

Introduction

China has so far experienced three revolutions in the twentieth century. The first was in 1911 when the Manchus' Qing dynasty was overthrown and the warlord-republic was instituted under the presidency of Yuan Shikai. The second was in 1927 when the Nationalists conquered South China, broke with the Communists, and established a party-republic under the chairmanship of Chiang Kai-shek. The third revolution took place in 1949 when the Communists defeated the Nationalists and unified all of mainland China under a people's republic ruled by Mao Zedong.

This book is about the second revolution and the ten years of Nationalist (Guomindang) rule between 1927 and 1937, when war finally broke out with Japan. During that decade the central government in Nanjing was dominated by Chiang Kai-shek, who tried to carry out the program of national construction left unfulfilled by Sun Yat-sen at the time of his death in 1925. A central feature of that program was the establishment of a special Chinese municipality in Shanghai, which was by the second quarter of the century China's only real metropolis. Shanghai was also partly under foreign rule, and Chiang Kai-shek's determination to create an effective Nationalist urban government there was partly to prove to the world that the Chinese deserved to recover their sovereignty over the treaty ports and rule themselves.

The Chinese Special Municipality of Shanghai thus became something of a test case for the Guomindang régime. Could the Nationalists actually set up and administer a modern municipal administration that would come to grips with such a turbulent, unruly, and crime-ridden city as Shanghai? In the eyes of Chiang Kai-shek and the Shanghai mayors he appointed, the key to the problem was the Chinese police force, which was only one among several law enforcement agencies that sought to bring

law and order to the city in its various concessions, zones, and districts. Could the Nationalists constitute a modern police force, modeled on the best law enforcement agencies in the world, that would cope efficiently with Shanghai's public health, housing, traffic, commercial licensing, entertainment, labor union, kidnapping, censorship, indigence, narcotics, prostitution, and racketeering problems, while simultaneously pursuing a program of recovering national sovereignty over the concessions and controlling popular disorder and unrest within the Chinese sectors of the city?

By the Nanjing régime's own reckoning, the police agents of the Public Security Bureau were to be the Nationalists' primary instrument for imposing their new revolutionary political order upon China's largest urban conglomerate, long the imperialists' key outpost and a center of comprador capitalism on the one hand, and a stronghold of the Communist labor movement on the other. By focusing on the efforts of the Chinese police to transform Shanghai into a Guomindang showplace during their decade of rule, this study hopes to clarify other aspects of the Nationalist régime, including the relationship between the central party-state and Republican local elites, the role of clandestine organizations and criminal syndicates in delegitimizing national political structures, the balance between police and civilian power in an urban setting, and the evolution of municipal political organizations under the extraordinary stress of military invasion and occupation.

For, as we shall see, any effort to read revolutionary intentionality back into the ten years of Nationalist rule instantly runs athwart the Japanese-shaped outcome of this critical decade. Because we know that the Manchurian Railway and Marco Polo Bridge Incidents loom ahead, it is extremely difficult for the historian to perceive 1927 without anticipating the military debacle that the Nationalists were to suffer in 1937 when 250,000 Chinese troops were lost during the Battle of Shanghai. But if we can for awhile look at this decade without preordaining its end, we can begin to appreciate how the Nationalists acted upon Shanghai's complex society, and how their régime, even at the national level, was in turn influenced and changed by the city itself. We will see, in effect, the Republican bureaucratization of certain aspects of urban society, and a corresponding and deeply consequential social transformation of the régime by which it was ruled. We will understand, I hope, why the second revolution in the end was bound to fail.

Twentieth-century China's political history has been construed in many different ways by Western historians, but four themes have prevailed: the disintegration of an imperial order followed by military chaos

and disunity; the quest for a new political order under Nationalist rule that was aborted by the Japanese invasion of 1937; the building of a populist revolutionary movement led by the Communists in the countryside; and the search for a new national identity punctuated by the failure of democratic movements in the cities. Each of those four historical readings, faithful to the uncertainties of the 1990s, emphasizes discontinuity and incompleteness.

In contrast, this book is about connections and continuities—the affiliations that link the late Qing reforms with Guomindang integration and socialist consolidation; the networks that enmesh racketeers and revolutionaries together; the affinities that tether policemen to criminals; the bonds that develop between secret agents on opposite sides of the fence; and the processes that tie together the Tianjin police of 1910 with the Shanghai Public Security Bureau of 1931 and the Beijing Committee on State Security of 1989. Above all this study is about the lamentable durability of governmentalized autocracy, whether Nationalist or Communist: it suggests the staying power of bureaucratic instruments of control and coercion that are institutionalized in the modern police state.