

The Fate of Liberalism in Revolutionary China

Chu Anping and His Circle, 1946-1950

YOUNG-TSU WONG

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Liberalism in China can be traced to Yan Fu's translations of works of Victorian liberalism in the late nineteenth century. This was years before either fascism or communism were introduced. Chinese liberalism, however, never came of age. While fascism was once in favor in the Guomindang (GMD), and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to this day claims to be loyal to its Communist ideology, liberalism continues to be only what might be called an oppositional ideology. Even liberalism as a system of thought has had to weather the storm of the indigenous intellectual climate. Especially individualism, a vital component of Western liberalism, collides with the traditional Chinese value for the welfare of the group and the ethics of self-submission. And the Chinese term for liberty, *ziyou*, borrowed from a poem of Liu Zongyuan (773-819), connotes unrestrained freedom. Yan Fu, who had tried in vain to coin a new term for liberty, finally settled on using the ancient ideogram of *you* in the hope of avoiding misunderstanding (Yan Fu, 1966: 1, 4).

Late Qing liberals, such as Yan Fu and Liang Qichao, were primarily progressive reformers. They looked to Western liberalism for a source of wealth and power which would revitalize the declining state (cf. Schwartz, 1964; Huang, 1972). For this task they favored a constitutional monarchy. But by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, it had become painfully obvious that a liberal, constitutional monarchy in China was little more than a forlorn dream.

Following the birth of the republic, while there were experiments with various elements of democracy, any hope for the emergence of a

liberal democratic state was quickly dashed upon the rocks of warlordism. The new generation of Chinese intellectuals who came of age during the first two decades of the twentieth century—most of whom were trained in modern-style schools or abroad—made the May Fourth intellectual revolution: a search for a way to free China from imprisonment in her own history as well as from the domination of the foreign powers (cf. Schwarcz, 1986: 12-95). Many intellectuals sought in liberalism the key to China's liberation from the past. But an increasing number, disillusioned and frustrated, turned to ideological radicalism and political revolution.

In the wake of the resurgent revolution in the 1920s, only a small liberal circle flourished in China. Liberals like Hu Shi waged a short, fruitless polemic war of words against the authoritarian GMD in the late 1920s. However, liberal demands for democracy and personal liberty seemed to make less and less sense in light of the subsequent conflicts between the GMD and the CCP, and of Japanese aggression and invasion. After the founding of the Nationalist government in 1928, basic liberal views were held by only a small group of academics in major urban centers. Even in this group, prominent individuals such as Jiang Tingfu (Tsiang T'ing-fu), Weng Wenhao, and Wang Shijie chose to join the Nationalist government. In view of China's chronic internal turmoil and the persistent external threat, they, in particular Jiang, felt that a temporary compromise with political realities was unavoidable. In effect this meant that they preferred authoritarianism or even fascism to liberalism. Hu Shi publicly disagreed with Jiang in this regard, but under the circumstances, even he and many other May Fourth veterans who held fast to fundamental liberal values found it difficult to shun the patriotic call for national unity. When the survival of the Chinese nation was at stake, they were simply unable to justify, for instance, any form of assertive individualism such as commonly cherished by Western liberals. Self-sacrifice, instead, was the call of the day. And realistically, they had to admit that democracy was of little relevance at a time of dictatorial "party tutelage" imposed by the GMD. Moreover, most Chinese liberals, either out of distaste for or fear of politics, were reluctant to form a political opposition; instead they set for themselves the mission of changing Chinese culture in order to prepare the ground for political change.

Ironically, perhaps, it was not until after the outbreak of the all-out war against Japanese aggression in 1937 that liberals found themselves in a favorable political environment. With the war, the people of China became caught up in a sweeping spirit of unity and common purpose. In this atmosphere, both the GMD and the CCP championed greater political cooperation and tolerance. This encouraged liberals to express their political opinions and helped them win a hearing in the political arena. In 1938, the Society for Citizen's Political Participation (*Guomin canzheng hui*) came into being. Even though this was only an advisory assembly, many liberal assemblymen at least found in it a political forum to express their views. Soon afterward, in 1941, with China still at war, the party-style Chinese Democratic League (*Zhongguo minzhu tongmeng*), better known as the Democratic League (*Minmeng*), consisting of many liberal academics, was launched. At the end of the war in 1945, despite the rising tension between the GMD and the CCP, the so-called third political force—which consisted of individuals and organizations which sought to follow a political course independent of both the GMD and the CCP—had a rare opportunity not just to influence but also to participate in politics. Political participation for Chinese liberals, however, did not necessarily mean joining one of the existing political parties or founding a party themselves. Prominent Chinese academics and intellectuals evidently felt that, even though they stood aloof from quotidian politics, they could still be much more politically influential than their European or American counterparts, presumably due to the legacy of the traditional literatus influence. As the pro-GMD liberal Fu Sinian told Hu Shi in a postwar year, “We are stuck if we join the [GMD] government; in my view, to launch a party is better than to join the Party [i.e., the GMD], and to publish a newspaper is even better” (Hu Shi, 1980: 170). Fu’s remark clearly shows the intention of fostering intellectual change before trying to change politics. Xiao Gongquan (Kung-chuan Hsiao), a distinguished professor of political thought, repeatedly declined offers to join the GMD during the war and insisted on—as liberals would do during the postwar years—freely expressing his political viewpoint as his way of participating in politics (Xiao, 1972: 199–208).

No matter what the inspiration, the broad demand for a democratic postwar China was there. During the war, Chinese liberals were

grateful for America's support in the struggle against Japan, and took heart from it. In victory, America symbolized the triumph of freedom and democracy over fascism and slavery. But the Chinese liberals' dream of a liberal-democratic world was shattered by the reality of the evolving cold war. Even though the "lost chance" appears historically inevitable, it still deserves our close attention.

As the publisher and editor-in-chief of a highly popular political weekly, Chu Anping was one of the best-known postwar Chinese liberal intellectuals. An independent journalist, Chu belonged to no political organization, but rather he gathered about him a highly significant circle and rallied to it a group of prominent liberal intellectuals, including many distinguished academics, nonpartisan social and political leaders, as well as members of the Democratic League. His circle constituted a major liberal influence in postwar China. Its views were published in a periodical known as *Guancha* (The Observer) that circulated widely from 1946 to 1948. The *Guancha* was a rare success among unsubsidized political magazines in modern China. In 1986, when Hunan's Yuelu Book Company reprinted Chu's work, the editor considered Chu Anping to be still "a name familiar to contemporary Chinese intellectuals" and his *Guancha* weekly to be a journal which "had once exerted profound influence on Chinese intellectuals and democrats" (Chu Anping, 1986: 1). To be sure, Chu and his circle had made little impact on China's political life; they failed, after all, to foster a liberal state. But they had demonstrated a strong "opinion power" in advocating freedom and democracy as well as condemning political repression, evident in the large readership of the *Guancha* and in the effort of the government to suppress the journal. In any event, with the outbreak of a full-fledged civil war soon after the defeat of Japan, which liberals had desperately tried to prevent, and the eventual military victory of the CCP, Chinese liberalism was inevitably on the wane.

Although our narrative ends with 1950, let us briefly look at the eventual fate of Chu Anping and liberalism in post-1949 China. In 1956, during the Hundred Flowers campaign, Mao Zedong provided "democratic personalities" with a political forum, the *Guangming ribao*, to express their views. Chu Anping was made editor-in-chief of the paper. He responded enthusiastically to Mao's call for the expression of different opinions. He not only printed uncensored news from

capitalist countries but also openly criticized the Communist regime. At the June 1 meeting of democratic personalities sponsored by the United Front Bureau in response to the CCP's invitation to criticize, Chu delivered a speech which attacked one-party rule without mincing words. He complained that everyone had to look to the Party cadres for guidance. This he called "All Under the Party," a satiric allusion to "All Under Heaven." His eloquent speech won loud applause and was even printed in *People's Daily* (Dai Qing, 1989: 40-41). His courage suggests that he was still truly committed to the liberal cause.

But in airing his criticism, Chu fell into the trap that Mao later described as "drawing the snake out of its hole." By mid-1957, the Anti-Rightist Campaign was well under way, and Chu prepared a statement, "Surrender to the People," which was published in *People's Daily* on July 14. He expressed regret that his "erroneous accusations" against the CCP had unfortunately assisted the well-known liberals Zhang Bojun and Luo Longji in their "conspiracy for power." Moreover, he admitted that his "mistake" had preliberation roots and that he had never really shed his "bourgeois liberalism," acquired when he was publisher and editor-in-chief of the *Guanhua* during the postwar years.

But to no avail. In 1957, Mao himself dubbed Chu a "cardinal rightist." In the autumn of 1966, during the heyday of the Cultural Revolution, Chu disappeared. In 1982, the Chinese government officially declared him dead (Chu Wanghua, 1989: 61). The cause of his death is still uncertain; most likely, he committed suicide (Li Wei, 1988). In any case, Chu was declared politically dead, so to speak, years before. In 1979, following the downfall of the Gang of Four, all 550,000 "Rightists" were rehabilitated save five, namely, Zhang Bojun, Luo Longji, Peng Wenying, Chen Renbing, and Chu Anping. They were, in fact, the most prominent liberals from 1946 to 1950.

The rise and fall of Chu's liberal forum, as well as Chu's personal fortunes and misfortunes, reflects the fate of liberalism in revolutionary China. My aim is to show how Chu and his liberal circle struggled to hold fast to their cherished beliefs before the founding of the People's Republic, to point out how and why Chinese liberals felt betrayed by the U.S. China policy, to throw light on the activities of the postwar liberals and the difficulties they experienced which eventually compelled them to accept the realities that rendered liberalism

impossible in China, and finally, to explain how and why the liberals compromised their position in view of the need they perceived to achieve socioeconomic equality before personal liberty and political equity.

THE MAKING OF A LIBERAL

Born in 1909 in a village in Yixing county in Jiangsu province, Chu was a landlord's son. His mother died when he was still an infant, and the family fortunes deteriorated rapidly. Hence he grew up in hardship. With his uncle's help, he attended high school in Nanjing. The young Chu soon demonstrated a talent for writing. A series of his short stories was published in the prestigious *Shenbao* and later reprinted in a book entitled *Lying* (Shuohuang ji). The remuneration from these publications helped pay for his education at Guanghai University in Shanghai, from 1928 to 1932. At this time, his interest shifted from literature to journalism and politics (Dai Qing, 1989: 131-133). His schooling indicates a completely modern-style education, a departure from the older generations of Chinese liberal intellectuals such as Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, and even Hu Shi, who first had substantial Confucian training.

Like the older generation, however, Chu's was passionately patriotic. In response to the crisis in Manchuria, in 1932 Chu compiled a book entitled *Zhongri wenti yu gejia lunjian* (Various Views on the Sino-Japanese Question), which assembled patriotic views by prominent intellectuals. In the book's introduction, he condemned the government's appeasement policy and demanded an end to one-party dictatorship. Political liberalization was for him a patriotic duty (Chu Anping, 1931: 1-2).

After graduation, Chu married and got a well-paid job at *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily News), the GMD party organ in Nanjing. He volunteered to fight the Japanese in Manchuria, but unable to proceed beyond Beijing, he settled down there and attended graduate school at Yanjing University. He fell under the influence of the liberal professors at Yanjing and of the Crescent Moon Society, a pro-Anglo-American literary circle led by Hu Shi, Xu Zhimo, and Luo Longji. While the journal of the society, the *Crescent*, was basically a literary magazine, its authors, particularly Hu Shi and Luo Longji, were also

concerned with political issues. Hu's "Human Rights and Constitutional Law" (*renquan yu yuefa*) sharply criticized the Nationalist government's use of arbitrary laws as political instruments to violate human rights. In this article Hu demanded a truly republican constitution which would ensure the rule of law and protect the rights of all Chinese citizens (Hu Shi, 1929: 1-7). This article incurred the wrath of the GMD, and Hu was bitterly attacked in the GMD-controlled press (Yang Tianshi, 1991: 119-132). However, by 1932, following his cordial meeting with Jiang Jieshi in 1929 and the crisis in Manchuria in 1931, Hu Shi chose a pro-GMD political stance. Nonetheless, Hu Shi did not surrender his liberal values (Wang Rongzu, 1990: 217).

Chu's admiration for Anglo-American culture and liberalism led him to go to Britain. In 1935, he won a scholarship from his native Jiangsu province to study abroad, and free passage to Europe to cover the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany. Following the Olympic Games, he enrolled in the London School of Economics. His experience in England confirmed him as an Anglophile. His book on England, which he completed after he had returned to wartime China, unequivocally acclaimed British freedom, justice, and fair play, as well as sang praise to the national character of the English people and their civic society. He devoted a whole chapter to the Magna Carta and liberalism. He understood that the liberty for which Englishmen had struggled was not just political but also civil, and that English freedom was inseparable from the rule of law. English laws, he argued, were there to protect, rather than to restrict, individual liberty. All men, from king to commoner, are equal before the law. He even found British policemen, the representatives of the law, not only handsome in appearance but also courteous in manner. They, in his opinion, were the most admirable policemen in the world (Chu Anping, 1948: 75, 78-79, 82, 86, 87, 88-89).

Chu admitted that he observed England with China and Chinese problems in mind. Not surprisingly, he was most impressed by the British freedom of assembly and speech. No organization, open or secret, was subject to government interference so long as it observed the law. He especially mentioned the 1940 trial of antiwar activists in London. Even during wartime, Chu noted, the English court found the accused not guilty because England fully respected freedom of thought and would never send someone to prison for holding dissent-

ing views. Thus "free speech," Chu observed, was an essential part of the English way of life, and no one dared to violate it. In addition, Chu felt that the English cherished justice more than any other people. From this love of justice, Chu thought, sprang the famous British sense of fair play. Indeed, he was enthralled by Britain's civic society which, he believed, rested on democracy and liberalism (Chu Anping, 1948: 3-4, 75, 91-95, 96-97, 122, 124). However idealistic his view of England appeared, modern England provided him with a concrete model of Western liberalism.

Chu saw a stark contrast between liberal England and illiberal China. Modern China, he observed, was not really an integrated nation. Rather, China's vast illiterate population was dominated by a relatively small educated class. This promised no democracy. Even educated Chinese were not ready for an English-style nation. In contrast to Englishmen, as he put it, the Chinese indulged in too many formalities, were fond of self-seeking, did not respect personal privacy, and lacked the ability to organize and cooperate. Lack of respect for other people's interests and rights inevitably resulted in social disorder and political oppression. Moreover, the Chinese government owed its existence to the support of the military rather than the people. Politicians thus were unconcerned about the people's rights, consent, and well-being. Politics, instead of being rational as in England, was unreasoning and arbitrary. The difference between England and China, for Chu, explained why England was strong and wealthy, while China was weak and poor. It is clear here that Chu, like liberal thinkers before him, viewed liberalism as a source of wealth and power. But China's problem, in Chu's view, was neither natural nor racial. China's problem could be solved, in a word, by education. Chu believed the excellent British public school system had created a people of good character and taste who had in turn built a democratic state and liberal society. No doubt, his London experiences fully convinced him that liberal England was the appropriate model for China to emulate (cf. Chu Anping, 1948: 253-295).

In 1938, the war in China drew Chu away from his studies in London and back to China. The *Central Daily News* promoted him to be its chief commentator on international affairs. But Chu refused to parrot the GMD party line, let alone join the party, and this finally cost him his job. In 1941, while retreating inland, he was offered a teaching

position at the newly founded Lantian Teacher's College in western Hunan. There he taught world politics, English history, and the English constitution. He was unfailingly attached to the latter two subjects, which he had studied in London. Meanwhile, he completed his book on England. His lectures were popular, and many students, inspired by his knowledge and enthusiasm, became his devoted followers (Dai Qing, 1989: 139). At the end of the war, while in Chongqing, he met many liberal intellectuals who, like intellectuals of other ideological orientations, were seeking a way to reconstruct war-torn China.

CHU'S LIBERAL FORUM

Following eight years of devastating war, Chu Anping, like most of his countrymen, hoped for a better China. For Chu, this meant a China to be rebuilt on a foundation of liberty and democracy. As an intellectual without political connections, he thought of "serving his country by his pen," a common aspiration among conscientious educated Chinese. In the winter of 1945, with the help from his friends and students, he started the modest *Keguan zhoukan* (Objective Weekly), which consisted of a few pages of coarse printing on cheap paper. Its success, plus a satisfactory fund-raising effort, made it possible in January 1946 for him to plan a new weekly in Chongqing to be named *Guancha*. The first issue was published on September 1, 1946, in Shanghai. Thus Chu was launched on a brilliant career in journalism which spanned the next four years. This period has been acclaimed as "the Age of Chu Anping" in Chinese journalism.

At this time, magazine circulation was generally poor in China. At first, Chu printed only five thousand copies of his journal. But to his pleasant surprise, at the end of the first six months, sales passed the ten thousand mark, with 2,709 regular subscriptions. Upon the first anniversary, circulation was fully seventeen thousand copies (*Guancha*, 1947, 1, 24: 3-7; 2, 24: 3-8). By the spring of 1948, despite an economic recession, the *Guancha* continued to enjoy popularity and pick up thousands of new subscriptions. At its peak, circulation reached approximately sixty thousand copies. The readership, according to a survey by Chu, included a wide range of the educated population: government officials, professors, school teachers, lawyers, politicians,

students, businessmen, and military officers (Guancha, 1948, 3, 24: 3-8).¹

Guancha's success was not accidental. The journal featured a broad range of information and opinions, in the form of political commentary, discussions of social, economic, and cultural issues, field reports from various regions, book reviews and digests, special correspondence, and short literary pieces. At the completion of each volume (twenty-four issues), there was a two-week "rest period" of self-study in preparation for the next volume.

The journal had first-class writers. About seventy authors, including prominent liberal intellectuals, scholars and academicians of renown, and some Third Force politicians, were its "basic contributors." Their names appeared on the cover of almost every issue. These authors usually offered clear and forceful arguments on democracy, freedom, and current affairs. The magazine also featured light columns, such as those contributed by the brilliant Qian Zhongshu, which were abundant in wit and cynicism.

Chu's liberal position was explicit: he declared that the *Guancha* was "a liberal publication" (Guancha, 1947, 1, 24: 7). All those associated with it, as he put it, were "freedomists" (*ziyou fenzi*), referring to those who were affiliated with no political party, or "believers in liberalism" (*ziyou zhuyi zhe*), referring to those who were committed to fundamental liberal values. In general, so far as Chu was concerned, anyone who refused to affiliate with either the GMD or the CCP was a liberal. The specific liberal themes he laid out for the forum were freedom, democracy, progress, and rationality. As his English experience taught him, Chu said, rationality was particularly essential for building a liberal democratic state and the type of a virtue best exemplified by the British (Guancha, 1946, 1, 1: 3-4). Indeed, it was these themes, plus related ones such as pluralism, opportunity for expression, fair play, the rule of law, human rights, political compromise, and the importance of education in shaping human minds, that the journal emphasized. The Anglo-American form of government was held up as a model, despite doubts about the feasibility of emulating Western-style capitalism. Government was conceived of as an instrument for progress. The journal espoused popular elections and the two-party system. It also championed intellectual freedom (by which it meant no government interference in thought and expression), sufficient

funding of education and research, and the guarantee of a basic standard of living for all intellectuals. Security and liberty for all citizens should be assured; in support of this belief, the Bill of Rights and the American constitution were often quoted by the journal (*Guancha*, 1947, 3, 11: 5-7).

Democracy, however, was not confined to politics. Democracy would have to be accompanied by modernization in the economy, society, education, the military, science, and technology. All these values were shared by most of the *Guancha's* contributors, and presumably by its subscribers as well. The main differences among the contributors, it seems, involved views on concrete ways to implement these values. Some *Guancha* writers were inclined to the right, while others more to the left. It was not until the final stage of the civil war that an increasing number of them—perhaps a majority—were driven to the left.

Postwar China was far from Chu's liberal ideal. The two rival political parties, the GMD and the CCP, each had a large army and their military confrontation held the nation hostage. Although Japan had been defeated, there was no peace. Nor was there economic democracy, since national wealth was controlled by a privileged few. How could liberals deal with the formidable social, political, and economic forces that ran counter to democracy? Chu recognized that liberals had no real power. They did not even have a political organization; the party which came closest to embodying liberal aspirations was the Democratic League. Most of the leading figures of the Democratic League (perhaps with the exception of Liang Shuming) admired the Anglo-American form of government. Indeed, some of its key figures, such as Liang Shuming, Zhang Dongsun, and Fei Xiaotong, were frequent contributors to the *Guancha*. But Chu did not join the Democratic League, nor was the *Guancha* a forum for it. Chu's strategy aimed at creating a viable liberal climate of opinion, to lay the ground for democratic politics in China. Chu thus disclaimed any political ambition. Quoting Zhang Dongsun, who was a member of the Democratic League and a philosophy professor at Yanjing University, Chu remarked: "We must concern ourselves with politics (*ganzheng*), even though we have no interest in playing politics (*zhizheng*)" (*Guancha*, 1947, 1, 24: 7; cf. Yu Yunbo, Wu Yunxiang, and Zhao Shoulong, 1989: 54-118). Indeed, Chu and his circle were not ready to play politics; for

them, renouncing political ambition at the time was essential to developing a selfless and unbiased political viewpoint. At least for the time being, Chu only strove to influence public opinion and enable liberalism to compete in the marketplace of ideas.

Immediately after the Sino-Japanese war, Chu was optimistic that the GMD might reform itself and he wished it success. He once remarked that the question with the GMD was *how much* freedom, while with the CCP the question was whether there would be *any* (Guancha, 1947, 2, 2: 6). Thus Chu harbored no illusions about communism. But when the GMD became increasingly intolerant of liberal views and resorted to threats and physical intimidation, Chu and most other liberals were bitterly disappointed. Moreover, the cruelty of the civil war and the brutal socioeconomic conditions in which the masses of China lived depressed and demoralized the liberals. In the end, most of them came to accept, however reluctantly, the Communist alternative. The great tragedy for Chinese liberals was not that the GMD regime was swept away, but rather that liberalism went down the river with it.

SEARCH FOR PEACE AND REFORM

Peace and reform appeared most urgent to postwar Chinese liberals. Without peace, no liberal reform was possible, and without the promise of genuine reform, peace was impossible. For peace, the two rival parties—the GMD and the CCP—had to settle their differences without resort to violence, and for reform, the ruling GMD had to give up its party tutelage and seriously embark on liberal-democratic reforms.

Preventing civil war was not only a concern of Chinese liberals, but also of the United States. President Harry S. Truman sent General George C. Marshall to China and in January 1946. Marshall not only obtained a truce between the armies of the GMD and the CCP but also an agreement to convoke a Political Consultative Conference (PCC) in Chongqing. Representatives of both partisan and nonpartisan groups attended the PCC to work out a program for the peaceful reconstruction of China on the basis of political democratization and the nationalization of all armed forces. Marshall praised the liberal resolutions of the PCC, which he and many others, Chu included, believed would

lead to the formation of a coalition government. The political prospects seemed even brighter when Jiang Jieshi himself promised that the resolutions would “be fully respected and carried out” (Zhengzhi xieshang huiyi ziliao, 1981: 129-133; Van Slyke, 1976: 1/24).

But the liberal-democratic resolutions eventually miscarried. Marshall blamed a small group of intransigent officials in both parties (Van Slyke, 1976, 1/433; 2/517). His diplomatic language, however, could not shield the reality that the most intransigent GMD officials, Chen Lifu and the members of his CC Clique, were most loyal to Jiang, and that the highly unified and disciplined CCP leadership really spoke with one voice. Yet the CCP seemed truly in favor of a coalition government at the time, regardless of its ultimate aims. Moreover, the Third Force certainly subscribed to Chu’s pronouncement that “we look forward to a coalition government” (Guancha, 1947, 2, 2: 5). The key figure who refused to share power, particularly with the CCP, was Jiang. He promised democracy but feared the Communists might eventually capture power through the democratic process. Hence, while talking peace, he continued to apply military pressure in hopes of subduing the CCP (U.S. Department of State, 1949: 90). “Chiang Kai-shek held hostage all the hopes,” as a recent study puts it, “for the prosperous democratic nation to be” (Hayford, 1990: 205).

The ink on the agreement to convoke the PCC was not yet dry when trouble began to appear. In January 1946—the very month that the agreement was signed—GMD plainclothesmen disrupted meetings in support of the PCC resolutions, harassed minority party politicians, and looted CCP newspaper offices (cf. Zhengzhi xieshang huiyi ziliao, 1981: 438-468). Even more serious was the breakdown of the truce in April as the GMD and the CCP scrambled for territory in Manchuria. The Soviet presence and its prolonged occupation of Manchuria further complicated the matter. In particular, Soviet actions intensified Washington’s concern about “communist expansionism.” Marshall was thus not being instructed to be an evenhanded mediator, especially in Manchuria. Washington’s strong interest in the success of the GMD did little to weaken Jiang’s intransigence (cf. Levine, 1979: 352-353, 354, 372; Gu Weijun, 1988: 6/16-17).

When the *Guancha* began its publication in September 1946, Jiang’s army had successfully pushed into North China and Manchuria. A full-scale civil war loomed ominously on the horizon. Like the Ameri-

cans, Chu did not share Jiang's confidence that the Communists could be easily and quickly defeated. He sadly predicted a prolonged and tragic civil war that would end any prospect for democracy. Hence he appealed for peace and hoped that the Third Force might be strong enough to balance the GMD and the CCP. But, as the liberal journalist Yang Gang pointed out, how could any third party deal effectively with the fully armed GMD and CCP? (*Guancha*, 1946, 1, 4: 18)

While their hope for a coalition government had vanished, Chu and his colleagues continued to demand prompt reforms. They felt that a substantially reformed GMD regime, even without the participation of the CCP, might still implement democracy and thus prevent an all-out civil war. To underscore the urgency of reform, Chu straightforwardly pronounced the twenty-year-old GMD rule a total failure. In the previous twenty years, according to Chu, the regime had concentrated on only two things: taxation and conscription. He and his colleagues urged the GMD to put that failure behind it by promptly ending party dictatorship and boldly enacting measures benefiting the country and the people. As Xiao Gongquan argued in the *Guancha*, what was needed was democratization, which included both political liberty and economic equality (*Guancha*, 1946, 1, 7: 3-6).

Following Xiao, many others contributed essays to the *Guancha* urging reforms. Chu's close associate, Wu Shichang, a professor at Nanjing's Central University, challenged the GMD political ideology, the Three Principles of the People, which he considered outdated. He called for a new political authority based on liberalism and progressivism. The economist Qie Yijin asserted that a democratic political system was a prerequisite to economic progress. Han Depei, a law professor at Wuhan University, insisted that the rule of law would prevent government from encroaching on the people's rights. Men such as these still believed that only democratization could unite the country without war. As Li Chelu remarked in the pages of the *Guancha*—obviously referring to Jiang's intention of using force—achieving national unification by military conquest à la Qin Shihuangdi was deplorable. What China needed was unification to be worked out through democratic processes, and the nationalization of all armed forces (*Guancha*, 1946, 1, 8: 3-7, 10; 1, 10: 9-10; 1, 12: 5-7).

Nonetheless, war became ever more imminent when Jiang decided to attack the Communist stronghold of Kalgan and ignored CCP

opposition to convening the National Assembly. The CCP showed no intention of retreating, either: peace would be “dead” should Jiang capture Kalgan and refuse to postpone the convening of the Assembly indefinitely. In fact, on November 15, 1946 the Assembly—which the CCP regarded as illegitimate on the grounds that the GMD had rigged its election—was convened. Jiang was perhaps more concerned about enhancing his political legitimacy by convening the Assembly—which would certainly elect him president—than about the CCP’s threat. He wanted all minor parties and nonpartisan groups to take part in his “democratic process” of isolating the Communists. While the Chinese Youth Party, the divided Democratic Socialist Party, and many nonpartisan politicians accepted Jiang’s invitation to attend the scheduled assembly, the more liberal Democratic League boycotted it, along with the CCP. After much hesitation, Zhang Junmai, a leader of the Democratic Socialist Party as well as a key figure in the Democratic League, decided to attend.

Most Democratic League leaders deplored Zhang’s support of Jiang. Chu Anping endorsed the Democratic League’s decision not to participate, arguing that the selection of assemblymen was arbitrary and undemocratic. He was sympathetic with Zhang’s decision to let his party participate, however, motivated as it was by Zhang’s commitment to the constitution he had spent much time helping to draft. Chu was convinced that Zhang was a man of integrity and would fight, through the constitution, for democracy and the lifting of the political restrictions imposed by the GMD government. In addition, he was impressed by the constitution Zhang had drafted. It appeared nearly identical to the recommendations of the Political Consultative Conference. At this point, faced with the alternatives of revolution or compromise, Chu still favored the latter. This suggests that, as late as the final split between the GMD and the CCP, he retained hope that the GMD might implement real reforms (Guancha, 1947, 1, 19: 3-4). He certainly did not anticipate the huge gap between Jiang’s declaration of intent and his actual performance. As it turned out, not even a liberal constitution could restrain Jiang.

A riot in Shanghai in December 1946, although a local incident, made manifest the widespread discontent in the country. As Chu understood it, people were discontented because of the spread of war and the lack of reforms. He reiterated that only through reform could

national stability be restored. He retained hope for the GMD regime, but 1947 brought him deepening disappointment (Guancha, 1946, 1, 16: 3-5). The failure of the Marshall Peace Mission was officially announced. Huang Yanpei, a key Democratic League figure who had been optimistic the previous year when the Political Consultative Conference was convoked, now lamented that its resolutions had been "burned to ashes" and that General Marshall had wasted his time in China (Xu Hansan, 1985: 201). By now Chu seemed to have realized that both the GMD and the CCP were by nature antidemocratic, even though he feared the latter was more so. He still had no illusions about a dictatorship of the proletariat. "In terms of governing," he remarked, "Communists are no different from fascists, as both tend to subject the will of people to strict institutional control" (Guancha, 1947, 2, 2: 6). Marshall's wish that Chinese liberals should play an active role was noted by Chu, but the liberals, whatever popular support they may have enjoyed, were politically powerless. Chu rejected the accusation that the Democratic League was a puppet of the CCP but admitted that the League was patently weak (Guancha, 1947, 2, 2: 7). He was not discouraged, however. He continued to play the role he knew best: as a champion of the liberal cause. "Whether we like it or not," he remarked, "we [liberals] have our share of responsibility" (Guancha, 1947, 2, 2: 3-8).

Under some pressure, the GMD government reorganized itself in April 1947—which entailed nothing but making Zhang Qun, Jiang's confidant, premier—still without the participation of either the CCP or the Democratic League. Hence, the "reorganization" was merely a cloak for continuing GMD rule. While the reorganized government paid lip service to democracy and the rule of law, in practice it showed no interest in ending the war and implementing reforms. Social disturbances and student demonstrations continued. Protesting students, like the more senior liberals, demanded an effective constitutional government to protect civil liberty under the law. Chu fully supported the demonstrations and was sure that other liberals, including many college professors, also stood behind the students (Guancha, 1947, 2, 13: 3-5; 2, 14: 3-5).

In fact, Chu and his liberal colleagues joined the students in calling for an immediate cease-fire (Guancha, 1947, 2, 16: 3-8). Instead, the war widened as the GMD government ordered a general mobilization

for the "extermination of the Communist bandits." Moreover, the GMD regime equated antiwar sentiment with antigovernment activism. On December 23, 1946, just three days before the constitution was formally adopted, the Legislative Yuan passed an emergency law to punish anyone who might "endanger" the state during the civil war, thereby preempting the constitutional protection of political dissent. Thereafter, few liberals, if any, continued to have faith in the constitution process (see for example, Guancha, 1947, 3, 1: 6-7).

Under the circumstances, the scheduled convocation of a National Assembly became even more controversial. "The GMD needs the assembly," as Liang Shuming put it in September 1947, "while the people can do without it" (Guancha, 1947, 3, 4: 6; cf. Alitto, 1979: 318-319). The National Assembly was indeed convened in Nanjing in March 1948, and Chu attended as a journalist. He was shocked by the disorderly proceedings which were punctuated with angry shouts and fist fights inside the assembly hall (Guancha, 1948, 4, 9: 3-6). The newly proclaimed constitutional regime, so far as liberals such as Chu were concerned, promised not democracy nor freedom nor even personal safety.

THE PLIGHT OF CHINESE LIBERALS

With the war widening and intensifying, liberals found themselves in the position of being attacked by both the GMD and the CCP. To the GMD, the liberals' persistent antiwar stance made them look like Communist fellow travelers, while to the CCP, their unyielding calls for peace sounded like antirevolution. Chu himself was accused of having an illicit relationship with the GMD, on the one hand, and of being a CCP spokesman, on the other. This situation worsened as time went on. It is a truism that liberal opposition to the war in early 1947 enraged the GMD which was confident that it would quickly exterminate the CCP, and then, in mid-1948, offended a victorious CCP. Not surprisingly, the Communists accused the liberals of being "fence sitters" (Guancha, 1948, 5, 8: 3). The immediate threat to Chu and his liberal colleagues, however, was not from the CCP, which was still struggling for power, but from the GMD, which was desperately trying to retain power.

In May 1947, citing growing unrest among the population over the soaring price of rice and widening upheaval on the nation's campuses, Chu warned the GMD that the turmoil, caused by government corruption and lawlessness, could never be quelled by sheer force. He condemned the brutal use of water cannon and iron clubs to suppress the student protests which broke out that month, as cruel and senseless. The GMD's vicious accusation that the students were the cat's paws of the CCP added to Chu's anger. "Given the current chaotic situation," he protested, "students need no one to tell them how intolerable starvation and war are" (Guancha, 1947, 2, 14: 3-5). When three Shanghai newspapers—*Wenhui bao*, *Xinmin bao*, and *Lianhe bao*—reported the bloody May Twentieth crackdown on students, the government censored them. An agitated Chu quickly denounced Jiang Jieshi as nothing more than a replica of Adolf Hitler.

Liberals therefore were in a bind. Up to this time, temperamentally and philosophically, they had not yet taken to grassroots organizing, either among workers or in the villages; they were ignored, attacked, and even assassinated by the GMD; and they were repelled by what they heard of CCP violence and class war. If they had one ally, it was, they thought, the United States, that "bastion of democracy" which had supported China during its long ordeal with Japanese aggression and had led the fight against fascism during World War II. Yet, in the postwar era, they had to confront the reality of a U.S. China policy which, practically speaking, seemed to place no value on democracy in China at all. Yang Guangshi and nine other liberals issued a joint statement in *Guancha* on 19 July 1947 which implored Washington to withdraw its support from the GMD government and to help create a "Democratic International" (*minzhu guoji*). The purpose of such an organization would be "to draw close the ties between the United States and the liberals and liberal parties of the rest of the world." Only by means of massive American aid to liberals and liberal parties all over the world, they asserted, could a real resistance to the Communist International be mounted and could the world be rid of the Communist threat. To make a stronger case, they argued that "China would not have had a Communist party twenty years ago without the instigation of the Comintern." Hence, for them, without a Democratic International and American financial aid, a strong third party would be impossible in the foreseeable future (Guancha, 1947, 2, 21: 3-4). This

proclamation did not necessarily represent the view of Chu or his forum. In the following issue, however, Wu Shichang published his "On the Democratic International" in which he acknowledged that Chu had shown him the joint statement before it was printed and was generally in agreement with the authors, who had presented some very "courageous and constructive ideas." He only objected to accepting money from America or any other foreign country, even though he agreed that the strong support of the United States was essential. He concluded that "the establishment of a Democratic International can be a good means to foster a fresh [political] force" (Guancha, 1947, 2, 22: 5). There was, however, no response from Washington.

In fact, Washington was hardly about to abandon Jiang Jieshi and his GMD regime in favor of an uncertain Democratic International. Indeed, it was becoming increasingly clear that the U.S. administration was single-minded in its support of the repressive Nationalist regime. Equally disturbing to Chinese liberals was the American plan to rebuild Japan's economic and military capabilities. In November 1947, Gu Chunfan wrote that America, while advocating democracy, actually was on the way to building its empire (Guancha, 1947, 3, 10: 3-5). On a more personal and emotional level, Chinese liberals were outraged by the United States military presence and behavior of Americans in China, including reckless driving, drunkenness, theft, rape, and even murder (Guancha, 1947, 1, 21: 16-17; Pepper, 1978: 52). A notorious rape case, which was reported in the *Guancha*, symbolized for Chinese liberals the callousness and brutality of Americans.

Hence, the admiration which Chinese liberals once had for the United States began to evaporate. This lack of chemistry perhaps explains why there was no significant cooperation between Americans and Chinese liberals. Clearly, the obstacle was not a difference in liberal and democratic values but the gap between United States' China policy and the Chinese liberals' expectations. To be sure, Marshall had an interest in the liberals, but his concrete actions to support them were too little, too late. "It was only after his mission to bring about a political settlement had failed," Tang Tsou has pointed out, "that General Marshall attempted to persuade the small parties and groups to unite and form a single liberal patriotic organization" (Tsou, 1967: 2/375). By that time, it was too late to change anything.

After the failure of the Marshall mission, Chu joined many other Chinese liberals in criticizing the U.S. China policy. They complained that the United States insisted on seeing "the China problem" in the context of the Soviet-American rivalry. That led the United States to embrace Jiang's regime for its anti-Soviet and pro-American policy, while turning a blind eye toward its repressive and antidemocratic actions. Liang Shuming, a key leader in the Democratic League who took part in the three-sided negotiations among the GMD, the CCP, and the United States, pointed out that Jiang knew all along that American geopolitical considerations would free his hands to deal with Chinese communism and "Soviet expansionism," and that Marshall would, willingly or reluctantly, back up Jiang, no matter what he did (Liang Shuming, 1987: 186). More specifically, Zhang Dongsun charged that Marshall disqualified himself as an impartial mediator by acquiescing in Jiang's actions in Manchuria (Guanha, 1947, 2, 6: 25). Liang Shuming was very sure that this undermined Marshall's role as mediator and doomed his peace mission (Liang Shuming, 1987: 186). Marshall seemed to agree that the Manchuria policy made him look bad and placed his "impartial position in a questionable light so far as the Communists were concerned" (Van Slyke, 1976: 1/121). As we have just seen, it was not just the Communists who questioned the general's "impartial position." Marshall's mediation continued, but the tide against a peaceful solution could not really be turned. Although Marshall explained that even with "the full backing of my government," he had no influence on Jiang, Chinese liberals had difficulty understanding why such a prestigious American envoy was so ineffective (Melby, 1971: 213-224).

In his farewell statement, Marshall placed his hope for China's "salvation" and "unity through good government" on the "assumption of leadership by the liberals in the government" under "the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek" (Van Slyke, 1976: 1/426, 433; 2/520). Marshall seemed unaware that the unreformed Jiang government would yield to no form of liberal leadership. The fact was, as many liberals knew, that for strategic reasons the United States was simply reluctant to exert too much pressure on Jiang, and so allowed him to turn a deaf ear to Marshall's advice.

Just as Chinese liberals hoped to draw the United States away from its policy of unconditional support for Jiang Jieshi, they also wanted

China to steer a course independent of both the United States and the U.S.S.R. The liberal writer Fu Lei explained that China should be as concerned with her national interests as were the two powers with theirs. The sociologist Fei Xiaotong disapproved of the U.S. interest solely in a pro-American China, with an American way of life. In this regard, he criticized the American-sponsored rural project of Yan Yangchu (James Yen). Leaving aside America's own political agenda, Fei wrote, peasant literacy, village hygiene, and farm technology would not solve the institutional problem of the land and the harsh realities of heavy rent, cruel conscription, and unreasonable grain purchases. Xu Deheng warned his fellow countrymen against allowing their country to become a battleground in the international rivalry between the United States and the U.S.S.R. (Guancha, 1947, 2, 4: 4; 2, 10: 22, 2, 16: 21; 3, 1: 5; 1948, 5, 1: 4-7, 15-16).

Chinese liberals were genuinely worried that the war between the pro-U.S. GMD and the pro-Soviet CCP would eventually draw China into a major international conflict (Pepper, 1978: 73). Any imaginable outcome of the Chinese civil war would thus be perilous. While a total victory for the GMD would make the U.S.S.R. uneasy, as Zhang Dongsun remarked in the spring of 1947, a victory for the CCP would surely arouse the United States. To secure peace, therefore, the Chinese should strive to bridge the differences between the GMD and the CCP, as well as between the two powers. Zhang believed that national peace could only be achieved by the willingness of the ruling GMD party to incorporate different political forces, and that world peace could not be ensured without a peaceful China. He suggested that a delegation of representatives from all the democratic organizations, plus the CCP, be sent to Washington to explain to the Americans how the reactionary forces—the GMD—used the fear of the Soviets to maintain dictatorial rule, why China should not tilt toward either the United States or the U.S.S.R., and what the position of the Chinese democrats was. Such a mission, he believed, would dissuade Washington from using “China as an anti-Soviet base”; instead, Zhang suggested, it might convince the United States once again to use its good offices to try to restore peace in China. A similar delegation, Zhang added, should go to Moscow for the same purpose (Guancha, 1947, 2, 6: 5-7). Zhang's view, which argued for detaching China from the powers' rivalry and steering clear of the fears of both powers,

clearly represented the consensus of Chinese liberals. However, they were frustrated by America's China policy.

The right wing was ascendant in the United States in the postwar years, and this too served to undermine liberalism in China. For Chu and his colleagues, the anti-Communist rhetoric of the U.S. right wing only reinforced Jiang's conviction that he need not fear interference from the United States in his war against the "Communist bandits." For this reason, Chu responded very strongly to William C. Bullitt's article "China: A Report to the Americans" that appeared in *Life* magazine on 10 October 1947. Bullitt urged giving prompt assistance to Jiang on the grounds that the Chinese Communists were the political tools of the Soviets. As one would expect, the article won lavish praise from Jiang's government. In Chu's view, however, Bullitt's anti-Communist strategy would intensify Soviet-American rivalry in China. If the right wing had its way, Chu argued, the United States might strive to control China's enormous manpower in preparation for a final showdown with the Soviets. His criticism of Bullitt angered Jiang and earned the *Guancha* a stern warning from the government. Chu had to hide for days in order to avoid harassment (*Guancha*, 1948, 3, 24: 7-8).

Perhaps to appease right-wing congressmen and senators who accused the Truman administration of "pursuing a negative policy in China," Marshall, who was now Secretary of State, sent General Albert C. Wedemeyer to China and Korea to conduct an on-the-spot survey as a basis for reappraising U.S. policy. The Wedemeyer mission was commonly seen as evidence of a radical shift of U.S. policy to the right. In fact, Wedemeyer himself perceived the GMD to be fighting a proxy war on behalf of the United States: "By not aiding the GMD government, the United States had facilitated the Soviet program in the Far East" (Wedemeyer, 1958: 392).

Chinese liberals paid close attention to Wedemeyer's visit. Chu, for example, covered the story extensively. Many liberals, however, did not react favorably to the visit. They were offended by the American "investigation" of their country together with Korea. Many suspected that Wedemeyer had come to collect information for building an anti-Soviet base in China. A number of liberal academics in Beijing visited Wedemeyer, but they did not believe they had influenced him. The meeting was considered a mere social gathering. Most of them were sure that, on his return home, Wedemeyer would recommend

financial and material aid to Jiang's government, regardless of his candid criticism of it. They warned that, without fundamental democratic reforms, no amount of foreign aid could resolve China's domestic problems (Guancha, 1947, 2, 23: 3; 3, 1: 3-5, 16-17).

Quite clearly, Chinese liberals regarded Wedemeyer as Jiang's friend, not theirs. By this time, their hope that America might help in implementing democracy in China had vanished. Furthermore, once an increasing number of liberals no longer viewed the United States as friendly, those liberals who had strong ties with Washington and Jiang such as Yan Yangchu and Hu Shi came to be severely criticized. Neither Yan nor Hu, however, was truly respected by Jiang. Yan's program of social reforms, for instance, was "politely" turned down by Jiang, as the latter considered the "battlefield" more important than the "rice field" (Hayford, 1990: 207, 210). In any case, the Wedemeyer mission further weakened the liberals by splitting them up.

Gone as well as was all hope for peace. By late 1947, Chinese liberals helplessly watched the ever-widening civil war and the increasingly vicious oppression of political dissent. When the government openly outlawed the Democratic League in November 1947, Chu and forty-eight liberals proclaimed that the action had "besmirched the proposed democratic constitution" (Guancha, 1947, 3, 11: 3). The GMD regime found criticism such as this hard to bear. Perhaps it thought that by beating demonstrating students with the truncheon and selectively employing assassination it could cow the press into silence. But Chu Anping and his *Guancha* would not be silenced. By early 1947, the government turned to more sophisticated means: it issued a new press law to silence dissent, and regulated the supply of newsprint (Guancha, 1947, 3, 15: 8-13; 3, 16: 3-4; 3, 19: 3-5). Not surprisingly, in February 1948, reporting on the third volume of the *Guancha*, Chu testified to the enormous political and economic pressure he, as a publisher, had to bear (Guancha, 1948, 3, 24: 3-8). The pressure, it can be argued, showed that the *Gauncha's* critical viewpoint was biting and influential. Furthermore, the fact that the GMD did not resort to physical violence to silence Chu, it seems to me, testifies not to the restraint of the GMD but to the great respect and influence that Chu enjoyed among Chinese intellectuals. In fact, the vicious political suppression meted out by the GMD government was incredibly self-defeating: step by step it drove more and more liberals into the hands

of the Communists. But Jiang seemed unconcerned about the political consequences. Perhaps the GMD feared that genuine reforms would weaken its autocratic power, which it seemed to cherish above all else.

With the GMD government regarding them as enemies, Chinese liberals found it increasingly difficult to maintain neutrality or to play the role of a loyal opposition. Yan Rengeng of Zhejiang University protested in vain that the government condemned all political dissidents, calling them Communists or fellow travelers. This situation, as economist Shi Fuliang observed, compelled liberals to choose sides and either succumb to GMD pressure or join the CCP revolution. However, neither choice promised liberty. A noted aesthete, Zhu Guangqian, compared the liberals to a "thorn in the flesh" of both the GMD and the CCP (Guancha, 1948, 3, 20: 19-20; 3, 22: 3-4; 3, 19: 20). Understandably, those liberals who vowed courageously to "walk on our own road to freedom" found the route increasingly narrow and ever more hazardous.

LIBERALISM COMPROMISED

The harsh reality of war compelled an increasing number of Chinese liberals to shift their attention from politics to China's worsening socioeconomic situation. They came to the conclusion that a simplistic advocacy of democracy would, in effect, enhance the already overwhelmingly strong power of "feudal landlords" and "bureaucratic capitalists," the pillars supporting the repressive GMD regime. Feudal landlords and bureaucratic capitalists are, indeed, Marxist jargon, and they frequently appeared in Chinese communist propaganda. But Chinese liberals had used these terms during the war long before the CCP made them part of its vocabulary. In 1947, the staunchly anti-Communist liberal Fu Sinian said that "bureaucratic capitalists were the products of the War of Resistance," and at the war's end they had become the most oppressive force in the country. "Bureaucratic capitalism in China is in full bloom," as Fu put it, "given the fact that there are numerous bureaucrats from the most powerful political families down to modestly influential officials who are indulging in profit seeking." Fu specifically named Kong Xiangxi (H. H. Kung) and Song Ziwen (T. V. Soong), both GMD top leaders and in-laws of

Jiang, as the leading “bureaucratic capitalists” of China (Guancha, 1947, 2, 1: 6-8).

For many Chinese liberals, without first emancipating the legions of the underprivileged from an oppressive socioeconomic system, discussing political freedom for the majority was mere “empty talk.” In this regard, the liberal creed that absence of government interference leads to both economic and political growth seemed decidedly untrue to the Chinese reality. Ironically, for a growing number of liberals an “illiberal” means such as a class war seemed necessary to liberate China.

When the GMD government’s promises of political reforms yielded no results in 1947-1948, liberal intellectuals became ever more convinced that socioeconomic emancipation was truly indispensable to any successful political reform. As a result, the question of economic equality occupied more and more of their attention. It was against this background that liberals found the CCP, which advocated “new democracy,” a lesser evil than the GMD. Luo Longji’s remark to John Melby in April 1947 was quite revealing: “even though communism in China would allow no more scope for the activities of the liberals than does the GMD, still communism means greater good for the masses and should be supported” (Melby, 1971: 251). As for Wu Enyou, while both liberty and equality were essential for democracy, Chinese reality, in which the majority was dominated by a minority, called for giving equality priority over liberty. A logical conclusion was thus reached: it was justifiable for the underprivileged majority, including the vast peasantry, to overthrow the privileged few as a necessary step toward genuine liberty and democracy. In other words, liberals came to believe that liberty must have equality as its foundation. Here the liberal Wu unwittingly endorsed the CCP’s line of class struggle, or more specifically, the peasant revolution.

Even more interesting, Li Xiaoyou, an advanced student at Central University, was eager to “reconcile the contradictions between liberalism and communism.” He believed that the common concerns of the two creeds, social justice and public well-being, should be able to overcome their fundamental differences on the issue of individualism. In his view, the stunted growth of Chinese liberalism in the past was largely because it had only found roots at the elite level, not at the mass level. He thus concluded that, unless the majority of Chinese were

emancipated, there would be no chance for liberalism to succeed. Accordingly, he disagreed with the opinion of Beijing University Professor Yang Renbian that there could be no compromise between liberalism and communism; on the contrary, compromise was not only possible, it was indispensable for overcoming the forces of oppressive "feudalism" by peaceful means (Guancha, 1947, 3, 12: 6-7; 1948, 3, 19: 7-9). While it may seem impossibly incongruous or contradictory for liberals like Li and Wu to have endorsed the fundamental program of the Communists, their willingness to compromise may be understood as an unavoidable, even reasonable, coming to grips with reality.

Liberals also compromised to accommodate China's cultural tradition. Liang Shuming, for example, had persistently questioned a simple emulation of foreign institutions, Western democracy included. The failure of the GMD's constitutional regime in 1948 seemed to prove Liang right. Zhang Dongsun, whose intellectual background was very different from Liang's, now endorsed Liang's contention that China should not adopt any foreign system uncritically. Consequently, Zhang recommended a "new democracy" that would combine suitable ingredients from both the Soviet and American systems. In February 1948, Zhang at last proclaimed unfit for China any form of economic laissez-faire. Instead, Chinese reality demanded a planned economy to rid itself of "feudal" obstacles and to unleash "industrial energy." In his opinion, Chinese liberals should hold fast only to a cultural liberalism—a spirit of tolerance and freedom of criticism—the lifeline of cultural-intellectual development. Zhang's cultural liberalism is obviously more akin to "social liberalism" than to "classical liberalism." To be sure, this form of liberalism was not shared by all; for instance, Cheng Shenshan doubted that a liberal culture and a socialist economy could coexist (Guancha, 1947, 3, 14: 9-11; 1948, 3, 23: 3-4; 4, 1: 3-5; 4, 6: 5-6). However, Zhang's thinking reflected the views of a growing number of Chinese liberals.

The cruel war, astronomical inflation, and brutal measures taken against protesting students and political dissidents pushed the liberals further to the left. The GMD government responded by intensifying its repression. Chu reported in the *Guancha* that ninety professors from four Beijing universities signed a letter to protest intimidation by GMD agents. Fearful that assassinations of professors might recur, Chu angrily warned the regime not to repeat the murders of Wen

Yiduo, the distinguished academic and poet who was gunned down in Kunming in 1946, and of Li Gongpu, who was assassinated in the street in Kunming shortly after Wen's murder. He also translated and printed John K. Fairbank's letter to the *New York Times* of May 9, 1948, which protested the GMD prosecution of intellectuals and warned of the consequences (Guancha, 1948, 4, 10: 3-4; 4, 15: 10). Fairbank was right about government action actually driving the liberals into the CCP camp.

As the GMD began losing the war and the country slipped toward socioeconomic chaos, the persecution of intellectuals and students escalated. The regime now believed political repression was the most reliable insurance for its survival. In July 1948, newspapers which frequently carried dissenting political views, such as the highly respected *Xinmin bao* in Nanjing, were banned by arbitrary police order. Quite a few journalists fled to Hong Kong. Chu naturally worried about his own liberal *Guancha*, which had been threatened for some time, but he refused to retreat and leave. He continued to speak out courageously. He called the government to account by raising the question of constitutional rights, including individual security and freedom of speech, even though he knew it would be of little avail. Relating his own bitter experience, he complained that the post office, under secret police instructions, refused to deliver his journal to its subscribers, and he protested loudly that the GMD regime equated political opposition with treason.

In the wake of mass arrests of political dissidents in Beijing and Shanghai in May 1948, many liberal intellectuals fled the country. More staunchly anti-Communist liberals such as Hu Shi and Fu Sinian remained loyal to the GMD, however reluctantly. As chancellor of Beijing University, Hu Shi allowed many protesting students to be struck off the university rolls to please the government. Chu chose to stay in Shanghai, obviously reluctant to give up his popular forum, and in no mood to relax his liberal stance. He continued reporting news of arrests, with bold and sharp commentaries. He and many of his liberal colleagues were increasingly radicalized by the worsening situation. They placed blame for the civil war, and the savaging of the country, squarely at the doorstep of the GMD (Guancha, 1948, 4, 23-24: 8; 5, 9: 3).

But renunciation of war in late 1948 seemed irrelevant when it was being so hotly waged. Following repeated and crucial military defeats, the GMD had long lost whatever advantages it had once enjoyed. What is more, its desperate currency reform proved to be a fiasco. Chu described the nation in November 1948 as being in unprecedented turmoil. He was now fully convinced that the GMD had lost control (Guancha, 1948, 5, 11: 1; 5, 13: 1-2). This may have helped him and other liberals to believe that the quick collapse of the GMD was the best way to end the agony of China. While most liberals hoped for an early end to the war, not all of them ignored the potential consequences of a CCP victory. Many feared that the Communists, like the GMD, would not permit intellectual freedom. In late October 1948, Beijing University Professor Yang Renbian wrote in the *Guancha*: "Since we never expected the GMD militarists to be so high-handed, what makes us sure that the CCP militarists will not be imperious?" (Guancha, 1948, 5, 9: 2). Even the more optimistic Zhang Dongsun, who already looked forward to a socialist China, was unsure whether cultural liberalism—including academic freedom—could prevail in the new China (Guancha, 1948, 5, 11: 3-5). Overall, as Professor Yan Rengeng observed in December 1948, Chinese liberals were waiting for the dawn of a new era "with mixed feelings of fear and joy" (Guancha, 1948, 5, 18: 4).

On Christmas Eve 1948, GMD agents finally closed down the *Guancha* and arrested its workers on the grounds that the journal had opposed government policies, had been sympathetic to the Communists for years, and had "revealed military secrets" to the enemy. Because he was not in Shanghai at the time, Chu himself evaded arrest. He had flown to Beiping in early December. Only a day after he arrived, the city was besieged by the advancing CCP army. The GMD government issued a warrant for Chu's arrest on December 30, but Beiping secret police could not find him. Trying to find clues to his whereabouts, agents detained and questioned no fewer than one hundred of Chu's friends. A tall man who bore a strong resemblance to Chu was thrown into prison; only later was this to be discovered to be a case of mistaken identity. Chu was finally safe when General Fu Zuoyi surrendered Beiping to the Communists on January 23, 1949. Ironically, the liberal Chu was "liberated" by the People's Liberation Army (Guancha, 1949, 6, 1: 32-33).

The *Gauncha* resumed publication on November 1, 1949, exactly one month after the founding of the People's Republic. The revived journal not only retained its old style, but featured clearer printing and better paper. Evidently, Chu watched the birth of the new China with feelings of patriotism, hope, and excitement. After all, China seemed to have been liberated from GMD repression and imperialist domination. Shortly after the birth of the new China, Chu embarked on extensive tours of North and Northeast China to inspect the postwar motherland. He was impressed by the CCP's initial performance. When the People's Central Government began functioning, he sounded a very optimistic note: "The people and the government will now truly unite for national reconstruction." He expected the new China to be "independent, democratic, peaceful, unified, wealthy, and strong" (*Gauncha*, 1949, 6, 2: 7-8). He was no doubt willing to give his loyalty to the new regime, even though he was not prepared to give up his self-appointed role as a member of the loyal opposition.

On May 16, 1950, after fourteen issues, the *Gauncha* announced changes not only in its style but also in its name. It was renamed *Xin Gauncha* (New Observer). The "new observer" could no longer truly be a liberal observer. Chu had to live in a new intellectual world, where there was no room for political neutrality.

CONCLUSION

With the CCP's military victory, Chinese liberals were left virtually no bargaining chips for political influence. The new-born Communist regime did allow small political parties, and Chu joined one, the September 3rd Society (*Jiusan xueshe*). It consisted almost exclusively of liberal academics. However, none of the small parties were prepared to check, let alone to replace, the power of the CCP. To be sure, the fate of the small parties would not have been much different had the GMD won the civil war.

In retrospect, the dream of Chu and his colleagues for a liberal state in postwar China was at odds with almost every turn of events. Certainly, liberal advocacy for rationality won high praise from educated Chinese, and the liberal opposition to the brutal war won popular

support. But Chinese liberals were unable to transform whatever majority consensus there may have been into an effective political force. The authors in Chu's liberal journal believed they truly spoke for the people, but admitted that they did not have the political and institutional mechanisms to implement their political views. Nor were they able—or perhaps, willing to try—to form a viable Chinese liberal party. As time went on, however, more and more liberals recognized the importance of political organization. The famous woman writer Chen Hengzhe, also a close friend of Hu Shi, who had insisted that liberals should seek moral leadership only, changed her mind in 1947: now, she proclaimed, Chinese liberals needed to seek political leadership by rallying social support and launching a liberal party (Guancha, 1947, 2, 12: 23). Even more assertive was Xie Fuya (N. Z. Zia), a close associate of Yan Yangchu. Xie criticized Chinese liberals as being too preoccupied with projecting a “clean” image as “social elites” (*shehui xianda*) to be willing to take the political initiative. He urged liberals to organize themselves quickly and to become the vanguard of their countrymen (Guancha, 1947, 1, 24: 13-14). Hu Shi had once been considered the proper figure to launch such a party, but he was more effective as an intellectual than as a political organizer. Furthermore, in the eyes of the majority of the liberals, his friendly relationship with Jiang disqualified him from playing a leading political role. From 1945 to 1949, the Democratic League aspired to be *the* liberal party, but it was a loose confederation which lacked the enthusiastic support of the Chinese liberals. Furthermore, both the GMD and the CCP secretly tried to disrupt the League. Zhang Junmai's withdrawal from the League at a crucial moment further weakened its importance. In the end, as Yang Renbian stated in “The Liberal's Road,” an essay published in Chu's journal, Chinese liberals remained content with their intellectual convictions and had little interest, if any, in organizing politically (Guancha, 1948, 5, 8: 5).

Out of a lack of interest in getting out of their ivory tower to build a strong political organization, Chinese liberal groups multiplied and fractured into factions. While both GMD and CCP leaders were committed to a life or death struggle for power, the liberals lacked the discipline of success or failure which would winnow out rival leaders to produce an eventual leadership cadre and an organization tested in

action. As a result, Chinese liberals were unable to build power, even as they talked about restraining power.

Beyond doubt, the paramount GMD leader Jiang Jieshi made a significant difference in the course of events. The only power that could have changed his course was the United States. Had the Marshall mission succeeded, a coalition government might still have been formed. The failure of the Marshall mission is a highly complex subject; however, Chinese liberals generally observed that the Americans were too concerned with geopolitical and strategic considerations to apply sufficient pressure on Jiang to bring about successful political compromise and reforms. Furthermore, with the rise of McCarthyism, and America's general turn to the right, liberals in America were coming under attack as "Communist agents." Only a courageous few spoke out in favor of the liberal alternative in China. Thus Chinese liberals found themselves without the vocal support of like-minded and potentially influential men and women in the United States. In the end, Washington and Moscow each supported its own client, while Chinese liberals were left alone, to watch helplessly as the dust settled.

Once peace and compromise failed, civil war was unavoidable. Chu and his liberal weekly's cry, first for prevention and then for an end of the war, was to no avail. It was indeed impossible for the liberals to maintain neutrality during the civil war. The GMD government's harsh policy of suppressing political dissent gradually and inevitably drove most of them to the other camp, which is not to say that the brutal war, wanton destruction, and unbearable inflation did not also deprive the GMD of its legitimacy to rule. Liberals, as well as the general population, were compelled to look for a political alternative. They had no illusions about Communism, but liberalism became increasingly irrelevant to the reality of war-torn China. To compromise with socialism, liberals concluded, was not only justifiable but just. Constructive planning seemed indispensable to a chaotic China, and Mao Zedong's New Democracy helped ease liberal fears of Communism. So far as Chu was concerned, the die was cast when GMD agents closed down the *Guancha* and ordered his arrest. At the founding of the People's Republic on October 1, 1949, a majority of those who contributed articles to the *Guancha* chose to stay in China. They generally welcomed the new China, but were not immediately aware that liberalism

and socialism were not really compatible in either means or ends. Chu's heroic struggle ended in a personal calamity that may well epitomize the tragic fate of liberalism in revolutionary China.

Deng Xiaoping's reforms after 1980, which seem to have put revolution to rest, inevitably have invited the revival of liberalism in China. Regardless of how effective or ineffective the campaign against "bourgeois liberalism" will be, the question of how to adapt Western liberalism to a culturally unique China remains.

NOTE

1. To put the figure of 60,000 copies—the maximum circulation of *Guancha*—into perspective, one might compare that number with the circulation of other Chinese periodicals. The weekly *Shenghuo zhoukan*, in the words of Wen-hsin Yeh, "on the eve of its closure by the Nationalist authorities in late 1933 . . . had attained a weekly circulation of 150,000 copies, the highest record of distribution ever reached by a periodical in modern Chinese publishing history before 1949" (Yeh, 1992: 191). The biography of Zou Taofen, the editor of *Shenghuo zhoukan*, puts the figure at 155,000 (Zuo Enju, 1978: 1/21). In any case, the *Shenghuo zhoukan* was published in a very different historical context. Its large circulation in 1933 was mainly due to its advocacy of the anti-Japanese crusade in the wake of the 1931 Manchurian Incident and the subsequent Japanese provocations. The *Guancha* was directed at a more high-brow (and hence, smaller) audience and circulated in a much worsening economy.

A more appropriate comparison may be found in the *Dongfang zazhi*. According to the *Zhongguo jindaishi cidian*, during its forty-four years of existence (11 March 1904 - December 1948), the *Dongfang zazhi's* highest circulation for any single issue was 15,000 (Chen Xulu, Fang Shiming, and Weijanyou, 1982: 156). Hence, so far as the 1946-1950 period is concerned, the *Guancha's* circulation was four times greater than that of the *Dongfang zazhi's* best issue.

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Young-tsu Wong is a professor of history at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Among his recent publications are Shizhuang tongshuo (A Modern Exposition of Liu Xie's Treatise on Historiography) (Taipei, 1988), and Search for Modern Nationalism: Zhang Binglin and Revolutionary China (Oxford Univ. Press, 1989).