Notes

Introduction

1. Zhang's story can be better understood in the context of modern Chinese history and its connection to world events. Each chapter of this book is prefaced with a few lines describing events in China and the world during the period expanded upon in the chapter.

2. Xi’an (‘western peace’), capital of the province of Shaanxi, was one of China’s most ancient capitals and was considered the biggest city in Asia, and possibly in the whole world, in ancient times. For hundreds of years the city marked the beginning of the Silk Road that connected China, the Middle East and Europe. In its environs is the tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang, who united China and died in 210 BC. The tomb is guarded by thousands of terracotta soldiers who represent real soldiers. In northern China there are two provinces with names that sound alike. One is Shaanxi (on the first syllable the tone dips and rises, on the second syllable the tone is neutral), containing Yan’an and Xi’an. The meaning of the name is ‘west of the mountain pass called Shan Xi An’. The other province is also called Shanxi, but in this case both the first and the second syllable have neutral tones. The name means ‘west of the mountains’ and the reference is to the Taihang Mountains that run down from north to south between this province and its neighbor, Hebei province. The events described in this book took place in the province of Shaanxi, not Shanxi.

3. The reference is to a sort of traditional spiritual authorization, decree or mandate, given by the heavens to the ruler to rule. It was a rhetorical political element meant to emphasize a new emperor’s right to govern by the grace of a higher power. Naturally, it was frequently explained that a ruler failed and fell because that divine grace was removed from him.

4. Confucius, or by his Chinese name Kong Fuzi (K’ung fu-tzu) the wise Kong, was born in the year 551 BC in the state of Lu in eastern China, today the province of Shandong. He served in different offices in his homeland and reached the rank of minister, retired from affairs of the state and devoted himself to teaching, editing classical books and writing an essay about the history of the state of Lu. Confucius’ Analects are considered a reliable source for the study of his own philosophy, as opposed to the philosophy that developed after his death throughout the generations. See, The Analects of Confucius, trans. Dim Cheuk Lau (New York: Penguin, 1979).


Chapter 1

1. The uprising was named after a secret Chinese society, whose members instigated it. They combined physical and spiritual warfare and operated to expel...
foreigners from the Chinese Empire and eradicate their cultural, religious, commercial and technological influences.

2. A distinction is being made here between the Manchu people – members of non-Chinese tribes (non-Han) – who established their power on the northern borders of China in the sixteenth century, threatened the Ming dynasty that ruled China and ultimately conquered China in 1644, turning Manchuria into their homeland, and the Manchurians – Chinese (Han) – who immigrated to the provinces of Manchuria (‘Dongbei’ in Chinese). The Manchu had their own language. They established the Qing dynasty, which ruled over the whole of China before the dynasty collapsed in 1911. The Chinese gradually entrenched themselves in Manchuria and the Manchu became a small minority.

3. Between the years 1928 and 1949, the capital of China was Nanjing and the name of Beijing was changed to Beiping, meaning ‘northern peace’. In this book, the city will be referred to as Beijing, even when dealing with the period when it was officially called Beiping.

4. Years later, Zhang Xueliang would testify that the wars between the warlords, despite the serious efforts invested in them, were not ‘serious’. Indeed, it appears that in the spirit of Chinese tradition, the rivals maintained social relations in the midst of fighting. The wives of the commanders who were fighting one another even met often to play mahjong.

5. The term ‘soviet’ was intentionally used by the Chinese and meant in the sense of a ‘council’. Based on the workers’ councils elected after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The reference here is to the territorial base that the Communists established in the countryside.

6. This term refers to the senior commander of the joint forces of land, sea and air. In the period reviewed here, this title was used by Francisco Franco, the head of the Spanish state, and by Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader.

7. The powerful explosion is currently illustrated by audiovisual devices in the Museum of Shenyang (the city’s name today) to mark the Japanese occupation and killings in Manchuria. Considering the material that has been collected, the theory about possible Soviet involvement in the assassination does not seem to be sufficiently reliable.

8. A Chinese game named after a downy bird, usually for four players. Tradition dates it back to the days of Confucius. The game includes 136 or 144 pieces, sometimes made of ivory.

9. A daughter, Lu-ying, and three sons, Lu-xun, Lu-gan and Lu-qi (also spelled as Luying, Luxun, Lugan and Luqi).

10. According to the doctrine of Sun Yatsen, the father of the modern Chinese nation, government in China should have been characterized by what may be called ‘guided democracy’, namely democracy guided by the Nationalist Party that he founded. Such a form of democracy was the second of the Three People’s Principles mentioned above.

11. In his conversations with interviewers as part of the Columbia University oral history project.

12. During the years of Zhang’s addiction until the rehabilitation he went through in 1933, he apparently did not reach such levels of opium consumption that would have completely immobilized him. It was widely believed that the effect of the drug dissipated after a few hours, during which the user feels relaxed, attains a state of euphoria, their pain is reduced, they