

WHAT DOES CHIANG KAI-SHEK REALLY MEAN FOR TAIWAN?

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Introduction

The most controversial personality in Taiwanese history is without doubt the former President of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi). There are still many Taiwanese showing him admiration, but for many others he is “the evil one.” This article is an attempt to treat him, in this connection, as objectively as possible.

In 1978 three persons in Chinese history were, more or less indoctrinated, worshipped almost as demigods in the Republic of China/Taiwan: Confucius, Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan) and Chiang Kai-shek. Because those facts must be seen in context, some critical words have to be said about Sun Yat-sen, namely in connection with his Soviet Union policies.

1) SUN YAT-SEN AND HIS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

In his attempt to become president of the whole of China, in 1922 Sun Yat-sen started to contact Soviet-Russia. At that time, i.e. 1924, in accordance with a statistical study of a certain Professor Sarolea, confirmed by a certain Mr. Hearnshaw of King's College, London, and quoted in Winston Churchill's book “Nach dem Kriege” (“After the War”)¹, the Bolsheviks had already murdered the following number of persons:

28 Bishops, 1, 219 priests, 6,000 professors and teachers, 9,000 doctors, 12,950 landowners, 54,000 officers, 70,000 policemen, 193,290 workers, 260,000 soldiers, 355,250 intellectuals and tradesmen, and 815,000 farmers. Those figures, so Churchill, did not include the monstrous losses of human life among the Russian population having perished from starvation.²

It was that the beginning of the “Revolution in Permanence” in the Soviet-Union. Later,

¹ Churchill, Winston Spencer, Nach dem Kriege, Zurich, Leipzig, Vienna 1930: Hoffmann, Joachim, Stalin's War of Extermination, Theses & Dissertations Press, Capshaw, Alabama, USA, p. 173.

² Ibid.

during the reign of Stalin, there was, of course, much more to come.

What does “Revolution in Permanence” mean? This term can be found, at least twice, by Karl Marx. In March 1850, together with Friedrich Engels, he stated: Their³ battle cry must be: “The Revolution in Permanence.”⁴ And in April 1850 he declared, together with the then allies⁵ Friedrich Engels, August Willich,⁶ Ada Vidil⁷ and Julian Harney⁸: “The aim of the Association is the overthrow of all privileged classes, their subjugation under the dictatorship of the proletarians, in which the revolution in permanence will be preserved until the realization of Communism, which will be the last form of organization of the human family.”⁹

On January 26 1923 Sun Yat-sen and the Soviet diplomat Adolph Joffe¹⁰ signed the Sun-Joffe agreement.¹¹ The Soviet Union promised to support Sun, who therefore made concessions to Soviet Russia, above all regarding the Outer Mongolia and Xinjiang.¹²

In August 1923 Mikhail Borodin¹³ became, at Stalin’s recommendation, Sun Yat-sen’s

³ The workers’

⁴ “Ihr Schlachtruf muss sein: Die Revolution in Permanenz.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Address of the Central Department to the League, March 1850 (Ansprache der Zentralbehoerde an den Bund vom Maerz 1850). Loew, Konrad, Marx & Engels – Die Vaeter des Terrors (Marx & Engels – The Fathers of the Terror), Langen Mueller, Munich, Germany 1999.

⁵ Around 1850 many revolutionaries formed links with Karl Marx but separated from him before long. Friedrich Engels, of course, was an ally of Marx during his lifetime. More: Loew, Marx & Engels, particularly pp. 300-310.

⁶ 1810-74, army officer, revolutionary, member of Communist League, supported anti-Marxist faction, emigrated to U.S.A., Unionist officer in the American Civil War. Kamenka, Eugene, The Portable KARL MARX, Viking Penguin Inc., New York N.Y., USA, 1983, p. 605.

⁷ No more information of that person available.

⁸ George Julian Harney, 1817-97, Chartist leader and journalist. Kamenka, Karl Marx p. 587.

⁹ “Das Ziel der Assoziation ist der Sturz aller privilegierten Klassen, ihre Unterwerfung unter die Diktatur der Proletarier, in welcher die Revolution in Permanenz erhalten wird bis zur Verwirklichung des Kommunismus, der die letzte Organisationsform der menschlichen Familie sein wird.” Loew, Marx & Engels p. 90.

¹⁰ 1883-1927.

¹¹ Dillon, Michael, China. A Cultural and Historical Dictionary. Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey, Great Britain, p. 166.

¹² More: Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, The unknown story of MAO. Alfred A. Knopf, New York N.Y., USA, p. 31-32.

¹³ 1884-1951. Died in prison. Rayfield, Ronald, STALIN and his HANGMEN. Random House, New York N.Y.,

political adviser.¹⁴ In May 1924 a military academy was established in Whampoa (Huangpu),¹⁵ about 10 kilometers away from Canton.¹⁶ This academy was modeled on Soviet institutions, with Soviet advisers and many Communist teachers and students. Planes and artillery were imported from Soviet Russia.¹⁷ From the day of its founding, Moscow made a determined effort to plant high-level agents in the Nationalist military,¹⁸ where many of them went on to become officers.¹⁹ This had the consequence that, during the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalist army was infiltrated by Communist agents, spies and sleepers, what contributed decisively to the defeat of the KMT on the Chinese Mainland. Therefore it must be said that Sun Yat-sen's wooing the Soviet-Union laid the foundation of the conquest of Mainland China by the Communists some 25 years later. `

In connection with the Sun Yat-sen-Soviet relations, many Chinese, above all young ones, were fond of Communism. Even Chiang Kai-shek cooperated with the Communists at that time. But he kept his distance from them within a few years. A greater admirer of Communism was his son Chiang Ching-kuo (Jiang Jinguo, president of the Republic of China from 1978 to 1988). He wanted to study in Soviet Russia. Therefore he traveled to Whampoa to discuss his Moscow plans with his father.²⁰ Chiang Kai-shek, obviously reluctantly, gave in, perhaps because he needed Soviet support.²¹ From the end of 1925 till 1937 Chiang Ching-kuo lived in the Soviet Union. He arrived there, together with other Chinese students, in November 1925. Already since 1917 Soviet Russia had provided military training and education for revolutionaries from China and other Far Eastern countries, eventually combining various training schools to become the University of the Toilers of the East.²² Then, in 1925, the Soviets decided to establish a separate institution for Chinese students: the Sun Yat-sen University of the Toilers of China (Sunovka).²³ Its rector became

USA, p. 507. Borodin's original name: Michael Gruenberg. Dillon, China p. 29.

¹⁴ Chang and Halliday, Mao p. 33.

¹⁵ Dillon, China pp. 147-148.

¹⁶ Chang and Halliday, Mao p. 33.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 301.

²⁰ Chiang Kai-shek was the first commandant of the Whampoa Military Academy.

²¹ Taylor, Jay, *The Generalissimo's Son*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA 2000, pp. 25-26.

²² Ibid., p. 22.

²³ Ibid.

Karl Radek.²⁴ Chiang Ching-kuo, having gotten the name Nikolai Vladimirovich Elizarov, also studied there.

On January 12 1926 a new Chinese student arrived at the Sunovka: Deng Xiaoping, getting the Russian name Ivan Sergeevich. But within a short time he was called “Little Cannon.” It seems that Chiang Ching-kuo and Deng Xiaoping struck up a close relationship.²⁵ During his lifetime, Chiang Ching-kuo also spoke several times with Stalin.²⁶ In 1937 he returned to China.²⁷

2) COMMUNIST UPRISINGS IN GERMANY

After World War I, Germany entered many political and economical crises. There was enormous inflation, and many Germans at this time got poorer and poorer. Speculators misused those circumstances for making money, radical movements for committing uprisings.

While Sun Yat-sen dealt with the Communists, i.e. on October 4 1923, the Soviet Government in Moscow decided to instigate revolution in Germany. It should take place on November 9 of the same year in Kiel in North Germany, on the 5th anniversary of the beginning of the “November Revolution” in Germany, which toppled the last German emperor, William II, and lead to the founding of the German Weimar Republic. Four agents, equipped with faked passports, were sent thither for making all corresponding preparations: the above-mentioned Karl Radek, Jozef Unszlicht,²⁸ Georgi Piatakov,²⁹ and a certain Shmidt. Also involved in that coup was the then manager of the State Bank of the USSR in Berlin, Nikolai Krestinski.³⁰ On Oktober 10 1923 Joseph Stalin, at that time still almost unknown outside the USSR, made an appeal to the German people in the newspaper “Red Flag” (“Rote Fahne”), central organ of the Communist Party of Germany. That appeal was published in Russian language with German translation and ran as follows:

²⁴ 1885-1939. Killed in a Soviet prison. Rayfield, Donald, Stalin and his hangmen. Random House, New York N.Y., USA, p. 315.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 519.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

²⁸ 1879-1938, shot.

²⁹ 1890-1937, shot. Piatakov then lived under the code name “Arvid” in Germany. Besymenski, Lew, Stalin und Hitler (Stalin and Hitler), Aufbau Verlag GmbH, Berlin, Germany, 2002.

³⁰ 1883-1938.

“The coming revolution in Germany is the most important world-occurrence of our days. To the proletariat of Europe and America, the victory of the revolution in Germany will be of greater importance than the victory of the Russian revolution six years ago. In connection with the victory of the German proletariat the center of world-revolution will inevitably be transferred from Moscow to Berlin.

The “Red Flag” can congratulate itself to a wonderful success, because it has proved itself to be a reliable lighthouse, showing the German proletariat the way to victory and assisting it to become again the leader of the European proletariat. From the whole heart I wish the “Red Flag” further decisive successes in the imminent battles for the conquest of the power by the proletariat, for the unity and independence of the just arising Germany of the working people. J. Stalin”³¹

But the revolutionaries agitated too quickly, the Communist organizations did not cooperate accordingly (the Socialists and most of the workers didn’t want to make revolution at all), and so all revolutionary activities were canceled. But some groups did not get informed, revolted, and fights took place in Germany, chiefly in Hamburg between 23 and 26 October. The uprisings ended bloodily.³² There were further bloody revolts, mainly in Thuringia and in Saxony.³³

Ironically, on November 9 1923 the Hitler-Putsch (March on the Feldherrnhalle) took place. It also ended bloodily.³⁴ Hitler was taken prisoner, put to court and sentenced to five years

³¹ “Die kommende Revolution in Deutschland ist das wichtigste Weltereignis unserer Tage. Der Sieg der Revolution in Deutschland wird fuer das Proletariat Europas und Amerikas von groesserer Bedeutung sein als der Sieg der russischen Revolution vor sechs Jahren. Mit dem Sieg des deutschen Proletariats wird sich das Zentrum der Weltrevolution unweigerlich von Moskau nach Berlin verlagern. Die “Rote Fahne” kann sich zu einem grossartigen Erfolg gratulieren, denn sie hat sich als sehr verlaesslicher Leuchtturm erwiesen, der dem deutschen Proletariat den Weg zum Siege gezeigt und ihm geholfen hat, wieder zum Fuehrer des europaeischen Proletariats zu werden. Von ganzem Herzen wuensche ich der “Roten Fahne” weitere entscheidende Erfolge in den bevorstehenden Kaempfen fuer die Eroberung der Macht durch das Proletariat, fuer die Einheit und Unabhaengigkeit des im Entstehen begriffenen Deutschlands der Werktaetigen. J. Stalin”. Besymenski, Stalin und Hitler, p. 35.

³² Ian Kershaw states that twenty-four Communists and 17 policemen had been killed. Kershaw, Ian, Hitler, 1889-1936 Hubris, W.W. Norton & Company, New York N.Y., USA, 2000, p. 201. Regarding Klaus Kellmann there were 100 victims. Kellmann, Klaus, STALIN, eine Biographie (Stalin, a biography) Primus Verlag, Darmstadt, 2005, p. 77.

³³ Kershaw, Hitler p. 201.

³⁴ Fifteen putschists, four policemen and one neutral person were killed.

imprisonment at Landsberg, where he wrote the first part of his “Mein Kampf.”³⁵ Hitler was released prematurely after serving only eight months in 1924.³⁶

3. THE KUOMINTANG IN TAIWAN

With the end of World War Two Taiwan was, at least de facto, restored to the Republic of China. Chiang Kai-shek appointed Chen Yi, an ally of him, governor of the island. Chen Yi arrived on October 25 1945, accepting the surrender of the Japanese, who had ruled Taiwan for 50 years, from their last governor-general, Ando Rikichi. Having been informed that the war was over, the Taiwanese had mixed feelings concerning their future. They agreed, in principle, that Japan was defeated, but they were anxious regarding the fate of their island and consequently the destiny of themselves. Unfortunately, their misgivings proved to be right. Chen Yi and his subordinates seemed to consider Taiwan as war booty, confiscating anything and everything; not to mention Japanese-owned assets, but also innumerable belongings of common Taiwanese people. That kind of behavior produced, of course, aversions to the newcomers.

Those aversions began to explode on February 27 1947, as policemen attacked a widow, who illegally sold cigarettes, in Taipei. Following day the whole Taiwan population became extremely excited, and upheaval started around the island. At the beginning of the unrests, the Chen Yi provincial government responded reserved, waiting for troops to be sent from the mainland (at this time, there were only very few KMT-soldiers in Taiwan, because practically all fought in the Chinese Civil-War). After they had arrived, Chen Yi brought them into action and the unrests ended bloodily. Regarding the Kuomintang’s own records, at least 28.000 people were killed.³⁷ On March 22 Chen Yi was recalled from Taiwan, and Chiang Kai-shek (who, of course, dissociated himself from those atrocities!) made him governor of the province Zhejiang. As it became sure that the Communists would be victorious in the civil war, Chen Yi started making approaches to them. But Chiang Kai-shek got informed about that and reacted. Chen Yi was taken prisoner, deported to Taiwan and, to the pleasure of all

³⁵ Kinder, Hermann and Hilgemann, Werner, *The Penguin Atlas of World History*, Volume 2, 2003, p. 183. The second part was written 1925-27. Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. Ian Kershaw claims that all Communist insurgencies in Germany were suppressed by the Reichswehr sent in by the Reich government with an alacrity not shown against the extreme Right. Kershaw, Hitler p. 201. But he does not mention that the Communist uprisings were, at least in Hamburg, instigated by the Soviet Union.

³⁷ Manthorpe, Jonathan, *Forbidden NATION. A History of Taiwan*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York N.Y., USA, 2002/5, p. 193.

Taiwanese, executed there in June 1950.³⁸

There was more to come. With the end of the Chinese Civil War, Chiang Kai-shek moved to Taiwan, and with him the Nationalist government as well as about two million mainlanders, among them 600.000 soldiers of the Kuomintang army.³⁹ The Generalissimo, hoping to recapture the Chinese mainland as soon as possible, considered his staying in Taiwan only as temporary. Therefore he tried to prepare the population of Taiwan for that enterprise, ruling it dictatorially (later rather autocratically). A kind of secret police was founded, the Taiwan Garrison Command under the direction of Chiang Ching-kuo. This secret police force was authorized to ferret out any aspiring politician who represented a real threat to the political stability,⁴⁰ really or at least allegedly. Communists (in reality very few in Taiwan) were purged, but also, on a much larger scale, Taiwanese who pleaded for an independent Taiwan, separated from China. Such movements were suppressed severely by the Kuomintang, leading to the so-called “White Terror”, which lasted from 1947 (after the uprising) into the 1980s. It is, by some analysts, estimated that 90.000 people were arrested in above-mentioned years. About 10.000 of those had got a military trial, but about 45.000 were executed summarily.⁴¹ The main-coordinator of those secret-police activities was Chiang Ching-kuo,⁴² who therefore carried the ultimate responsibility for the deaths of tens of thousands of Taiwanese.⁴³

In the early fifties two reforms were put into effect: the “Currency Reform” and the “Land Reform.” The Currency Reform stabilized the New Taiwan Dollar, after years of inflation. The Land reform distributed land from the landowners to peasants, which led the foundation for a prospering peasantry as well the following industrialization of Taiwan. Big landowners were obliged to sell most of their soil to the state, who distributed it to landless peasants. Not all landlords were happy with this development, believing they had been “robbed” of their land.⁴⁴ One former landowner said: “The regime will never give its real reason for stealing our land because one was political. They wanted to eliminate the power of the landowners because we were the social elite in every community, looked up to by the peasants, and we

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 193-94.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 194

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 203-204.

⁴¹ Ibid., 204.

⁴² A former Communist!

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hung Chien-chao, A History of TAIWAN. Cerchio, Rimini, Italy, 2000, p. 264.

were known to have been active in the 1947 revolt.”⁴⁵

How was, at that time, the situation in Mainland-China? After the civil-war was won, Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) launched energetically a nationwide “campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries,” which lasted for one year. The number of victims, by execution, mob violence or suicide, went into some three million.⁴⁶ In this regard Mao did not want to kill a single one of those big Chiang Kai-sheks but only small Tschiang Kai-sheks.⁴⁷ It was that the beginning of the “Revolution in Permanence” in China.

And there was, of course, also much more to come: the “Three-Anti Campaign ” (late 1951), the “Five-Anti Campaign” (1952), the “Great Leap Forward” (1958-1960) and the “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976). The number of victims was uncountable. Those campaigns included “collectivization”, what meant nationalization, of land. As Graham Hutchins states: “By 1956 Chinese agriculture had been collectivized nationwide. Apart from subsidiary private plots, private farming was a thing of the past. Land belonged to the state.”⁴⁸

Why collectivization and nationalization of the land? It seems that the main answer can also be found by Karl Marx, who declared in 1872:” I, however, say: The future will decide that the ground only can be national property. To transmit the land to associated agricultural workers would mean delivering the whole society to a special class of producers. The nationalization of the land will cause a complete change in the relations between labor and capital and eventually eliminate the whole capitalist production.....⁴⁹ And, as Mao Tse-tung said at one occasion: “Marxism is that brutal.”⁵⁰ During the reign of Mao, innumerable landowners had been killed.

⁴⁵ Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation* p. 202.

⁴⁶ Chang and Halliday, *Mao* p. 324.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Hutchins, Graham, *Modern China*. Penguin Books, 2000, p. 265.

⁴⁹ “Ich hingegen sage: Die Zukunft wird entscheiden, dass der Boden nur national Eigentum sein kann. Das Land an assoziierte Landarbeiter zu uebergeben, wuerde heissen, die ganze Gesellschaft einer besonderen Klasse von Produzenten auszuliefern. Die Nationalisierung des Grund und Bodens wird eine vollkommene Aenderung in den Beziehungen zwischen Arbeit und Kapital mit sich bringen und schliesslich die gesamte kapitalistische Produktion beseitigen.....” Loew, Marx & Engels, p. 189.

⁵⁰ Chang, Halliday, *Mao*, p. 394.

CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can now be drawn, in connection with Chiang Kai-shek's actions in Taiwan? There can be no doubt that the Generalissimo was, directly as well as indirectly,⁵¹ responsible for countless misdeeds and for at least many ten thousands of victims. That is, of course, much more than regrettable. But at the other hand: What would have been the alternative for Taiwan at that time? At the conferences of Cairo and Potsdam it was decided that Taiwan would be returned to China after the war. And therefore, Japan having been defeated, there was only the question who would take it: the Nationalists or the Communists. And had the Nationalists not occupied it, than the Communists would have taken the island, what would have meant, doubtlessly, incomparable more Taiwanese victims than under the Nationalist government. There was no revolution in permanence in Taiwan and almost no starvation. And, concerning area and population, Taiwan within a few decades became an economical superpower, the foundations for those developments also laid by Chiang-Kaishek. Considered all this, Taiwan got off lightly. And that means, in the opinion of the writer of this article, that the Taiwanese shall assess him critically, but not condemning him too much.

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⁵¹ Regarding the above-mentioned atrocities of Chen Yi, Chiang Kai-shek is at least indirectly responsible, because it was he, maybe with his government, who made him "governor" of Taiwan.

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