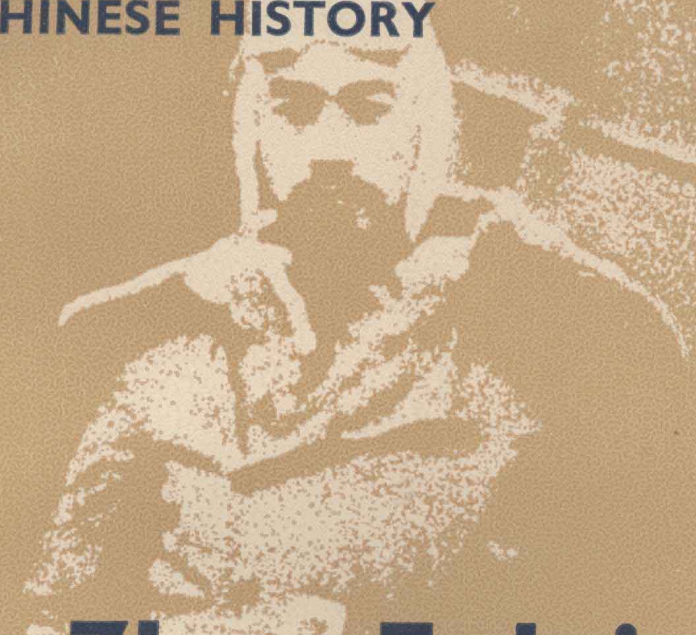


**A TURNING POINT IN  
CHINESE HISTORY**



**Zhou Enlai  
and the  
Xi'an Incident**

*— An Eyewitness Account*

by Luo Ruiqing    Lü Zhengcao  
Wang Bingnan

**A TURNING POINT IN CHINESE HISTORY**

**Zhou Enlai**  
and the  
**Xi'an Incident**  
— *An Eyewitness Account*

**LUO RUIQING, LÜ ZHENGCAO &  
WANG BINGNAN**

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS**

**BEIJING**

**First Edition 1983**

**ISBN 0-8351-1053-2**

**Edited and Published by the Foreign Languages Press  
24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing, China**

**Printed by the Foreign Languages Printing House  
19 West Chegongzhuang Road, Beijing, China**

**Distributed by China Publications Centre (Guoji Shudian)  
P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China**

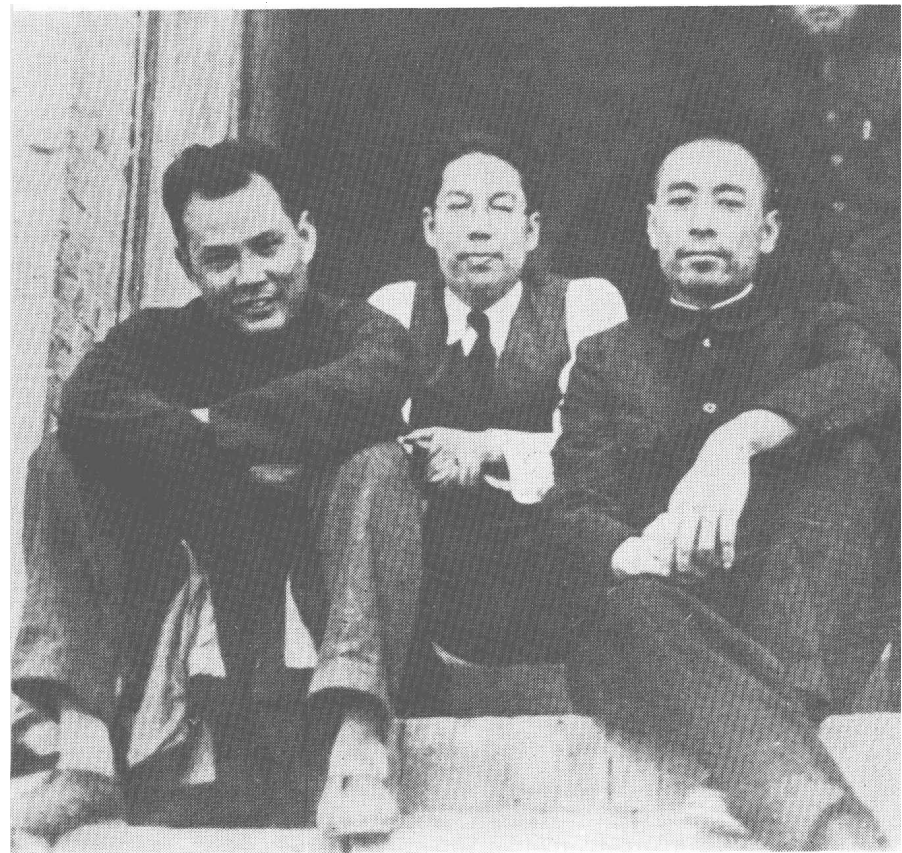
***Printed in the People's Republic of China***



Comrades Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai at the Yan'an airport upon the latter's arrival from Xi'an after the peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident.



Comrade Zhou Enlai in Yan-an at the beginning of 1937.



Comrades Zhou Enlai (*right*) and Ye Jianying (*left*) at the Xi'an Office of the Eighth Route Army, photographed with Mr. Zhang Chong, the KMT representative.



General Zhang Xue-liang at the time of the Xi'an Incident.



General Yang Hu-cheng at the time of the Xi'an Incident.



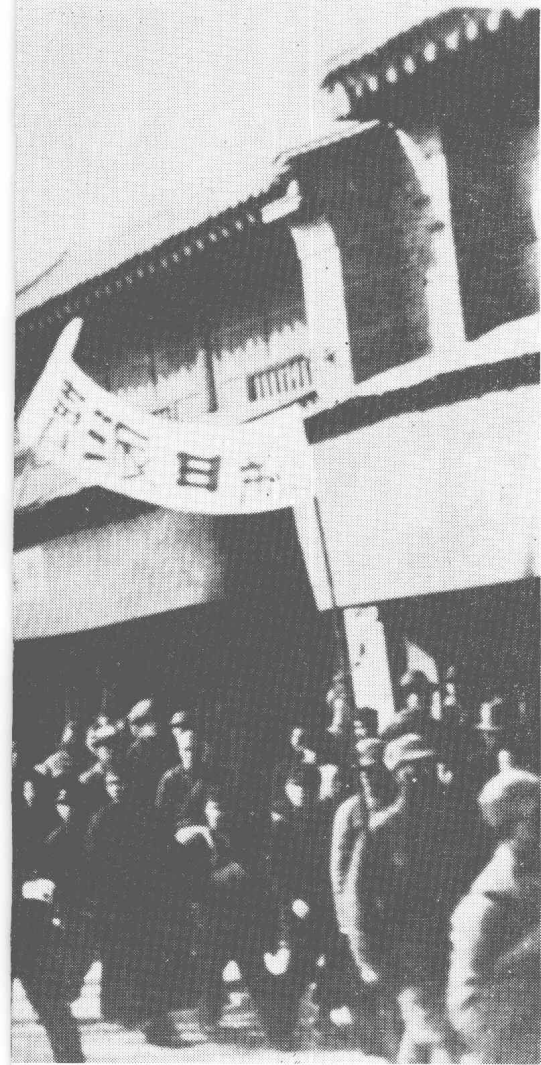


Anti-Japanese slogans prepared by the Northwest Provisional Military Committee of the Anti-Japanese Allied Forces.





Armed men and civilians staging a demonstration in Xi'an on December 12, 1936, soon after the occurrence of the Xi'an Incident.





Where Comrade Zhou Enlai worked in the Xi'an Office of the Eighth Route Army.

## Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	1
1. On the Eve of the Great Upheaval	7
2. Winning Over the Northeastern Army and the 17th Route Army	20
3. The Xi'an Incident That Shook the World	38
4. Principles for Settling the Xi'an Incident	53
5. Initial Victory in Peace Negotiations	65
6. Chiang Kai-shek's Perfidy	83
7. Turning the Tide	94
8. For the Formation of an Anti-Japanese United Front of the Whole Nation	107
<i>About the Authors</i>	115

## Foreword

The Xi'an Incident staged by the patriotic Kuomintang (KMT) generals, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, on December 12, 1936, stands out as an event of great significance in modern Chinese history. It occurred in circumstances where, influenced by the policy of the Chinese Communist Party for the establishment of an anti-Japanese national united front, the officers and men of the Kuomintang's Northeastern Army and Northwestern (17th Route) Army demanded an end to the civil war in the interests of united resistance against Japan and the entire Chinese people were unfolding a resist-Japan-and-save-the-nation movement.

Intensified Japanese imperialist aggression against China in 1935 put the whole nation in a perilous position. On August 1 of that year, the Chinese Communist Party issued an "Open Letter to All Fellow Countrymen on Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation", calling on all parties, compatriots in all walks of life and all armies, despite their different views and interests or hostilities, to work for the cessation of the civil war so as to pool the manpower, the material and financial resources and the armed forces for the sacred cause of resisting Japan and saving the nation, because "brothers quarrelling at home should join forces against attacks from with-

out". In October 1935, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army successfully reached northern Shaanxi on its Long March, opening a new page in the Chinese revolution. In view of the fact that the situation in north China had by then become very serious, the Communist Party issued two more declarations urging all parties, armed forces, mass organizations and citizens willing to fight Japan to unite for an anti-Japanese war. Thus the resist-Japan-and-save-the-nation movement begun with the December Ninth Movement of 1935 reached a nationwide high-tide in the early summer of 1936, and it further developed along with the deepening of the national crisis. In August 1936, the Central Committee of the Communist Party wrote directly to the Kuomintang, calling for an immediate stop to the civil war, the establishment of an anti-Japanese national united front and the launching of a sacred national war in self-defence in the face of Japanese imperialist aggression so as to restore and safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and save the Chinese nation. On September 1, the Party issued a directive on forcing Chiang Kai-shek to resist Japan. All this was the Party's wise policy in the new circumstances aimed at the earlier establishment of an anti-Japanese national united front. It showed its magnanimity of disregarding old scores for the sake of the nation.

Turning a deaf ear to the just demands of the Communist Party and the people, however, Chiang Kai-shek continued his policy of "internal pacification before resistance to foreign aggression".

The correct policy of the Party and the vigorous



development of the people's movement for resisting Japan and saving the nation precipitated division in the ranks of the Kuomintang.

Having suffered defeats in their war to "suppress the Communists" and under the pressure of their officers and men who demanded resistance to Japan, Generals Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, commanders of the Kuomintang's Northeastern Army and 17th Route Army respectively, who were stationed in northern Shaanxi to attack the Red Army, accepted the Communist Party's proposal for stopping the civil war and uniting against Japan. Their armies had in fact stopped attacking the Red Army, and time and again they asked Chiang Kai-shek to unite with the Communist Party for resisting Japan. Chiang remained obstinate and, instead, dispatched to northern Shaanxi more than 200,000 troops under his direct control to attack the Red Army as well as the units under Generals Zhang and Yang. Chiang's perverse action angered the officers and rank and file of the Northeastern and 17th Route armies. Seizing the opportunity of Chiang Kai-shek's arrival at Xi'an to direct "suppression of the Communists", the two patriotic generals had him and scores of his high-ranking military and government officials detained on December 12, 1936. Their aim was to force him to accept the proposal for unified resistance against Japan instead of continuing the civil war. This has been referred to as the Xi'an Incident which caused wide repercussions both at home and abroad.

The Xi'an Incident led to a tense and complicated situation which might develop in two possible direc-

tions: towards the spread of the civil war, which would weaken the domestic anti-Japanese forces and retard nationwide resistance and thus facilitate Japanese imperialist invasion; or towards the cessation of the civil war, which would bring about an earlier establishment of an anti-Japanese national united front and an earlier start of resistance against Japan. Therefore, the correct settlement of the Xi'an Incident was the key to changing the critical situation and initiating an anti-Japanese war.

The Chinese Communist Party and Comrade Mao Zedong made a scientific analysis of the situation and set forth the principle for a peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident. A Party delegation led by Comrade Zhou Enlai was sent to Xi'an to help settle the issue in a peaceful way. In the explosive situation, Comrade Zhou Enlai displayed his capability as a proletarian revolutionary and contributed decisively to the peaceful settlement of the Incident, rendering indelible service to the nation at a critical moment.

This development was a turning point in the situation of the time, for it eventually led to the establishment of an anti-Japanese national united front, ushering in a new period marked by the second instance of Kuomintang-Communist co-operation (the first instance of such co-operation occurred in the mid-1920s) and an unprecedented unity of the whole nation, with all parties and armies and people from all walks of life joining hands for a nationwide anti-Japanese war. Manifesting the correctness of the Communist Party's policy for a united front, the peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident also raised

the Party's prestige, strengthened the revolutionary forces at home and paved the road for final victory over Japanese imperialism.

After the Incident, the perfidious Chiang Kai-shek put General Zhang Xueliang under house arrest, and the latter is now still in custody in Taiwan. Then, General Yang Hucheng was imprisoned and, refusing to yield to Chiang's inducement to surrender, was killed on the eve of liberation after 12 years' life as a prisoner. Both Zhang and Yang were generals of an old type and, as such, were not free from certain weaknesses and limitations in ideology which were responsible for some otherwise avoidable setbacks in the course of the Xi'an Incident. But as Comrade Zhou Enlai said, they made "remarkable contributions to the cause of resistance against Japan". "Chiang Kai-shek himself caused the Xi'an Incident, and Generals Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng acted according to the will of the people in forcing him to resist Japan." In 1956, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Xi'an Incident, Comrade Zhou Enlai again praised the two generals' patriotism and spirit of self-sacrifice, pointing out that they were heroes whom the people will never forget.

The authors of this book were all witnesses to the Xi'an Incident. Luo Ruiqing was then with the delegation of the Chinese Communist Party to Xi'an, and Lü Zhengcao and Wang Bingnan were doing united front work on behalf of the Party in the Northeastern Army and the 17th Route Army respectively. All of us saw with our own eyes how Comrade Zhou Enlai strove for the peaceful settle-