

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 234

“Chiang in Charge”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

“I would rather have no offspring than sacrifice our nation’s interests.”

Chiang Kai-shek, on the kidnapping of his son.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 234. Chiang in Charge.

We last discussed the situation in China in episode 225. To summarize briefly, China was divided under the warlords, who were in many cases hardly more than bandit leaders, whose armies robbed the provinces they “ruled.” The two main opponents of the warlords were the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, which had agreed to a United Front, brokered by the Soviets. The two groups had many goals in common: overthrow the warlords, reunite the country under a civilian and democratic government, and claim China’s place in the sun, as an equal among the nations of the world. That meant an end to all those special tax and legal concessions to foreigners and foreign business interests; it meant an end to Western exploitation of China.

The Communists worked on organizing the workers, which is what Communists always do. Many Chinese workers worked in foreign-owned factories for foreign capitalists, so Chinese labor unions were typically anti-capitalist and anti-foreigner, socialist and nationalist.

This is not the same thing as being national socialist. Bear with me on this.

All of this benefited the Communist Party of China. The Communists enjoyed great success organizing the workers. Membership soared, leading to violent clashes between striking workers and the warlords, who knew no answer to social unrest other than sending in the troops.

And then there was the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang in Chinese, or KMT, if you like. The rising unrest, and the public backlash against the warlords, should have been good for the Nationalist cause, too. And it was, only the death of Sun Yat-sen in March 1925 hamstrung the party at just the time it needed to go on the offensive. Sun had been a powerful leader of a highly centralized party. He had been the unifying figure in a party made up of factions that had little in common other than their loyalty to Sun. No arrangements had been made for a successor. And so his death left the party at a crossroad.

There were several figures within the KMT who were plausible replacements for Sun, but the most prominent among them was the 41-year old Wang Jingwei. Wang has just missed being mentioned in this podcast twice before, but now I'm finally going to introduce him. He was born in Guangdong Province in 1883. As a student in 1903, he traveled to Japan, where he became involved with Sun Yat-sen's anti-Qing movement. In 1910, back in China, he was arrested for plotting the assassination of the Prince Regent, who was the father of China's titular Emperor, who was just a toddler at the time. Wang openly confessed to planning the assassination and was convicted at trial, but was saved from execution by the Revolution of 1911. After the Qing Dynasty was overthrown, Wang was released from prison and acclaimed as a revolutionary hero.

That was the first time I almost mentioned him. Wang later returned to his studies, this time in Paris, where he happened to be during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. There he led Chinese students in demonstrations against the Allies' decision to grant the Shandong Peninsula to Japan. That was the second time he just missed a mention.

By 1925, Wang had become part of Sun Yat-sen's inner circle. He had traveled with Sun to Beijing, where Sun died, and is said to have assisted Sun in drafting a will during his final days. Wang was part of the left wing of the Kuomintang, though he was not himself a Communist and remained suspicious of communism as an ideology. Still, he supported the United Front with the Communists for pragmatic reasons, believing it to be crucial to defeating the warlords and creating a united and democratic China.

Three months after Sun's death, the Nationalists set up what they ambitiously called a "national government" in Guangzhou, meant to rule the nation once the Nationalist Army defeated the warlords. It was a sixteen-member committee, and Wang was named chair, making him effectively the prime minister of the embryonic government of the Republic of China. But the presence of Wang and a few other left-leaning figures on the committee was disturbing to the right-leaning elements of the party. In November 1925, fifteen right-wing members of the Kuomintang Central Committee met at Western Hills, on the outskirts of Beijing. They declared themselves to be a quorum of the Central Committee and voted to expel the Communists from the Party and suspend Wang from party membership for six months, effectively terminating the United Front.

Unsurprisingly, the leadership down in Guangzhou denied the authority of the Western Hills group and convened the Second Party Congress in January 1926, where the left and right wings would have it out once and for all. The upshot of the party congress was a decisive win for the left. Wang's leadership of the government was reaffirmed. So was cooperation with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China. Two of the leaders of the Western Hills group were themselves expelled from the party, and more Communists were added to the government, including Mao Zedong, enough Communists that about half of the government ministries were now headed by them.

Chinese Communists and the Soviet government in Moscow had every reason to believe they had scored a resounding victory. The Nationalists had shaken off the right-wing doubters and had proven themselves a reliable partner to the Communists.

But the Communists had not yet heard from Chiang Kai-shek. Two months after the party congress adjourned, on March 20, 1926, Chiang declared martial law in Guangzhou. The rationale related to a Chinese cruiser, the *Zhongshan*, the flagship of the Republican navy, appearing suddenly at Guangzhou, contrary to orders. The ship was commanded by a Communist and had a Soviet naval advisor on board. And after its arrival, there was a flurry of phone calls, supposedly inquiring as to the location and movements of Chiang. Chiang decided that a coup was in motion against him. So he mobilized the armed forces under his command, including the cadets at the Whampoa Academy to seize control of the city and arrest a number of prominent Communists, including Zhou Enlai and the Soviet advisors in Guangzhou.

Communist sources have always denied, and continue to deny, that any sort of plot against Chiang was in the works. Maybe there was. Maybe there was some kind of misunderstanding. Or maybe it was an excuse engineered by Chiang himself to provide cover for a coup of his own. History has made no firm judgment on this. But whatever the cause, when the dust settled, Chiang was in control of the Nationalist Party and its government. Wang Jingwei opted not to oppose Chiang's move. Instead, he announced his retirement from politics and he left for Hong Kong, and from there on to France. But don't forget about him just yet. He will come back into the narrative, and sooner than you might think.

Chiang became the party chairman and renegotiated the alliance with the Communists. The Soviets would withdraw and replace their advisors to the Republican government. Communist Party members would no longer serve in high-level positions in government or in the Nationalist Party, and the Nationalist Party would be given a list of names of all Communists in its membership.

Chiang was now in charge. But although his rise to leadership was a setback for the Communists, it was not seen on either side as a complete repudiation. Communists were still welcome to aid the Nationalist cause, though not in positions of leadership, and Soviet aid and advice were still welcome. The right-leaning factions within the Kuomintang applauded Chiang's moves to

reduce Communist influence, but equally important, Chiang had also undermined the principle of civilian control over the military, which the Nationalists had previously respected.

At this time, Chiang was seen by many as a centrist figure in Chinese politics. His moves to weaken Communists within the KMT could be interpreted as an attempt to appease the right wing of the party just enough to hold the coalition together without entirely repudiating the Communists. But Chiang was thinking bigger than that. Chiang was ready to make his military move: the long-promised Northern Expedition to defeat the warlords and reunite all of China under a Nationalist government.

It's worth noting that beginning this offensive would also enhance the power of Chiang Kai-shek. As commander-in-chief of the Nationalist Army, he would now be the senior soldier and the senior political leader of the Nationalist movement. So the March coup opened the way for the Northern Expedition, while the Northern Expedition would help solidify Chiang's control.

The Northern Expedition finally got under way in June of 1926, attacking north from Guangdong province into central China. By October, it had reached the Wuhan region, securing the key inland provinces of Hunan and Hubei as far north as the Yangzi River. They were almost halfway to Beijing.

How did the Nationalist Army advance so quickly? It had three advantages. First, all that training at Whampoa Academy, under the supervision of Chiang and his Soviet advisors, had paid off. The Nationalists were a real army, whereas many of the warlord units opposing them were little more than bandit gangs, not prepared for real combat. Second, the Nationalists had many supporters among workers in the cities and peasants in the countryside. They gave the Nationalists valuable intelligence, and sometimes rose up against the warlords as Nationalist forces approached.

The other reason was the willingness of Chiang and his army to incorporate warlord defectors. Warlords who correctly deduced which way the wind was blowing were welcomed into the Nationalist Army along with their troops, who would be designated a Nationalist Army unit with the warlord appointed their commander. The advantages of this policy are pretty clear. The Nationalist Army was small; this was a way to expand it quickly. It also minimized bloodshed. On the other hand, this was all part and parcel of the warlord gig. Warlords were accustomed to shifting in and out of alliance with one another or submitting to another's authority one day, then betraying them the next. So the bargain Chiang was making was a quick and relatively bloodless advance in exchange for a dubious command structure in which many of his nominal subordinates were people you couldn't trust any farther than you could throw them underwater.

But it had gotten Chiang and his forces as far as Wuhan. Now Wuhan is actually a cluster of three cities, Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang. *Wuhan* is a contraction of those names, get it? You may recall that Wuchang has come up before in the podcast. That's where the Revolution of 1911 began, quite accidentally, which led to the end of the Qing Dynasty, episode 58. Wuhan is

the largest metropolis in the region. It sits on the Yangzi River and is a rail and transportation center. It's been called the Chicago of China. When the Nationalists captured it, they moved the government they'd set up down in Guangdong up to Wuhan. This seemed a logical move, given Wuhan's central location, which made it a more attractive choice for a government that aspired to rule all of China.

Once Wuhan was secure, the question arose of where to strike next. Many in the Nationalist leadership and among their Soviet military advisors believed the next step would be to continue north to Beijing. The capture of China's capital would do wonders for the morale and prestige of the Nationalist cause and would force the international community to deal with the Nationalists as the government of China. Militarily, it would split the territory still controlled by the warlords into two separate enclaves: the Northeast and the lower Yangzi River valley. These two regions could then be brought under control one at a time. Also, there's a major rail line that runs from Wuhan to Beijing that could support the army as it advanced.

But Chiang didn't like this idea. A powerful and hostile warlord controlled the region to the northwest, and could potentially harry the army's left flank and threaten its supply lines. Chiang wanted to turn east and advance down the Yangzi into the lower valley, a rich and densely populated region, and on to the biggest prize of all: the port city of Shanghai, China's key industrial and commercial hub. The first attempts to probe northward seemed to confirm Chiang's judgment, and so east it was.

But the warlord who controlled this region, Sun Chuangfang, was not anyone to be trifled with. He drove back the first Nationalist attempt to enter his domain in September 1926, and then emphasized his point by killing hundreds of KMT supporters living in his territories and putting their severed heads on public display. The Nationalists tried to turn one of Sun's subordinate commanders, but Sun got wind of the betrayal and struck first, executing the traitor and thousands of his soldiers and supporters.

But the Nationalists pressed on. Additional units were brought up from the south to attack Sun from that direction. The fighting continued through the winter and into 1927. In March, Communists in Shanghai led a general strike, disrupting the city, which was a key supply route for the warlord. Days later, the Nationalists marched into Shanghai. A few days after that, they seized Nanjing, another key city on the Yangzi. Nanjing, like Shanghai, had a substantial foreign community, which was attacked and looted by the Nationalists. British and American naval vessels shelled the city to drive the Nationalist troops away as foreigners evacuated.

This Nanjing Incident, as it was called, gave the Nationalists' international reputation a black eye. Chiang blamed the disturbance on the communists, probably unfairly. By now, he was becoming quite fed up with the communists. Still, let's look at the bright side. The Nationalists now control all of China south of the Yangzi River. So they're halfway to their goal.

[music: Jiao'an, 《平沙落雁》 "Pingsha Luoyan"]

While Chiang was fighting Sun in the lower Yangzi valley, upriver at Wuhan, the would-be Nationalist government was veering left once again. Peasant organizations in the region ousted landlords and seized control, another exercise in do-it-yourself land reform. Now, many Nationalist army officers came from landlord families, and they viewed this sort of thing with great alarm. Was the unrest in Hunan and Hubei a foretaste of what Nationalist rule would mean for the rest of China? And then there was that labor unrest in Shanghai, which alarmed Chinese capitalists and business people, not to mention the foreign community.

And then there was Wang Jingwei. I told you he was coming back sooner rather than later. He returned from his French exile, with Soviet encouragement, to claim a leadership role in the Wuhan government.

To the right wing of the KMT, all of this was worrisome. The Western powers were generally sympathetic to the KMT and its goal of unifying the country, but they most certainly did not want to see Russian-style Bolshevism take root in China. The Nanjing Incident was the last straw for the international community. They may or may not have believed Chiang when he blamed all that on the Communists, but they at least pretended to, recognizing that whatever his shortcomings, Chiang would be a better friend to the West than the Communists ever would.

At dawn on April 12, 1927, Chiang made his final break with the Communists. KMT soldiers attacked the meeting places of workers' groups across Shanghai. The workers resisted, but to no avail. Many were killed, many were arrested, some of those arrested were summarily executed. In the days that followed, similar actions rounded up Communists and left-leaning figures across the region Chiang and his troops controlled. The death toll was in the hundreds, maybe more than a thousand. The government in Wuhan declared Chiang an enemy and relieved him of his command. Chiang responded by setting up his own government in the city of Nanjing.

Chiang finally married his fiancée, Soong Mei-ling, later that year. And speaking of family matters, you'll recall that his son by his first wife, Ching-kuo, had been in the Soviet Union for the past two years, attending a Communist Party school as a member of the Communist Youth League, along with another young Chinese Communist named Deng Xiaoping. After his father's attack on Communists in China in April 1927, Ching-kuo published an essay in a Moscow newspaper condemning his father. Whether he wrote this essay willingly or not is unclear, but we do know that Ching-kuo was held in the Soviet Union for another ten years, during which time he was put to work at a steel plant in the Urals, where he met and married his wife, a Belarusian woman, before Stalin finally permitted him to return home. During this period, his father turned down Soviet offers of a prisoner exchange, Ching-kuo for some Communist prisoners Chiang was holding. The quote I read at the top of the episode was Chiang expressing his position on this standoff.

Meanwhile, half of China still remained to be taken. Both of the competing Nationalist governments, Wang's in Wuhan and Chiang's in Nanjing, were eager to put the armies under

their respective commands back on the offensive to complete the work of the Northern Expedition. Whichever government could accomplish this would have the credibility to proclaim itself the true government of the Republic of China. Unfortunately for both of them, neither had the means just now, and so the offensive stagnated for about a year. The Wuhan government had a smaller army, too small to both advance on Beijing and cover its northwest flank. Chiang's Nanjing government had the stronger army, but it faced the warlord Sun Chuangfang, who had been driven out of the lands south of the Yangzi, but still had an army on the north side of the river, an army that had since been reinforced by warlords farther north who by now were banding together with Sun against Chiang and the Nationalist Army, which they now recognized to be a serious threat to them all.

The warlords called their united force the "National Pacification Army," a grand name, but wherever it went the NPA was hated. As bad as it was to have your farm or your village regularly raided by the local warlord's army; those guys are at least children of families from your own or a neighboring community, but it was even worse when strange soldiers from a distant province, speaking a dialect you can barely understand, join in and demand their own share of your produce.

But as unloved as they were, there they were. Both governments pondered the problem of how to break this impasse, and both came up with the same solution: the 44-year old general Feng Yuxiang. Feng was literally born into the army; his father had been a soldier in the Imperial days. He joined the military himself at the age of eleven. He was an officer in the Beiyang Army in 1911 when the Revolution broke out. He supported the Nationalists and was imprisoned for it, but was released after the Imperial government was overthrown. In 1914, he was baptized a Methodist.

When the Beiyang Army broke apart at the beginning of the Warlord Era, Feng became one of the powerful northern warlords who controlled Beijing. He became famous in the West as the "Christian General." He instilled a strong sense of discipline in his soldiers, prohibiting the use of opium, gambling and prostitution, and ruled his territories with a lighter hand than most warlords. He worked at converting his soldiers, too, although stories that he performed mass baptisms of his troops with fire hoses appear to be exaggerations.

Anyway, Feng continued to be sympathetic to the Nationalist cause. It was he who had invited Sun Yat-sen to the negotiations in Beijing back in 1925, negotiations that unfortunately went nowhere because of Sun's untimely death. By 1927, Feng and his army had been driven out of the Beijing region by rival warlords and he had set up shop about 200 kilometers northwest of the capital, in the Chinese city of Zhengjiakou, which on the edge of Inner Mongolia, near the Great Wall. In 1927, most Westerners knew this city by its Mongolian name, Kalgan.

With both Wang and Chiang reaching out to him for an alliance, Feng became the kingmaker. He met separately with both Nationalist leaders, and we can only speculate on what they discussed,

but afterward, Feng chose to align himself with Chiang. The fact that Chiang was set to marry a Methodist and was converting to Christianity himself may have factored into the decision. Feng announced his decision in a telegram to Wang Jingwei in June, in which he also called on the Wuhan government to break with the Communists and join with Chiang. In Wuhan, the government there had initially deplored Chiang's April attacks on the Communists, but by the time they received Feng's telegram, the Chinese Communists had received their own telegram from Comrade Stalin in Moscow, instructing them that Chiang's turning on them and attacking Communists was the signal to begin the Revolution in China. Committed Communists took these instructions to heart, but the Wuhan Nationalists like Wang Jingwei rejected the Communist revolutionary model and regarded the unrest and the breakdown in order the Communists were now inciting in the rural regions as exactly the opposite of what the country needed. In July, Wuhan expelled its Soviet advisors, declared martial law, and directed all Communists within the Nationalist Party either to renounce their Communist Party membership or leave the Nationalist Party.

The Communists led multiple uprisings against the Nationalists, the most important one being in the city of Nanchang, which is why it's called the Nanchang Uprising. Here Communist soldiers under the command of Zhou Enlai took control of the city on August 1, hoping this would in turn launch a general peasant uprising. It didn't, and the Nationalist Army retook the city a few days later. Still, Communist historiography marks August 1, 1927 as the date of the founding of the People's Liberation Army and the beginning of the long civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists that will not end until 1950.

The warlord coalition, noting the disarray south of the Yangzi, went on the offensive that same month, hoping to take advantage of the chaos in the south. It was a disastrous miscalculation. The Nationalist forces quickly set aside their differences and with General Feng opening a whole new front, they were able to shatter the warlord offensive, taking tens of thousands of prisoners.

With the warlords reeling, now was not the time for the Nationalists to be fighting among themselves. In September, the two governments agreed to combine at Nanjing. Wang Jingwei refused to participate in the combined government. The Nationalist Army began driving north once again.

At the urging of their Soviet advisors, the Communists kept up their resistance. In September, the Autumn Harvest Uprising by peasants in Hunan province, led by Mao Zedong, fought local landlords and the Kuomintang for two months, until it was finally put down. A month later, in December 1927, the Communists tried again, this time organizing a peasant uprising farther south, in the Nationalists' home base of Guangdong Province. The Nationalist Army put down the revolt at the cost of thousands of lives. This led to a tremendous backlash against the Communists. The Nationalist government in Nanjing severed all remaining ties with the Soviet Union, and even Wang Jingwei, not a Communist himself, fell under suspicion for his past

policy of working with the Communists. Wang prudently chose to leave the country for Europe once again.

The following spring, with the arrival of warmer weather, the Nationalists continued their advance north. In contrast to the first phase of the Northern Expedition, which was as much a rolling revolution as it was a military offensive, Chiang now commanded the largest army in China and this final phase was a straight-up military campaign. Warlords willing to submit to the Nationalists were still welcome, otherwise prepare to fight. In June 1928, the Nationalists took Beijing. By December, the last warlord, the one who ruled Manchuria, submitted.

This submission was an important development, not only because it put an end to resistance in the last province of China. Manchuria, as you'll recall from our episodes on the Russo-Japanese War and the Great War, though formally part of China, was regarded by the Japanese as in their "sphere of influence," as the diplomats like to say. So as long as Manchuria was run by a semi-independent Chinese warlord beholden to Japan, the Japanese were content with that arrangement. But from now on, Manchuria will be run by a semi-independent Chinese warlord beholden to the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek. The Japanese military will find this arrangement unacceptable.

But that is a story for another episode. For now at least, China was united. On paper.

Nanjing would remain the capital of the newly united Republic of China. I should mention here that Nanjing means "southern capital" in Chinese, since the city had sometimes served as the national capital in times past. Beijing means "northern capital." I should also mention that in 1927, most English speakers called these cities Peking and Nanking. These were spellings that early Western missionaries in China created for those cities, although in our day we spell and pronounce them Nanjing and Beijing, as these are closer to the Chinese pronunciations and these are the names I have been using in the podcast.

Anyway, the Nationalists renamed Beijing to Beiping, or Peiping in the English-speaking world. This literally means "northern peace," or maybe "northern tranquility," although you could also read it as simply "northern plains." In any case, the city will bear this name until 1949. Nanjing made for a more centralized location and establishing the capital there symbolized a break with the Imperial past. It also didn't hurt that Chiang Kai-shek was a native of the next province over, meaning he had a lot of support in the Nanjing region. Chiang was made President of the Republic, in addition to retaining his military command. Remember that Sun Yat-sen had decreed that next time, the Nationalists would establish military control first and then only gradually introduce democracy. Well, here we are with the military control. As for the gradual introduction of democracy, well, maybe General Chiang will get around to that someday soon.

Spoiler alert: He will not.

And then there were the warlords. Although they had officially submitted to the authority of the Republic, there were still several powerful warlords, including our Methodist friend, General Feng, whose loyalty was debatable. Chiang certainly never took any of them for granted, and over the next decade there would be a number of occasions when open warfare would break out between the central government and one or more of the warlords.

Still, the decade to come, 1928 to 1937 is remembered in Chinese history as the Nanjing Decade or sometimes the Golden Decade. It was a period of greater political stability and rapid economic growth. The Nanjing government invested heavily in schools and highways. Businesses expanded, and so did the professional class. The Nanjing government gradually won international recognition and respect and even had some success in negotiating with the Western powers the unwinding of some of the unequal treaties.

But besides the unreliability of the government's warlord allies and the lack of democracy, there were two other looming challenges. First, there were the Communists. Or perhaps I should say, first, there were the workers who remembered the massacres. And there were the peasant farmers who remembered that the Chiang government broke up their organizations and undid their attempts at land reform. The workers and peasants remembered these things because they had the Communists to remind them, and to speak to them of the promise of something better.

Second, there were the Japanese. As I said, Japan considered Manchuria in its "sphere of influence." A weak and fragmented China, riven by warlords, suited Japan just fine. The warlords could be bought or treated with. But a united China, with a centralized government to which Manchuria owed its loyalty endangered Japanese interests. It even challenged Japan for the role of regional hegemon. The Japanese would never reconcile themselves to a strong Republic of China, and from the beginning they sought to undermine it.

But that is a story for another episode. We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Laurence and Cameron and Alexander for their kind donations, and thank you to Philip for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Laurence and Cameron and Alexander and Philip help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we take a look at doings in the Soviet Union. The death of Lenin left the USSR at a crossroads, and the massacres of the Communist movement in China were a blow to Soviet hopes of exporting the revolution, leading Moscow to refocus on building socialism at home before trying to spread it abroad. The Five-Year Plan, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. I mentioned two leaders in the Communist Party of China who early embraced the strategy of organizing the rural peasants, Mao Zedong and Peng Pai. It wasn't very Marxist, but it seemed to work in China.

After the Nationalists put down the Autumn Harvest Uprising, led by Mao, the Communist Party of China expelled him for his focus on organizing rural peasants and his premature turn to open revolt. This made no difference to Mao, who fled into the mountains in the west and continued his pro-peasant, anti-landlord organizing underground.

Peng Pai led the later peasant uprising in his native Guangdong Province, which lasted four months before the Nationalist Army finally defeated him. Like Mao, Peng went underground afterward. Unlike Mao, Peng was betrayed to the Nationalists in 1929 and was arrested and executed on the orders of Chiang Kai-shek. He was 32 years old.

Peng was married. His wife was executed with him, but they left behind a four-year-old son named Peng Shilu. Shilu was cared for by his grandmother until he turned eight, at which time the Nationalist government put him in prison. His grandmother was able to arrange his release, probably by paying someone a bribe, and shipped him off to Communist-controlled territory, where he would be safe.

In 1949, at the age of 24, Shilu, who had proved to be a gifted engineering student, was sent to the USSR to study nuclear science. Ten years later, in 1959, after the Soviet government refused to share its nuclear technology with China, Peng Shilu was placed in charge of a project to develop a Chinese nuclear reactor capable of powering a submarine. In 1974, the younger Peng's work contributed to the launch of the *Long March*, China's first nuclear-powered submarine. In the 1980s, Peng helped develop civilian nuclear power plants until his retirement. Peng Shilu died on March 22, 2021, just three weeks before the date I released this episode. He was 95 years old.

[music: Closing Theme]