPWD, he had in public been 'Director Wang'. Chiang Ching-kuo had been 'President Chiang'. When they were alone, Chiang often became 'Education Director', the position he had held those many years previously in Jiangxi. Wang Sheng became 'Hua-hsing'.

That, of course, was not the name his parents had given him, which was Wang Shiu-chieh. But that name had disappeared along the way. Wang Sheng was the student name which had stuck. Another teacher, though, had taken to calling him Wang Hua-hsing, so sometimes Chiang Ching-kuo called him that. Or he would use the two titles that Wang Sheng had held while Chiang's direct subordinate in the Political Warfare hierarchy, 'Chief of Education Wang' or 'Assistant Commandant Wang'.

Yet this time it was 'Director Wang'. And 'President Chiang' motioned to the sofa. Wang Sheng sat on the left, Chiang on the right. Not well – driven by diabetes, his health had been in serious decline for several years – Chiang Ching-kuo was very serious.

It had been but several weeks since Wang Sheng had returned from a short trip to the United States at the request of the unofficial US Embassy, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). Aside from the usual gossip occasioned by the timing, the whole business had seemed uneventful enough.

Certainly the inevitable carping and criticism, though, had proved irritating. The name Wang could also mean 'king', and Sheng could mean 'raise' or 'to rise up'. Hence, as Chiang Ching-kuo deteriorated, went the gossip, Wang Sheng, or 'Rising King', was moving to solidify his position with the Americans so that there would be no disruption, come the transfer of power, in the Republic's relations with its chief international backer.

Ironically, the trip had been cleared by Chiang Ching-kuo himself. The timing had been right. After three difficult years of 'extra duty', heading a special body set up by President Chiang to coordinate Taiwan's response to China's united front assault, Wang Sheng had found himself back in his familiar GPWD routine when Chiang abruptly terminated the '*Liu Shao Kang* Office'. The American invitation, apparently stemming from Washington's own perception of Wang's position in the ruling KMT hierarchy, had been pressed since 'derecognition' of Taiwan in favor of the mainland in 1979. Sensing the need for a break, all concerned had agreed that the time had come to accept.

As far as such episodes went, the Wang Sheng tour was decidedly low key. Accompanied by only a single interpreter and his wife, Wang Sheng had met with American officials and academics concerned with Taiwan and China. At one point the issue of the presidential succession came up, in response to a question asked by the scholar A. Doak Barnett. Wang replied that Chiang Ching-kuo's health was good, his mind clear; and, in any eventuality, the ROC constitution, which stipulated that the vice-president would step into the shoes of the president should such become necessary, would dictate events.

That the issue of the transition was openly broached by the Americans to Wang had created some stir in Taiwan, but both the question and the response had been straightforward. It was reported in a regular communication sent back to Taiwan.

When he returned, Wang Sheng discussed his trip directly but briefly with Chiang Ching-kuo. The president seemed different in a vague sort of way, a bit cold, but that could be attributed to his continuing illness. Wang Sheng thought nothing more of it and



Fateful visit: Wang Sheng is greeted by William Casey, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), during his brief 1983 trip to the US.

went back to his work. There were no meetings between the two.

Now, in May, they made small talk. Then Chiang Ching-kuo came to the point. 'You've been doing the same job for too long', he said, 'so we're going to transfer you to a position in armed forces joint-training'. A few more words, and the meeting was over. It had lasted just five minutes.

Thus ended one of the most powerful, though certainly one of the most ambiguous, careers in the long history of the KMT and the system it sought to build and protect. 'Rising King' had fallen, summarily and completely, ushering in a new phase of the Republican revolution.

In retrospect, one has images of storm clouds gathering and ominous portents, followed by the climactic struggle. Reality was far more prosaic.

Even the sacking was lacking in drama. For Chiang Ching-kuo had said nothing of demotion or disgrace. He had spoken only of a general being transferred. Certainly Wang Sheng was no ordinary general, as we shall see, but he was, in the final analysis, just a general filling a billet. Moving to another position would have been unusual, given Wang's singular involvement with Political Warfare, but not extraordinary.

There was even a certain logic to the meeting. Three years earlier, just before *Liu Shao Kang* had been established, Chiang Ching-kuo had asked Wang Sheng to his house for a friendly chat. At the time, Wang was thinking about how he could get a new job. 'I was running Political Warfare', he was to observe later. 'This was very wearing. You're the guardian for the whole military. Any night the phone would ring, I'd jump up, frightened, knowing there might be some disaster'.<sup>2</sup>

Wang Sheng, a product of a military sense of duty and a Chinese sense of obligation, could not directly tell Chiang Ching-kuo, his superior and lifelong teacher, that he did not want his job anymore, so he tried to find another way. Referring to the time when Chiang had been GPWD head, and Wang the deputy, he said, 'When you took this job the first time, it was for a two year term. When you stayed on, it was for only another term. You left in order to keep things legal. Next year I'll have been here three terms. If I continue to stay on, I'll violate the system'.<sup>3</sup>

Chiang Ching-kuo, though, did not see the connection Wang Sheng was trying to make and said only, 'It is a difficult question but another problem'.<sup>4</sup>

Then, after a few days, he called Wang Sheng and said that he had checked the matter out: 'There is no statutory limit on the head of the Political Warfare Department. Term limits were just something we had assumed existed'.<sup>5</sup>

That was the end of the issue. Wang Sheng was unable to get himself to ask formally that he be given a new assignment. Nevertheless, he did not let the matter drop. In particular, when Chiang Ching-kuo directed him to set up *Liu Shao Kang*, Wang tried his mentor's patience by seeking to decline. In the end, the fateful chain of events was set in motion.

When Chiang Ching-kuo finally called Wang Sheng in, however, that eighth year as Director of GPWD, and told him that he had been there too long and was being given a new job, it did not seem ominous. Indeed, Wang was relieved. He needed a change. 'Fine' was all the response he mustered.

'For sixteen years I had been the deputy director and executive deputy general beneath Chiang Ching-kuo', he recounts, 'then eight years as the director, a total of 24 years of very difficult work. So I felt as though ten thousand pounds had been lifted from my shoulders'.<sup>6</sup>

Wang Sheng returned to his office. Immediately thereafter, the transfer order was announced. He was to become the Director of Joint Operations and Training. Finally, Wang was stunned: 'If I had been transferred to a very important position, such an action would have been comprehensible, but I had been transferred to a very insignificant position'.<sup>7</sup>

There now was no doubt that the action was considered extraordinary. No time was allowed for a normal rotation. The GPWD Executive Officer, a lieutenant general, was not even in Taipei but in the southern part of the island participating in a field exercise. The Chief of the General Staff, Hau Po-tsun, was also there to watch the exercise.

A reaction to the announcement started immediately. The Chief of Staff heard the news and called back to Wang Sheng's office. He said that the change had caused uneasiness among the troops and suggested that Wang meet him immediately to calm matters and to plan an orderly transition. Wang briefly demurred, observing that it did not seem to be necessary to do such a thing. But General Hau insisted that he do so 'for the country's sake'. Wang agreed to go if Hau would issue an order, which he did. 'I was a fool for conceding', Wang was to observe much later, 'For the country's

sake, I went. But certainly this caused a great deal of trouble for all of us!<sup>8</sup>

He went down south, where he made a round of farewell calls. Again, in retrospect, it was naive. In the military way of looking at things, the sudden removal of a key officer, the GPWD boss, made necessary efforts to emphasize continuity. This undoubtedly was General Hau's logic. Furthermore, GPWD's central role in looking after the welfare of officers and men alike demanded that the reservoir of goodwill Wang had accumulated be respected by an adequate and heartfelt sendoff. Just as predictably, given the circumstances of Wang's transfer, this was not how the political world would see matters.

Chiang Ching-kuo and others saw Wang's moves as disruptive. On the surface, though, the farewell tour, which eventually expanded to units countrywide, was calm enough and well within the bounds of normal military protocol. In one instance, at a Marine assembly hall in the south, he spoke to over a thousand officers of field grade (major) and above, all from the area. The Chief of Staff's orders were that all would attend. Marine General To Yo-shing was the base commander. Wang discussed the need to move on, emphasizing that their duty was to protect the country. He cautioned them not to use his sudden transfer as 'cause for sadness'.<sup>9</sup>

It was all very moving. After the talk at the assembly hall there was a meal. As it began, General To Yo-shing brought his cup to Wang, toasted him, saying, 'Mr Director, we all feel sad about your new appointment', and became teary-eyed. It was indicative of a general feeling.

Former colleagues were to remember 'General Wang Sheng', as he invariably was termed by them, thus: 'Taiwan's principal expert at fighting communism';<sup>10</sup> 'one of the most diligent and incorruptible men in the military';<sup>11</sup> 'a man totally loyal to his country and dedicated to the people';<sup>12</sup> 'a man completely loyal to President Chiang Ching kuo and the Kuomintang and prepared to sacrifice himself';<sup>13</sup> 'a totally selfless person, without personal ambition, who was dedicated to helping others';<sup>14</sup> 'a pragmatic administrator who eschewed patronage systems and factions';<sup>15</sup> 'a military officer who was dedicated to education for himself and to help young military officers obtain a liberal education, especially in foreign universities';<sup>16</sup> 'one of the few important military officers who interacted regularly with scholars in the academic

community’;<sup>17</sup> ‘a very capable person with strong political wisdom’;<sup>18</sup> ‘a great communicator who was very persuasive but very soft-hearted in dealing with subordinates’;<sup>19</sup> ‘a loyal subordinate who never sought political power’;<sup>20</sup> ‘a good man who did a lot for his country against communism and corruption’;<sup>21</sup> and ‘the right man, in the right job, at the right time in Taiwan’.<sup>22</sup>

Altogether, Wang Sheng made three major speeches. In addition to the one in the south, he gave one to the Defense Department; another to *Fu Hsing Kang* College, the training ground for Political Warfare officers and, in many respects, a Wang Sheng creation. There, many students and instructors wept.

There was also a good bit of reaction in the civilian community. Approached by one young man at a wedding, Wang was told tearfully, ‘The day you left, I lost my mother’.

Yet there was another side to the reaction. While many wept at Wang’s departure, others rejoiced. For they believed he was Chiang Ching-kuo’s powerful henchman, a man who controlled thousands upon thousands of secret police – and who was responsible for the brutal suppression of ‘popular movements’ in Taiwan.<sup>23</sup> A purported exposé of Kuomintang oppression, written later, was to label him as the ‘widely feared...successor to CCK [Chiang Ching-kuo]’, as well as ‘perhaps the most feared man on the island’. He was a ‘hard-line political czar’, ‘having direct command of a security network that permeated Taiwanese society’, ‘the man who manipulated student demonstrations against the United States’. He was the ‘notorious boss of the military’s Political Warfare Department’, who was ‘widely considered among the three most powerful men in Taiwan’. He was ‘responsible for the continuation of martial law’. ‘Perhaps the most feared man on the island’, he was one ‘in control of thousands of political agents and informants’ and ‘author of truly vitriolic tracts’ attacking communism. He was, to be blunt, the man who helped Chiang Ching-kuo ‘terrorize life in Taiwan’.<sup>24</sup> Finally, if he had not participated directly, he had surely helped to create the atmosphere which resulted in the murder of an American citizen, Henry Liu (pen name, Chiang Nan), whose writing had been harshly critical of the Kuomintang.<sup>25</sup>

In short, Wang Sheng was not an old soldier who could just fade away. Even his efforts to settle into a new low profile routine did not end the adulation and critique of his past role. The joint training job, he found unchallenging and repetitive. Yet it seemed

to offer a chance to catch up on his reading and family affairs, a chance to work something vaguely resembling a nine-to-five job. But every day there were visitors non-stop seeking his counsel. This combined with reports, in particular, of Wang's speech in the south, to worry Chiang Ching-kuo.

'I thought I had performed a great service in calming the military', Wang analyzes.

But the president had been told that some soldiers perceived my talk to be arrogant. It was reported that I had said – who is the most ardent anti-communist? I'm the only one who can do this work. Ironically, I even sent a tape of the speech to Chiang Ching-kuo so that he could see there was but one line which was being misinterpreted.<sup>26</sup>

It was to no avail. To those around him, Chiang Ching-kuo asked, 'How did General Wang become so wild, so conceited, so arrogant?'<sup>27</sup> Such questioning could not escape Wang Sheng's notice:

Hearing such words, I knew Chiang Ching-kuo's judgement had weakened. After fifty years of friendship, he should have known my mind. He was acting on rumors rather than checking them out. That was not like him. That's when I knew his mind was going. In my new job, I was being overwhelmed with visitors. Most were high, influential people. I was spending all my energy on this! All they wanted to do was to comfort me. Chiang Ching-kuo should have been pleased at such solicitude in the upper echelons. But people told him that this was evidence of how powerful I had become. This created a cloud. Paranoia set in. That was why he decided to put me far away from the country.<sup>28</sup>

This analysis seems accurate. From his earliest days in the KMT cause, Chiang Ching-kuo had worked assiduously to avoid that which KMT stalwarts viewed as the single greatest cause for their loss of the mainland, factionalism. Whether there was more to it than that is best left for later discussion. For the moment, we can judge that Chiang Ching-kuo's immediate concern was that Wang Sheng at home continued to be a source, through his faithful following, of division. So he decided 'to send him far away'.

Just how far he could not bring himself to tell directly to his

loyal subordinate, his friend and comrade. Instead, he detailed the task to Premier Sun Yun-husan (also rendered as Yun-suan), or Y. S. Sun, as he was normally called by the Americans. A member of the KMT inner circle as well, a friend of Wang's, Sun explained to Wang that he had been chosen for an ambassadorship. He did so in a gentlemanly way, explaining that Wang's expertise, his skill, and his experience were needed for a task that would serve the nation. He had also been requested by the president of Paraguay, whom he had known for some time.<sup>29</sup>

Wang tried to decline. He protested that it did not make a whole lot of sense. Sending him to be an ambassador was not quite proper and might cause the country to pay a high price if he proved inadequate to the task. He thought, 'I'm a military man; I have no experience for such a thing'. But he said out loud, 'At this moment, I am still a military man. I obey orders. If you tell me to go, if those are the President's orders, I will obey'.<sup>30</sup>

'I heard later that Chiang Ching-kuo was very pleased to hear that I would go if ordered since I was a soldier', Wang notes.<sup>31</sup>

Chiang Ching-kuo summoned me. Whereas previously he had been stiff, now he had a lighter attitude. He addressed me as 'ambassador'. I said being an ambassador was not my cup of tea and that I was not suitable, but that if he ordered me to go, I would. He said an ambassador was a very important position and something I should experience. He said, 'I know you will do a good job. Within this country, you may become the focus of a faction'. I answered, 'You ought to know me. I'm almost seventy. You ought to know me. Don't use your own fist to hit your head'. Chiang Ching-kuo replied, 'My thinking is still very clear'. I was unable to continue. I bowed and left.<sup>32</sup>

And so Wang Sheng was sent as ambassador to Paraguay, a country a ten and a half hour flight from Miami, Florida. Before he left, he met one last time with Chiang Ching-kuo. The president was at ease and solicitous in his mannerisms. There was no doubt in his mind that he was sending Wang Sheng into exile and that Wang Sheng, out of loyalty to the KMT and Taiwan, was going. They sat beside each other again on the sofa, and Chiang Ching-kuo wished Wang Sheng well. They were never to see each other again.

After Wang Sheng arrived in Paraguay, he was dropped from the KMT Standing Committee, the inner circle of 27 who determined the parameters of national policy. He remained a member of the Central Committee. He did not return to Taiwan until 1990, two years after the death of his mentor, Chiang Ching-kuo. An era had ended.

## NOTES

1. The military rank structures of the US and Taiwan (ROC) are basically the same, having equivalent grades at each level. Unlike the US military, however, which uses four stars to designate a full 'general', Taiwan's armed forces use three stars for the counterpart. Further, though all 'generals' in the ROC system physically wear 'three-stars', there is a further division, for pay purposes, between 'upper level' and 'lower level' generals. Wang Sheng was a 'lower level general', which would rank as a US four-star equivalent, or 'general'.
2. Interview with Wang Sheng, 16 July 1993 in Taipei.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Interview with Yu Kuang, chief of ROC Advisory Mission to Cambodia during the Vietnam War, 19 July 1993 in Taipei. Though this and the quotes which follow come from specific individuals, there was considerable overlap in their analyses of Wang Sheng's personal and professional qualities, extending in particular to their choice of adjectives. Hence virtually any source could be used to support particular quotations.
11. Interview with Tracy T.S. Cheng, former professor at National Taiwan University (began work with Wang Sheng during the civil war period), 14 July 1993 in Taipei.
12. Interview with Kiang [Jiang] Yen-shih, Secretary-General of the ROC Office of the President and former KMT Secretary-General, 20 July 1993 in Taipei.
13. Interview with Chang Shih-jieh, Chinese Unified Union Advisor (Wang Sheng colleague since civil war period), 26 July 1993 in Taipei.
14. Interview with Central Military Academy (CMA) Class 16 members, 16 July 1993 in Taipei.
15. Interview with Kung Chiu-chuan, professor at Tamkang University (Wang Sheng colleague since World War II period), 12 July 1993 in Taipei.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview with Thomas B. Lee, Director of Graduate Institute of American Studies at Tamkang University, 29 July 1993 in Taipei.
18. Interview with Li Huan, former premier of ROC, 23 July 1993 in Taipei.
19. Interview with Tseng Cheng-te, former Commercial Attaché in ROC Embassy to Paraguay, 19 July 1993 in Taipei.
20. Interview with Soong Chang-chih, former defense minister of ROC, 13 July 1993 in Taipei.
21. Interview with Sun Yun-husan, former premier of ROC, 29 July 1993 in Taipei.
22. A phrase used repeatedly by interviewees, July 1993 in Taipei.
23. Chiang Na [Henry Liu], 'Wang Sheng's Mysterious Misstep' [translated], *Ch'i-shih Nien-tai Yueh Kan (The Seventies Monthly)* (June 1983), pp.55-7. Such accusations also

- came out in interviews with Hsieh Tsung-ming (Roger), member of Legislative Yuan, 22 and 26 July 1993 in Taipei.
24. David E. Kaplan, *Fires of the Dragon* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1992). See pp.175–6, 196, 259, 268, 328, 334.
  25. Ibid.
  26. Interview with Wang Sheng, 16 July 1993 in Taipei.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Ibid.
  29. Interview with Sun Yun-husan, former premier of ROC, 29 July 1993 in Taipei.
  30. Interview with Wang Sheng, 16 July 1993 in Taipei.
  31. Ibid.
  32. Ibid.

## 2 Jiangxi: The Making of a Counterrevolutionary



A youthful Wang Sheng as rendered by a colleague.

TO SPEAK of the passing of an era is to hint at profound change; to imply a succession in world views, a generational shift. Certainly this occurred in Taiwan in the years which followed Wang Sheng's exile. As he flew to Paraguay, he left behind him a 'Free China' that was but an island and its outliers, a domain the size of Massachusetts and Connecticut combined, which was all that remained of the Republic of China that had once ruled the huge mainland. The Republic was beginning to prosper, true, yet remained only a promise, economically and politically, its democracy imperfect and authoritarian. Less than a decade later, when he returned, it was to a nation which ranked among the strongest economically in the world, a fledgling democratic power with a rich cultural life. More significantly, the generations who had built this 'Taiwan miracle', as it was so often called,<sup>1</sup> had handed leadership over to new blood. Those such as Wang Sheng had passed the torch.

It was a torch which had been lighted decades before in China itself, when the 1911 collapse of the Qing (Ch'ing, Manchu) dynasty brought an end to imperial rule. There followed the chaotic years of the warlords, a time of bloodshed and suffering tempered, at least partially, only in 1927 with the consolidation of the Republic. It was a republic, though, which did not even dominate its core area of provinces centered on the great treaty ports such as Canton and Shanghai. It was these that had been seized in the so-called Northern Expedition, headed by the emerging star of the Kuomintang (KMT), Chiang Kai-shek, father of Chiang Ching-kuo and leading KMT figure following the death in 1925 of the 'father of the republic', Sun Yat-sen.<sup>2</sup> From the moment of Sun's passing, it had been Chiang who increasingly dominated the KMT and the future of China.

In 1927 this future was anything but clear, for the revolutionary endeavor, the drive to replace the old-regime with something new, had early on splintered into two contending forces, both Russian-advised, the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP was not yet, in those early years, led by Mao Tse-tung, and so was not 'Maoist'. What it sought was a Marxist-Leninist solution to China's problems, the most salient of which were a loss of national independence and internal socio-economic-political structures which insured that life, to use the old phrase, was nasty, short, and brutish. In the chaotic post-imperial world, it was the local elite, or gentry, which increasingly determined the

rhythms of existence. Though ultimately beholden to regional warlord power, the gentry were thrust to the fore by the very vastness of China and the size of its population. Of necessity, warlord power was concentrated in towns or cities. Thus it was the gentry who were masters of their localities and the directors of the forces of local order. Predictably, too, it was they who were the targets of the CCP.

Neither could the gentry gain protection from the KMT, at least not initially. Far from being their ally, the KMT also saw them as a counterrevolutionary force, a link with the past impeding those new structures necessary to restore China to its previous glory and its rightful place in the family of nations. Thus it was logical that initially the CPP and the KMT worked together in a united front against the warlords and, by implication, their local representatives (i.e. structurally if not actually), the gentry. This marriage of convenience ended, however, even as the Northern Expedition drew to a conclusion. In 1927 and 1928, estranged by the CCP's efforts to emphasize class struggle and to mobilize into its ranks forces Chiang saw as a threat, the KMT leader turned on his erstwhile allies and purged them. In disarray, the CCP fled from the areas in which it had, following its Marxist-Leninist doctrine, concentrated its efforts, the cities, to the only place where it could find safety, the countryside. There Mao, who had early on attempted to reorient the party towards the teeming millions who dwarfed in numbers any purported, doctrinal 'proletariat', was ultimately to emerge as CCP helmsman. And there the KMT, needing to mobilize forces to do battle with the communists, turned to the gentry in an alliance which was to last throughout an increasingly more widespread and bitter civil war. Chiang Kai-shek, in other words, sought to build upon the structures which were embedded in Chinese society; Mao Tse-tung worked to mobilize new forces for the creation of new structures.

Wang Sheng, of course, was to have his identity formed by the playing out of this drama, but this is to get ahead of the story. For the moment, suffice to note the point and move ahead. The end to the tale is already well known. Yet therein lies the confusion which we see in those attempting to describe Wang Sheng himself. He became an historical figure precisely because he picked the 'losing side' in the struggle, the Kuomintang. For as is now clear, in reality those who lost the war, the Nationalists, won the peace. It was their state which realized the dreams of the early revolutionaries

for a China which was independent, prosperous, and free. And Wang Sheng played a crucial role.

### *Maoist Insurgency*

At this point, there is no need to review in more detail than above the early framework of the Chinese revolution and its growing civil war. Nonetheless, there are several points which must be made. Certainly Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) emerged the short-term victors when, in 1949, after a struggle of more than two decades, they drove the Kuomintang from the field. From this fact, though, it does not follow that the outcome was preordained, an inevitable consequence of the flawed structure or incorrect leadership of 'pre-liberation' China. This, of course, has been a dominant theme of American scholarship on China.<sup>3</sup> Actually, the evidence would seem to come closer to supporting an earlier view, that which saw activists exploiting grievances, than to the alternative, that which saw the revolutionary élite as springing from the masses. Indeed, as we now know from a wide body of material, the initial recruits of the Maoist revolutionary endeavor in China were not drawn from the masses *per se* but from fringe elements of the populace, especially secret societies, bandits, and linguistic minorities located in locales of minimal official presence, such as border areas. Only when the revolutionary movement became a going concern was it able to exploit the mechanisms and contradictions in the old-regime, as it did in the key province of Jiangxi, where the communists had their most important pre-World War II 'liberated area', or soviet. Thus the structural conditions of the old-regime in China cannot be seen to have *caused* the communist insurgency.<sup>4</sup> The role of leadership – of the choices made by both sides – was crucial.

When all is said and done, communist revolutionary warfare in China was a technique for purposive action.<sup>5</sup> It was a means to an end, political power – political power to be seized for the purpose of overthrowing the existing order. It was not, as so many of its misguided adherents have claimed, an alternative form of democratic governance.<sup>6</sup> To the contrary, as will become clear in this work, democracy has been the most viable counter to the Maoist approach. The CCP insurgency, in other words, was about politics, about reshaping the process of 'who got what'. It was the

conscious effort to supplant one political structure with another. Taken to its logical end, it became that which Mao claimed to be waging, *revolutionary warfare*, the conscious effort by insurgents 'to make a revolution' by seizing state power using politico-military means. Those who resisted it, such as the KMT and Wang Sheng, therefore, engaged by definition in *counterrevolutionary warfare*. They were counterinsurgents.

This becomes entirely logical when it is recalled that, following the Northern Expedition, it was the KMT which became the state power in China. Whereas previously the Nationalists had been the revolutionaries, they now found themselves *countering* would-be revolutionaries. Hence, if for temporal reasons alone, they had become revolutionaries waging counterrevolution. When the roles were ultimately reversed again in 1949, with the communist victory on the mainland, the KMT on Taiwan was again in the revolutionary position *vis-à-vis* the established power.

A crucial point, of course, is that in all these endeavors it is men who comprise revolution and counterrevolution. Structural circumstances, as either Mao or Wang Sheng would say, mean nothing save they are made real through human action. External manifestations of *insurgency* or *counterinsurgency*, such as terror or guerrilla war or mobile war, are all but tools to accomplish the political end, the remaking or defense of the political system. The precise level of force required by either side to achieve its goals depends upon the strength of the system under attack. Guerrilla warfare may suffice in one case; full-fledged conventional action may ultimately prove necessary in another. Likewise, the correct strategy to be followed will depend upon the particulars of the case at hand. Regardless, that which links strategy to the tactical use of force is the operational utilization of political infrastructure, covert in the case of the insurgents, open and legally established in the case of those who support the existing system.

Thus it is that the *raison d'être* of military power in such a context, in whatever form and for either side, is the projection and protection of the political infrastructure, leading ultimately to victory. Mao is only the most famous of the various revolutionaries who have related this reality. He set forth a three-step process (strategic defensive, stalemate, and offensive) and found it necessary, in the end, to transform his guerrilla armies into massive conventional forces to remove the last vestiges of KMT power. (Castro, we may note by way of contrast, found a Cuba so decayed

that minimal guerrilla action was needed to bring the edifice crashing down.) Likewise, prominent counter-revolutionaries have achieved a certain notoriety; but since, in China, they were the losing party in the battle, KMT theorists of counterrevolution have not been much in evidence. Only Wang Sheng was to be a consistent exception, at least in the Chinese-speaking world.

Turning to the insurgent side of the equation, regardless of the military strength required to achieve the political aim, the critical fact is that it is dictated by the demands for protection of the alternate political system being constructed to carry out the revolution, not by military means *per se*. This, to be sure, is the ideal. Numerous other mundane factors, such as logistics or demographic realities, will affect insurgent courses of action. Yet it is the inspiration that is important. Step by step, the revolutionaries in China created an alternative political movement, then used it to seize power. Having done this, they implemented far-reaching changes – revolutionary changes.

Mao's strategy itself did not spring full-grown from his mind. It matured only by fits and starts. As such, it really had several parts, and the relationship between them is not always appreciated. Specifically, during the Jiangxi Soviet period, 1927–34, techniques of correct tactical employment of force, as well as for dealing with the masses, were developed. Yet these proved insufficient to prevent the Jiangxi Soviet from being crushed by Chiang Kai-shek's five encirclement campaigns.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, during the Yen'an period, that which followed the 'Long March' but prior to full-scale war with Japan in 1937, further 'mass line' techniques were developed (i.e., those for mobilizing the populace). Only with the Japanese occupation, however, and the adoption of the 'united front' as a strategic template (as opposed to its use merely as a tactical gambit), could a synthesis emerge which we would recognize today as Maoist revolutionary warfare.

There continues to be controversy over the role 'aroused Chinese peasant nationalism' played in mobilizing manpower for the CCP, but Chalmers Johnson is obviously correct in judging that without the Japanese occupation there would not have been Maoist insurgency.<sup>8</sup> One need not even enter into the debate as to whether it was nationalism or social action which activated the peasantry. Both were important and played varying roles depending upon the specific region in question; the real key was the destruction of the Kuomintang resource and manpower base by

the Japanese, a reality which meant the state – incomplete and inefficient though it was, even after the Northern Expedition – was no longer able to muster the power which had previously proved sufficient to crush the communists. Indeed, it is not an overstatement to state that without the Japanese invasion, there might well have been no Mao. The collapse of the KMT in the 1945–49 civil war was an anticlimax. The Nationalist cause was mortally wounded before the battle was joined.<sup>9</sup>

Such an analysis surely flies in the face of much accepted wisdom but is more accurate. Jiangxi was the communist movement prior to war with Japan; and in Jiangxi the CCP was beaten. Following the Fifth Encirclement Campaign, the KMT began several significant approaches and programs designed to further its vision of China's future. These plans met with varying degrees of success before they, too, fell victim to the flames of war. In them, though, may be found the genesis of modern Taiwan.

### *A Youth in Longnan*

It was not, we have noted above, in the rural hinterlands of provinces such as Jiangxi that the communists first attempted to make their movement a going concern. Instead, it was in the cities of southern China, particularly Canton and Shanghai, where they could find a proletariat which needed only the leadership of a Leninist revolutionary party to throw off its chains. Only with their hammering in the urban centers did it become necessary for the would-be revolutionaries to go to the masses. There were those such as Mao, and a host of lesser known local would-be revolutionaries, already there. Most of these individuals, including Mao himself, were sprung from the gentry. More often than not, they were students and teachers who used the existing institutions and structures of Chinese society to build their movements. Once they gained a certain following, they went to work amongst those they judged to be the exploited, particularly the landless poor.<sup>10</sup> Since their proffered solution was one which saw the overthrow of existing institutions, they rapidly came into confrontation with the gentry.

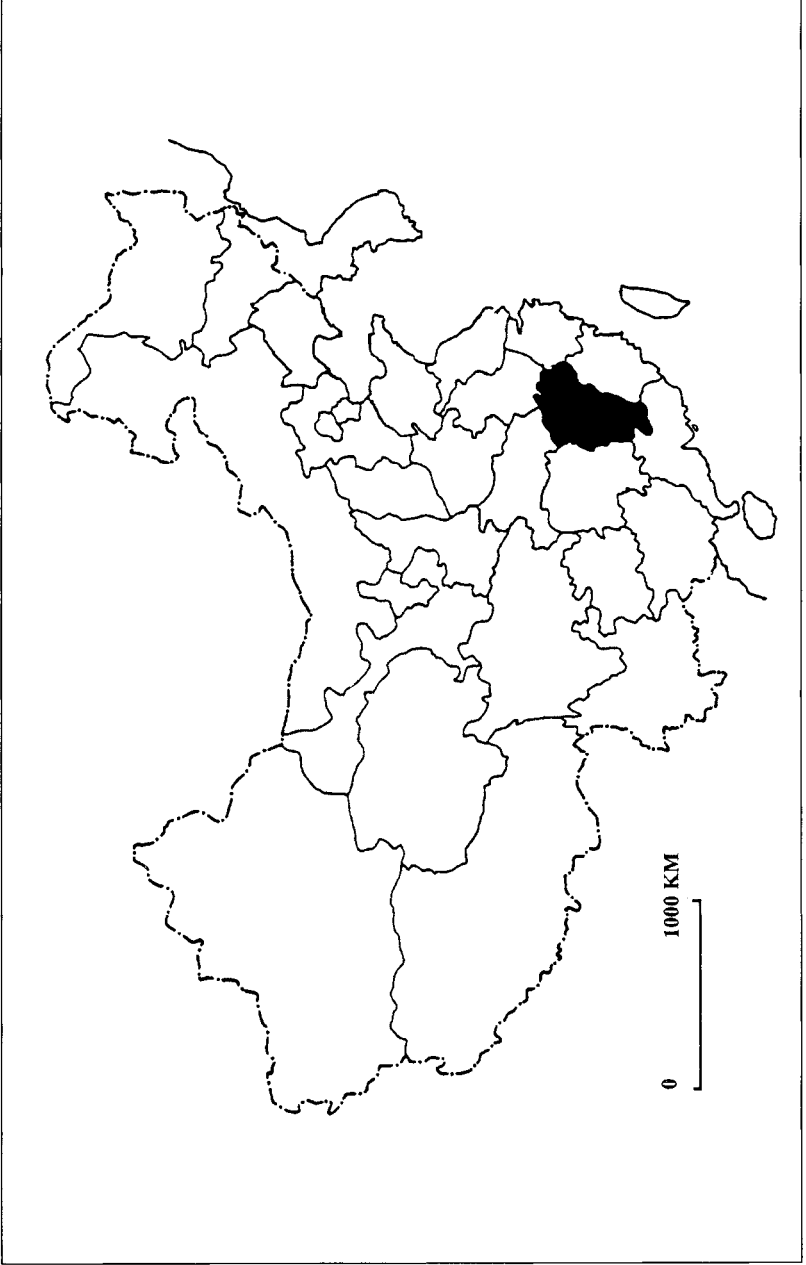
As the conflict grew in scope and violence, the gentry's need for enhanced resources, particularly trained manpower, resulted in appeals to higher rungs of government for assistance. These

responded, with the result that the contest which emerged was one characterized by alternative modes of mobilization. What is of most significance in this process is that, because it was a political battle between rival infrastructures, with each side marshalling armed power to protect its organizing efforts, the outcome in any particular area was never a foregone conclusion. Grievances thrown up by structural injustice, to include widespread gentry abuse of the populace,<sup>11</sup> could be used by the insurgent leadership to mobilize manpower; but the process could work for the counterinsurgents in support of the status quo as well, particularly if the gentry could be made to ameliorate its excesses.<sup>12</sup> Where the two sides differed fundamentally was in the use they were willing to make of existing societal structures.<sup>13</sup>

Amidst such a dynamic Wang Sheng was born on 28 October 1915<sup>14</sup> in Longnan, one of Jiangxi Province's 81 counties or *hsien* (see Map 1 for location of Jiangxi, Map 2 for Longnan). There were 28 provinces, excluding Tibet and Outer Mongolia, and approximately 1,964 *hsien* nationwide.<sup>15</sup> Jiangxi itself was by the time of Wang's youth to have 13,794,159 inhabitants in 173,089 square kilometers.<sup>16</sup> His own world, though, was ever so much smaller. Even Longnan, now grown to some 300,000 people, was then but 80,000. It was administratively divided into five districts embracing 22 villages or small towns. It was in one of these, now called Jingou (Chinkou), 'Golden Fishhook', near Longnan town, that young Wang Shiu-chieh, as his parents named him, lived – though then their village was Mut'itsun (Muticun), 'Wooden Flute Village'. It was so-named because of the whistling noise the wind made as it swept through the trees. The Wang household lay in a cluster of 20 homes half an hour's walk, about a kilometer, from the Longnan center (see Map 3). Most of the homes, including the Wang family's, were sun-baked mud brick structures; tiled roofs and wooden frames. Subsistence activities were the norm. Rice-growing provided the livelihood for most, augmented by vegetables and fruit. As cash crops, the inhabitants processed commodities such as cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, peanuts, and beans.<sup>17</sup>

This was an isolated world, yet it was integrated into the larger system of the Gan River, a tributary of the Yangtze. The transportation network was poor, and only a few roads led to the outside; Guangdong Province was eight hours to the south by foot. Thus it was on the river that the most important commercial

MAP 1  
JIANGXI PROVINCE IN CHINA



MAP 2  
JIANGXI PROVINCE COUNTIES



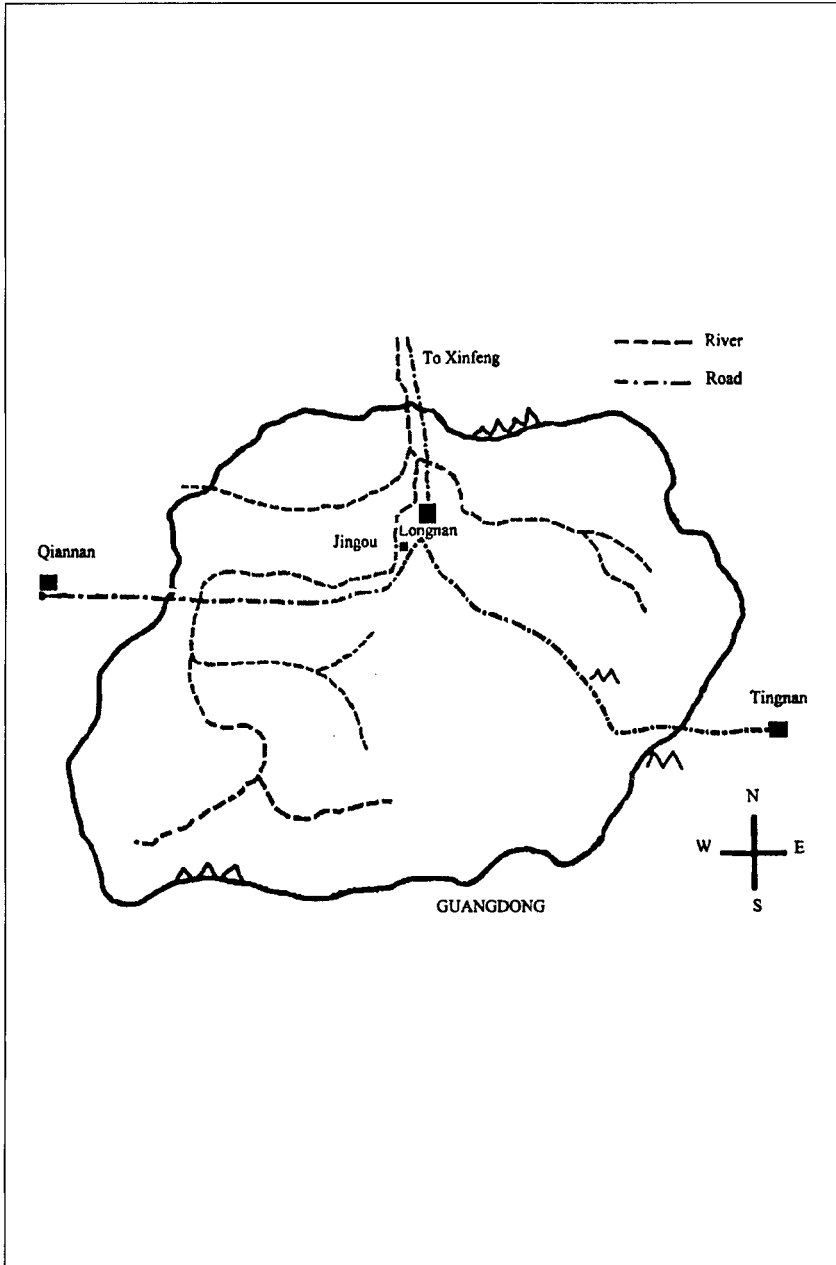
activity moved, in particular the exchange of salt, which Jiangxi lacked, for rice, needed by far-off Guandong. Cantonese, consequently, comprised a majority of the outsiders. Wood was another export, floated, like the two-way trade in salt and rice, to the provincial capital, Nanchang, thence to Nanjing (Nanking), the capital of the Republic, or, using various branches of the great rivers, to the bustling commercial center of Canton itself. In the Longnan area, the Jiangshu River, a branch of the Gan, could be used both ways for movement of such bulky items. Inland, on the roads, there were a few carts for shipping of goods, but most hauling was done by porters. Travellers got around almost exclusively on foot.

It was thus that the Wang family, ethnically Hakka, had originally come to Longnan. They had been in their area long enough to assimilate but had retained a commercial orientation.<sup>18</sup> Wang Sheng's father, Wang Pei-kuei (also known as Wang Kuei-san), ran a small business processing cotton and tobacco. As the chief of the clan, the small group of families with the same surname who lived together on the outskirts of Jin-gou, he presided over religious ceremonies and was the mediator in disputes. He was, in other words, a member of the gentry but certainly not in the sense that 'élite' is frequently interpreted. He could read and write but was not educated. His cotton mill was really only rented space in a public building, and all work was done by hand. When business was good, help could be hired. Elsewise, it was a family endeavor, joined in by Wang Sheng and his mother, Liu Huei-ying; an elder brother, Wang Chien-kang, and sister, Wang Hsiang-feng; and a younger brother, Wang Chien-hu.

The dislocation of the warlord years and the economic difficulties which culminated in the worldwide Great Depression made such family arrangements the norm. Hardship was great. The Wang business had not a single cart to carry its products; everything was moved on the family's backs. Wang Sheng's mother, a 'kind and hardworking woman', as one villager remembers, drove herself relentlessly despite a worsening illness. Recalls Wang Sheng, 'She overworked herself during those years. She would stay up until midnight, coughing with tuberculosis. Always I have that image of her – she worked and suffered. I would wake up in the dark and hear those two sounds, of her working the cotton and coughing'.<sup>19</sup>

At first young Wang Sheng must have been unaware of the

MAP 3  
LONGNAN COUNTY



straits in which his family found themselves. Gradually, however, they impinged directly upon his life. From 1924–29, until he was 13 years of age, he was able to continue with his primary education at the county's Chih-liang Elementary School, working for the family on the side. He was a quick learner and applied himself, but to continue on with middle school would have required going to the regional center of Ganzhou, a four-day trek away, at a time when family finances were straitened and political instability mounting. Already the presence of local 'Communist Bandits' was interrupting the rhythms of daily life. In any case, by 1929 the family's money situation had become such as to preclude this option. Instead, Wang Sheng worked in Jingou and its vicinity to contribute his share. His brother owned in succession two stores, a small shop in Mut'itsun, then one for Chinese medicine in Qiannan, which he maintained with a partner. Wang Sheng worked as a clerk in the medicine store and also ran a print shop with a friend. He studied on his own at the insistence of his father and brother. From 1932 to 1935, he was able to return to a formal setting, Nanfang Institute of Chinese Literature, a clan creation which was a normal method for boys of the time to be educated. Though only attending half a year annually, the other half devoted to work, he was an apt pupil of his teacher, Liao Cheng-pu, who tutored him, as well as the other students, in the classical manner of 'the academy' (for which Socrates and the Greek philosophers were so well known).

Principally it was Chinese literature, philosophy, and social sciences which attracted Wang Sheng. As with countless others of his generation, he was drawn to tales of Chinese heroes – he especially liked Wen Tien-hsiang of the Southern Sung Dynasty – and to the three immemorial classic tales, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Tales of the Monkey King*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber*. As perhaps indicative of the times, when China itself sought to build a republic, he also studied on his own a smattering of American history and was impressed by the quintessential American legends, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, and George Washington. He also was deeply interested in the moral framework posited by the Chinese philosophers Confucius and Mencius. His classmate, Chung Li-jieh, three years older, was to recall those years:

All Wang Sheng did was read all the time, study really hard,

work hard. He got along with people well. All the time he stayed occupied. He was very, very goal-oriented, yet very introverted. We would talk. The topic was always about the country, society, our county – not like youngsters nowadays, who show less concern. We all lived in school together. At this part-time school, we didn't have extracurricular activities. All we did was study. This is why Wang Sheng has very good Chinese, because of his studying at that school.<sup>20</sup>

It was an education which was to serve him well. Throughout his life Wang Sheng was to be known for his ability to bring ideas together into a coherent whole, then to articulate his vision. His view of the moral order was profoundly affected by the classics; and he took away from his learning a world view which saw behavior, structures, and values as being of equal importance in forming a just order. The solution to the ills of society lay, first, in individual perfection; leading, second, to correct behavior; and, finally, brought together with other like-minded individuals in institutions dedicated to service as well as leadership. In pondering the intricacies of any situation, he was given to writing down his ideas – he had a strong memory – pulling the diverse threads into a coherent whole, all stroked with a sure hand in simple but elegant calligraphy.<sup>21</sup>

Evident, too, even at this early date, was Wang Sheng's astonishing capacity for work, linked to a growing patriotism which had first surfaced in the 'citizenship' lessons of elementary school. Clearly, he was profoundly affected by his family's own impoverishment, its downward social mobility, if one may use the term. 'I believe that life's tears can stain you', he has observed, 'but they can also push you forward'.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, he was much affected by the plight of that entity called only 'China'. Educational attainment provided a natural outlet for the synthesis he formed:

I had a belief: scholarly knowledge is not anyone's monopoly. If you work hard, it can belong to you, not just to those with special degrees. My brother encouraged me to study. My father also encouraged me. No one told me, but it was obvious that to live in this world, you must have knowledge. Our country was so poor; we needed knowledge to improve. My thought was this: If the country is to advance, we must become educated.<sup>23</sup>

How Wang Sheng – a product of an isolated, remote,