

Chapter 14

Love for Taiwan

In August of the 38th year of the Republic of China, I arrived in Taiwan. It has been fifty-six years now. Who would have thought I would stay in Taiwan for so long? Nowadays, apart from here, there is no other place where I envision spending my remaining years. There is no need to talk about drinking Taiwanese water, eating Taiwanese rice, or how much I love Taiwan. In short, I have come to regard this place as my home.

Looking back, back then I truly thought that Taiwan would be liberated in three to five months at most, maybe a year. As the saying goes: "It's hard to predict things in the world." With the qualifications of an octogenarian, I can definitely affirm the accuracy of this statement.

Those of us who retreated from Guangzhou to Taiwan were flown directly to the Hsinchu Base. We were immediately sent to live in an empty house not far from the City God Temple. Those colleagues with families like

Huazi Yihui went to Tamsui, where there were family quarters. We all slept on the floor, and it seemed like the meal group started right that day, so no one went hungry. However, the food wasn't great. The person who bought groceries was from Shanxi; he said he mistook the Hsinchu rice noodles for the noodles from his hometown, and they weren't soaked in cold water enough, so when cooked, no one knew what it was.

There were over forty people in the large dormitory we stayed in. Not all were meteorologists;

some had communication or other duties. Guangzhou indeed did not hold on until Double Ten Day; it was overrun by the Communist army by late September. I suspect that, like me, many in that dormitory were instinctively lured by food, not just me. I don't remember whose it was, but there was a radio. Since everyone had no duties at the time, during the day, someone tuned the radio to a high volume, and everyone in the dorm room could hear it. It was probably October first, and the radio was playing a program hosted

by Bai Yang, a red movie star who had starred in "The Spring River Flows eastward," along with another very famous male star. They were passionately and crazily singing: "With our flesh and blood, we build our new great wall. When the Chinese nation arrives at the most dangerous moment…." Many other stars were also present. Bai Yang called out their names one by one and asked them to say a few words of congratulations for the establishment of the new China. The song they sang, which I learned when I was young, was the "March of the

Volunteers," which is now the national anthem of the People's Republic of China. When the voice of Bai Yang came through the radio saying, "Chairman Mao is now on Tiananmen Square," the singing stopped. After a while, the radio broadcast in a Hunan accent: "I announce, the People's Republic of China is established!" This was followed by enthusiastic applause and cheers, both from the radio and from those in the dorm room. I was also one of those enthusiastically applauding. I heard years later that Bai Yang was struggled

and died. I wonder if that's true?

The street markets in Hsinchu certainly couldn't match those in Guangzhou, but as evening fell near the City God temple, the atmosphere wasn't much different from that of Guangzhou, especially before the regime change. There were many vendors selling all kinds of things, and those selling contraband cigarettes didn't have a stall - they just laid out newspapers on the ground. For the price of one bowl of shaved ice, you could buy around thirty cigarettes,

but unfortunately, the quality of the cigarettes was so poor that it didn't even satisfy my addiction, which I later developed at Xin Le Yuan. In the rental bookstore, works by authors such as Lu Xun, Ba Jin, Cao Yu, Dostoevsky, and others were boldly displayed. You could rent them by leaving a deposit. To be honest, these writers had nothing to do with the "Communists," but they were later banned.

You may not know this, but when I was young, I also attempted to write both classical and modern poetry.

At that time, I wrote a modern poem titled "We've marched twenty-five thousand li." Essentially, in a mocking manner, I narrated the tragic situation of our Nationalist army being chased from Changchun, Beiping, Jinan, Nanjing, Guangzhou...along the way. The headlines at that time never used the term "retreat." I can't remember who came up with the two words: "advance transfer." In the end, we "transferred" to Taiwan. My poem couldn't be published anywhere in print; it was just circulated among colleagues. Everyone just chuckled it off.

We knew that, whether it was an advance transfer, retreat, or even a "long march," soon enough, Taiwan would also be liberated.

Indeed, things are hard to predict. In March of the 39th year of the Republic of China, President Chiang resumed his presidential duties. This meant that at the beginning of the 38th year of the Republic of China, when the Communists were about to cross the Yangtze River, Chiang had announced his resignation, allowing Vice President Li Zongren to take up a

presumptuous presidency. President Li even didn't dare to come to Taiwan and directly escaped to the United States. Resuming presidential duties meant that Chiang was officially re-elected president in Taiwan, leading the country once again, although in essence, he never really stopped his involvement in national affairs. Then, around three months later, on June 25th, a major event occurred that affected me and the destiny of all Taiwan residents: the outbreak of the North Korean invasion of South Korea. The United States

immediately dispatched the 7th Fleet to enter the Taiwan Strait. Shortly after, the mainland began the "resist the founder with American support.” The United States not only provided economic assistance but also sent military aid. Under America's protection, it could be said that there was no end in sight to Taiwan's liberation.

Many people believe that if it weren't for the Korean War, the United States might have abandoned us. This is a political judgment issue, and I have no words on it. However,

looking at the situation during the later Cold War period between the United States and the Soviet Union, where each side sought opportunities to gain advantages, considering Taiwan's strategic position as an aircraft carrier that doesn't sink, close to the southeastern coast of the communist mainland, the United States would spare no effort to defend Taiwan.

With the United States as the backing, the government naturally could stand tall and defend itself. Taiwan was labeled as the "Rejuvenation

Base" and the "Island of Freedom." At the same time, the era of secrecy and counter-espionage now known as the "White Terror" emerged, with the phrase "Communist spies are among you" becoming widely known. There is a saying, "Once bitten by a snake, ten years scared of a rope." Their disastrous experience on the mainland led them to the conclusion that cultural infiltration was truly terrifying. The eight years of resistance and the ensuing four years of victory saw tendencies towards left-leaning in films, dramas, literature, and

art. This seemed to be the global trend at the time, not necessarily the main cause of the Nationalist Party's failure. The main factors were financial collapse, particularly the near fraudulent government bonds, which lost the confidence of urban residents. As for the grassroots peasant movement, that was originally Mao Zedong's specialty. Some American intellectual sympathizers of the Communist Party at that time praised Mao Zedong as an example of a Chinese-style rural "reformist."

As for me, during these fifty-six long years in Taiwan, my mindset can be divided into three major periods. Before the "Peacock Incident," I was fully devoted to the Communist Party. When the United States landed on the moon, I was a typical "haipinion." After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1989 until today, I honestly don't know what I think about. Perhaps, I don't even think about it at all. Because then, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the mainland's adoption of thorough capitalism, I also

turned into a "petty bourgeoisie." Generally, the petty bourgeoisie, apart from thinking about personal interests, seldom cares about others.

Let's mention her, without her, nothing exists.

In the autumn of the 41st year of the Republic of China, shortly after my marriage, a friend based in Tainan lent me his newly equipped radio, saying I could listen for a while before returning it, which I considered a wedding gift. During that time, the radio

used vacuum tubes, and one with better performance required five or seven tubes, making it heavy. I felt bad that he had sent it a long way for me. One late night, I was tuning the stations, and when I heard a familiar tune, I recognized it as the "March of Volunteers." It was followed by an excerpt from the opera "The White-Haired Girl," which included the lyrics: "The north winds blow, the snowflakes flutter, the snowflakes flutter down…" A cool breeze swept over me, as if, amidst the noisy markets, a clear wind and moonlight suddenly appeared.

I quickly lowered the volume enough to listen only to myself. I later had the chance to hear the entire play "The White-Haired Girl" and see the entire ballet performance CD. I learned that it wasn't all about clear skies and bright moons; during the landlord struggles, it could be fierce and full of hatred. That night, after sleeping soundly, she appeared. We hadn't seen each other in a long time. I asked in bewilderment, "Is it you? Is it you?" She smiled and replied, "It's me." "I thought you wouldn't come. None of those dignified ones

like Lao She came, and I abandoned Li Yulin, Ma Dingxiang, and even the loyal prince Li Xiucheng, but you haven't forgotten about me. What do they call you?" "Call me Sunflower." "Why Sunflower?" "Sunflowers always face the sun, right? And the sun is the most just, shining on everyone, rich or poor, so call me Sunflower." "Sunflower, you're very good. You really understand me." "Of course, if I don't understand you, who can understand your inner world?" "Thank you, thank you, Sunflower." That night, I fell asleep in a sweet

dream. I saw her again a year later. After that, my eldest son and second daughter were born successively. My wife has always worked outside, in places like the US Navy and the US military advisory group, receiving a salary many times higher than ours in the military. We didn't worry about food or clothing, but our thoughts revolved around trivial matters of life. Feeling a bit old and melancholic, occasionally reminiscing about youthful dreams, I couldn't help but feel a sense of emptiness, thinking that perhaps this is how it's going to be for the rest of my

life—plain and uneventful. This marked the beginning of what is known as the "Peacock Incident."

I wrote down my thoughts as a novel of about 5,000 words, in the name of my wife, and it was published in the United Daily News' United Supplementary Section on December 28th, 1958. (See Appendix 1). That night or the next night, Sunflower came again, and she seemed much more mature.

"I carefully read your masterpiece," she said.

"Thank you."

"After reading your 'Peacock,' it reminded me of a Russian writer, Turgenev, and his novel 'Rudin.' Am I right in making this association?"

"Let's not talk about it. You know I also have the same guilt. Rudin had the courage to die on the streets of Paris during the Paris Commune Revolution of 1848, and what about me?"

"You had your main character die on a level crossing while

trying to save a child later on, which wasn't bad, right?"

"Why mock me? I'm afraid I don't even have the courage to cross a level crossing myself. I can only wait until old age and die in bed."

"My friend, don't limit yourself to a certain framework. Besides dedicating one's life as a martyr for the revolution, is there no other use for life? To take someone else's sentiments as your own, to repeat someone else's thoughts, what does that amount to? You should know,

who wasn't lost in their youth? You have your own thoughts, just do what you want to do."

"Thank you, Sunflower."

"There's no need to write yourself off so soon. The days ahead are still long. Remember, I will always be by your side, I am your friend, call me Sunflower."

I refer to this as the "Peacock Incident." If one were to divide a person's life into psychological stages, this is one of the milestones. No, my fascination with communist

ideology has not completely changed. Even until the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the opening up of the mainland for family visits, I was still in a state of confusion. As Sunflower said, there's no need to write yourself off so soon, likewise, there's no need to write off communist ideology so soon either.

My love for Taiwan has just begun. One could say that I matured, grew up, aged, and may also wither away in Taiwan. Who hasn't been lost in their youth? But one cannot remain lost forever, right? My

love for Taiwan saw me in confusion for ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years, fifty years is long enough to sketch an outline.

The above can be considered the preface to my fifty years of love for Taiwan. The true first chapter begins with imprisonment, and the next chapter follows.