

DID YÜAN SHIH-K'AI'S SON DINE WITH THE KAISER?  
SOME EVIDENCES FOR YÜAN K'O-TING'S JOURNEY  
TO GERMANY IN 1913

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- I. Foreword
- II. Yüan K'o-ting
- III. The Monarchical Movement
- IV. Yüan Shih-k'ai and the Foreign Powers
- V. Yüan K'o-ting in Berlin
- IV. -Conclusion

I. FOREWORD

While looking into Sino-German relations during the era of the last Hohenzollern emperor (Kaiser) Wilhelm II (reg. 1888-1918), I came across an anecdote which aroused my curiosity. It said that "in the early days of the (Chinese) Republic", Yüan Shih-k'ai's eldest son, Yüan K'o-ting, had visited Germany where he was invited to dinner by Wilhelm II. The Kaiser, my story continued,

told (the younger) Yüan that in order for China to obtain wealth and power, she absolutely needed a monarchy. He admonished Yüan to relate this to his father in detail. Germany would support him with all her might, Wilhelm added, proceeding to write a personal letter to Yüan Shih-k'ai with his own hand. <sup>(1)</sup>

This is told in such a way as to suggest that the Kaiser then slipped his billet-doux into Yüan K'o-ting's hands...

Since the same source repeatedly refers to its own allegation, namely that it had in fact been Wilhelm who encouraged—if not introduced—the idea of a

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(1) Liu Ch'eng-yü, *Hung-hsien chi-shih-shih*, p. 28.

monarchical restoration in China with Yüan Shih-k'ai on the throne, (2) I tried to find this delightful plot corroborated in some of the Chinese and Western standard works on the period, but failed. Mr Lin Min-te of this Institute informed me that the anecdote above was practically the only evidence, not only for Yüan K'o-ting's alleged tête-à-tête with the German monarch, but even for his trip to Germany on the whole; no reliable sources seem to exist in Chinese (or in Japanese for that matter, while Japanese historians have long been interested in the rumour).

Was this just an amusing story, or was there some history in it? Fortunately, I did not have to dig too deeply into German Foreign Office archive materials available at this Institute<sup>(3)</sup> in order to consolidate—both: Yüan K'o-ting *did* travel to Berlin in 1913, but was not received in audience by Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Apart from presenting the German evidence, I shall try in this paper to draw a tentative analysis of the background and object of the younger Yüan's visit that was shrouded in secrecy and ended so farcially. A brief biographical sketch of Yüan K'o-ting will be followed by a few words on the monarchical restoration and a glimpse at Yüan Shih-k'ai's relations with the foreign powers as well as their attitudes towards him, with emphasis on Germany (since they are only meant as a passe-partout for the main issue, these remarks will be very brief and quite eclectic); subsequently, there will be a detailed account of the visit based on the German files; while in a final sequence, I shall outline my own observations.

## II. YÜAN K'O-TING

Yüan K'o-ting (*tzu*: Yün-t'ai) was born at the Yüan-shang family estate, Chang-te district, Honan province, in 1878 (in the twelfth lunar month of the fourth year of the *Kuang-hsü* reign) by Yüan Shih-k'ai's legitimate ("main") wife, née Yü, as Yüan's first-born son. (4) As a child, he was of delicate health and often suffered from nausea but would not let this

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(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 59.

(3) *German Foreign Ministry Archives* (hereafter GFMA).

(4) Cf. I Ming, *Yüan Shih-k'ai ch'üan-chuan*, "Nien-p'u", p. 13. Boorman/Howard, *Biographical Dictionary* IV, p. 89, give 1887 as Yüan K'o-ting's year of birth, which must be a printing error.

discourage him in his studies to which he devoted himself eagerly enough, (5) although he had a propensity for taking up too many things at the same time. (6) This may have been one of the reasons why he failed in the traditional examinations. Subsequently, the hot-tempered youth burnt his Classics and poetry books, claiming them to be stale and useless for any practical purposes. (7) Certainly, later when the imperial examinations were abolished (in 1905) everybody praised K'o-ting for his foresight, but at the time some members of the household were appalled at this act of irreverence and informed his father against him. However, Yüan Shih-k'ai only laughed about it, finding no fault with his son's attitude. In fact, the elder Yüan himself thought little of book learning. Being a great admirer of Kaiser Wilhelm and German militarism, he is said to have asked Yen Fu to translate works on German military policies. He regarded German military discipline as a model for building not only the state, but the family as well. (8) His sons, whom he abounded in, had to sport German-style cadets' uniforms and also pose for a photograph in this array, boots and all. At the time, the picture became quite famous in Peking. (9) Yüan saw to it that his sons studied foreign languages, not only English, but German as well. It must have pleased him to see his eldest turn away from the Classics and take up studies of military science and foreign languages--English, German, French and Japanese. For a German tutor to his boys, Yüan Shih-k'ai engaged his friend, the Manchu Yin-ch'ang who was to serve as Minister to Germany from 1901 to 1906 (who can't have been too successful with K'o-ting, however, since even years later, by the time of his visit to Berlin, Yüan K'o-ting's command of the German language was described as insufficient although his English was said to be excellent). (10)

(5) Yüan K'o-wen, "Ta-hsiung chuan", p. 15.

(6) GFMA, China 9, 2: Letter H. Cordes, Peking, 19 Sept., 1913, to Deutsch-Asiatische Bank, Berlin.

(7) Yüan K'o-wen, "Ta-hsiung chuan", p. 15.

(8) Liu Ch'eng-yü, *Hung-hsien chi-shih-shih*, p. 26.

(9) The picture is contained in I Ming, *Yüan Shih-k'ai ch'üan-chuan*, p. 4. On the number of Yüan's sons, the accounts differ. I Ming, p. 217, has "13 sons", which contradicts the photo on p. 4. on which 14 sons are numbered; Boorman/Howard, *Biographical Dictionary*, IV, p. 89, mention "some 30 children, 16 of whom were sons"; Yüan K'o-wen (who should know), in *Yüan-shang szu-ch'eng*, p. 36, has 17.

(10) GFMA, China 9, 2: Letter H. Cordes, Peking, 23 Sept., 1913, to Capt. Riese, Berlin. For Yin-ch'ang's term in Germany, cf. *Ch'ing-chi Chung-wai shih-ling nien-piao*, p. 10.

Personally, Yüan K'o-ting seems to have been self-confident to the point of conceit and ill-manneredness. Thus he is said to have been excessively proud of his legitimate birth, looking down on his younger brothers<sup>(11)</sup> who were born by his father's concubines. On the other hand, a German friend who had known him for years characterized the young man of 35 as a charming, agreeable "Kultur Mensch" (man of culture) who possessed common sense and civilized tastes; still, even this very sympathetic European had to concede that, "simplicity and modesty notwithstanding, Yüan K'o-ting grew up as the son of a viceroy", after all, and was rather "touchy" to people who tried to incommode him or held opinions different from his own.<sup>(12)</sup>

His first important appointment was by the Ch'ing scholar-official Chao Erh-sun when Chao was appointed General of Mukden in 1904 and reformed the army. In July, 1905 the Ch'ing government dispatched a delegation of officials to the USA and Europe in order to study Western institutions.<sup>(13)</sup> Yüan K'o-ting was asked to join the group, but his mother would not suffer his travelling so far. In this way he escaped the bomb attack against the delegation upon their departure at Peking railway station by the revolutionary Wu Yüeh on 20 September. Although the assassin killed only himself, slightly injuring two of the delegates, it is understandable that after this, K'o-ting's mother was even less willing to allow him to go abroad.

In 1906, the Ch'ing court reorganized the *Kung pu* (Board of Public Works) and merged it with the *Shang pu* (Board of Commerce, established in 1903) into the *Nung-kung-shang pu* (Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce). Yüan K'o-ting served in the new institution as *ts'an-i* (consultant).<sup>(14)</sup> However, the jurisdiction of railways, shipping, telegraphs and the postal service, previously claimed by the *Shang pu*, went to the new *Yu-ch'uan pu* (Ministry of Posts and Communications) over which Yüan Shih-k'ai gained much control between 1907 and 1911, for instance by launching some of his protégés into key positions.<sup>(15)</sup> It is therefore not at

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(11) I Ming, *Yüan Shih-k'ai ch'üan-chuan*, pp. 217-18.

(12) GFMA, China 9, 2: Letters H. Cordes of 19 Sept. and 23 Sept., 1913.

(13) Cf. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, p. 781.

(14) Yüan K'o-wen, "Ta-hsiung chuan", p. 16 (instead of the 工 in 農工商部, this text erroneously prints a 公); for the institutional reorganizations in 1906, see I. C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 496; *Cambridge History of China* II, 2, pp. 292-3.

(15) For further details, cf. *Cambridge History* II, 2, p. 450.

all surprising to find his eldest son on the staff of the *Yu-ch'uan pu* as Senior Secretary before the 1911 Revolution. <sup>(16)</sup>

Yüan K'o-ting had always been close to his father. Particularly during Yüan Shih-k'ai's forced retirement (1909-1911), he made himself quite indispensable as his father's intermediary between Yüan-shang and the political circles in and around the imperial court as well as the elder Yüan's loyal supporters in Peking. <sup>(17)</sup> K'o-ting's ambition to become "heir apparent" to his father's achievements had shown itself before 1911, but when Yüan Shih-k'ai was recalled to Peking as premier, the son made his father's career his own and resigned from his government post. <sup>(18)</sup> From now on, he was the elder Yüan's intimus and "did his best to fan his father's vanity and desire for glory" <sup>(19)</sup> which cannot have been burning much more passionately than his own. <sup>(20)</sup>

When Li Yüan-hung and Huang Hsing strove to win Yüan Shih-k'ai for the Revolution by offering him the presidency of the Republic-to-be, K'o-ting urged his father to accept. <sup>(21)</sup> Still, Yüan Shih-k'ai would watch his opportunity and make no premature commitments, which secured him the premiership at the hands of the regent in the Manchus' eleventh-hour attempt to save the dynasty and introduce constitutionalism. K'o-ting already showed how he would push his father with the help of others: he asked Wang Ching-wei to help change his father's mind and persuade him to settle for the republican presidency, <sup>(22)</sup> doubtlessly because this position was endowed with greater power.

Another example of how Yüan Shih-k'ai placed his own adherents while covering himself at all sides is the composition of the peace negotiation delegation set up under Yüan after the abdication of the Manchu regent in December 1911. Ironically, the delegation included T'ang Shao-i who was openly in

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(16) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 85.

(17) GFMA, China 9, 2: Letter H. Cordes of 19 Sept., 1913.

(18) Yüan K'o-wen, "Ta-hsiung chuan", p. 16.

(19) I. C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 568.

(20) Cf. J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, pp. 86, 179; also W. W. Yen, *East-West Kaleidoscope*, p. 74, where he mentions "a group of sycophants who surrounded (Yüan)"; Yüan K'o-ting's burning ambition to make his father emperor is also mentioned by I Ming, *Yüan Shih-k'ai ch'üan-chuan*, p. 255; T. Li, *Woodrow Wilson's China Policy*, p. 146; B. L. P. Weale, *The Fight for the Republic*, p. 11.

(21) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 86.

(22) I Ming, *Yüan Shih-k'ai ch'üan-chuan*, p. 229.

favour of republicanism. <sup>(23)</sup> In order to outbalance him, Yang Shih-ch'i was appointed as his assistant, a very impenetrable figure at the time who later proved to be one of Yüan's creatures. <sup>(24)</sup> As a disciple of his father, Yüan K'o-ting developed into a designer of schemes himself. Apparently, it was him who was mainly responsible for what is now known as an organized mutiny of the 3rd Division at Peking that began on 29 February, 1912, and gave Yüan Shih-k'ai a pretext for not moving the capital to the revolutionary-controlled South. <sup>(25)</sup> However, having assumed the preliminary presidency after all, the elder Yüan was entrusting his son more frequently with the making of decisions for which he obviously believed he had well prepared him (for instance, three times before 10 November, 1911, K'o-ting had already acted as negotiator with the revolutionaries on his father's behalf, though unsuccessfully) <sup>(26)</sup>, and the younger Yüan seems to have been accepted in this role by some leading Chinese politicians, too. <sup>(27)</sup> We also find the father increasingly complying with his ambitious offspring's suggestions as he grew older and began to feel the weight of his self-created dictatorship. In 1913, K'o-ting had his personal military adviser, Captain König <sup>(28)</sup> of the German East Asian Naval Squadron, who would also teach him German. After the familiar pattern, Yüan K'o-ting later persuaded Wang Shih-chen, another of his father's "puppets", out of retirement to take over the new Central Command replacing the Military Department. In 1915, he was himself placed in charge of the command of his father's new army, the Standard Regiments, which Yüan Shih-k'ai had organised in October 1914 at K'o-ting's suggestion. <sup>(29)</sup> In 1915, too, the movement to restore the monarchy in which Yüan K'o-ting played such a decisive part appeared openly into sight, and within this context he was described as a very unimpressive person, both physically and intellectually, "a fact that the father seemed ready to acknowledge as a weakness for the new

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(23) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 24; W. W. Yen, *Kaleidoscope*, pp. 73-74; Yen claims that T'ang "won over" Yüan Shih-k'ai to republican ideas: I can only understand this as a highly "diplomatic" remark.

(24) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 94.

(25) E. P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 261 note 1.

(26) I. C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 560.

(27) Cf. I Ming, *Yüan Shih-k'ai ch'üan-chuan*, p. 255; J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 95.

(28) U. Ratenhof, *Chinapolitik*, p. 240. See also GFMA, China 9, 2: Dispatch Chargé d'aff. Maltzan, Peking, 11 July, 1914.

(29) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, pp. 160-161.

dynasty. He had done nothing to win general respect and was not a leader in the overall governmental operation".<sup>(30)</sup> Hence Yüan Shih-k'ai's hesitations, among other factors? Be that as it may—the monarchical movement will be discussed in the following sequence.

A personal mishap must be mentioned here which was to be of some significance in connection with Yüan K'o-ting's journey to Germany. On 26 April, 1912, he returned from the North to Yüan-shang on horseback. As he was entering the estate, his horse tripped and he was hurled against a tree. Trickle of blood seeped from his left ear and mouth while he remained unconscious for five hours and semi-conscious for another forty-four. It turned out that he had suffered concussion and a small skull injury above his ear. For about two weeks, both his legs and other parts of his body were paralysed, and for a while his speech was impaired, but mobility returned gradually, although in 1915 he was still seen walking with a slight limp. However, his intellectual capacities and general health were reported intact by his physician.<sup>(31)</sup>

In what was very obviously a political match, Yüan K'o-ting was married to a daughter of Wu Ta-ch'eng (1835-1902; Governor of Hunan, 1892-1895), a native of Suchou. She bore him a daughter, Chia-ti. He had another daughter, Chia-chin, and a son, Chia-jung, by a concubine, née Ma.

The fact that practically nothing can be found on his life after his father's downfall and death in 1916 reveals the degree to which Yüan K'o-ting had backed the wrong horse. He simply sank into oblivion. Rumour has it that he died in 1929, but I am unable to consolidate this.

### III. THE MONARCHICAL MOVEMENT

Considering the close relationship between Yüan Shih-k'ai and his eldest, as well as the clandestine nature of most of their schemings, it is hard to say whether the father used his son as a mere instrument or was in turn used by the son, too. However, the first steps towards making Yüan Shih-k'ai emperor were obviously taken by K'o-ting. His own brother suggests that as early as 1911, in the wake of the regent's abdication, he (K'o-ting) had

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(30) E. P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, pp. 222-223.

(31) Yüan K'o-wen, "Ta-hsiung chuan", p. 16; GFMA, China 9, 2: Letter Cordes, 23 Sept., 1913; B. L. P. Weale, *The Fight for the Republic*, p. 110.

presented their father with "an opinion" (to the effect, we may presume, of a replacement of the Manchu by a Han Chinese dynasty commencing with Yüan Shih-k'ai) but had met with the latter's severe rebuff.<sup>(32)</sup> Still, at the time, this "opinion" was by no means a Yüan family secret: In November, 1911, K'o-ting had already begun to sound out the opinions of "important foreigners" in Peking on the possibility "that, after a transitional republican stage, the revolution might acclaim his father as emperor".<sup>(33)</sup> Certainly, Morrison was in on the secret; so was Jordan; and so was an anonymous Western author who, in an article in the *North China Daily News* of 1 February, 1912, predicted that "as soon as any abdication decree is issued, the generals and other leaders (in the North) will probably declare Yüan Shih-k'ai emperor" which would meet with a wave of enthusiasm. An American diplomat, in a dispatch of March, 1913, again hinted at Yüan's monarchical aspirations.<sup>(34)</sup> Therefore, the Revolution was wary. Even from distant Germany, Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei wired his suspicion, in December, 1911, that Yüan would use the occasion to make himself emperor. During January, 1912, "when the negotiations between Yüan and the revolutionaries seemed bogged down," Yüan's monarchical aspirations were frequently discussed in Nanking.<sup>(35)</sup> However, in 1911 "prorepublican sentiment predominated" even among Yüan's own aides, and Yüan K'o-ting had to restrain himself for the time being.

As for Yüan Shih-k'ai, it is well known that he kept denying such aspirations fervently at first, and even in 1915 displayed a passive and reluctant attitude. However, before and after the collapse of the Ch'ing dynasty, he never denied his skepticism towards the suitability of a republican system for China at least at that historical moment. Some close observers attested him an honest and serious effort to save the Ch'ing to the very last.<sup>(36)</sup> In a long debate with Morrison, published by the latter in the London *TIMES* of 20 November, 1911, Yüan argued passionately in favour of a (constitutional) monarchy, since only the venerable institution of an emperor would inspire the popular respect necessary to guarantee continued inner stability in China.

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(32) Yüan K'o-wen, "Ta-hsiung chuan", p. 15.

(33) E. P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 211.

(34) Quoted from Scalapino/Yu, *Modern China*, pp. 229-230 and 373, footnote.

(35) E. P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 211.

(36) e. g. O. Franke, *Grossmächte*, p. 368.



Yüan's preference for a monarchical system could also be seen in early revivals, under his republican presidency, of traditional customs and rituals, including the activities of the *K'ung-chiao hui* (Confucian Society) after September, 1913.<sup>(37)</sup> But all these views and biases were shared by many of China's most prestigious scholars and did not yet make Yüan a pretender to the throne. It was even suggested that the press in such Western countries as favoured the revolutionaries circulated such rumours with malicious intent.<sup>(38)</sup> Beyond question, China was in a dreadful quandary in 1911, and the task to try and pull her out in one piece must have looked almost hopeless then. Even to the revolutionaries, Yüan appeared as the only man who had the stamina and practical means, including a modern army and the confidence of the foreign powers, to venture that attempt.

There is not enough space here to discuss to what extent both sides were outmanoeuvred by Yüan in his bid for power. In any case, he was entrusted with the preliminary presidency by Sun Yat-sen and his partisans. But within only a few months, he had done away with the National Assembly, outlawed the KMT, amalgamated the other political parties into the *Chin-pu tang* which he controlled—in short, established himself as dictator. Neither Yüan's autocratic character nor his political training within the disorderly and corrupt administration of the late Ch'ing “was such as to prepare him for the methods of parliamentary government, nor were the members of the new parliament accustomed to the exercise of power”—in fact, Yüan's grasp at absolute power was facilitated by a National Assembly incapacitated by inner strife, for which Liang Ch'i-ch'ao so bitterly accused it, in 1913, of “suicidal” incompetence.<sup>(39)</sup> Parallels in modern European history come to mind: Both Lenin and Hitler

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(37) P. S. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, pp. 180-82; J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, pp. 162-3; for the Confucian revival, cf. Scalapino/Yu, *Modern China*, p. 384.

(38) e.g. by O. Franke, *Ostasiatische Neubildungen*, p. 103; but even Liu Ch'eng-yü, who as a close adherent of Sun Yat-sen was obviously no sympathiser with Yüan, concedes that the throne was not one of Yüan's objects in 1911-12, cf. *Hung-hsien chi-shih-shih*, pp. 59, 62.

(39) For the quotation, cf. C. F. Remer, *The Foreign Trade of China*, p. 110; Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's essay, “Kuo-hui chih tzu-sha” 國會之自殺 cf. *Yin-ping-shih wen-chi chüan* 30, pp. 11-15; interestingly, Liang, too, mentions, and warns against, tendencies to restore the monarchy (p. 14). T. Li, *Woodrow Wilson's China Policy*, p. 145, confirms, “Feeling already had it in Peking (in) 1913 and 1914 that republicanism was not suited to the conditions in China”; also see J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 140;

likewise profited from weak and disrupted parliaments and their nations' inexperience in the concept of popular sovereignty.

A number of authors (e. g. Pai Chiao, Reinsch, W. W. Yen, F. Houn, Jerome Ch'en, E. P. Young, etc.) in an attempt to be fair on Yüan, claim that at least some of the responsibility for his deviations from the path of republicanism rests with those "sycophants" surrounding him, of whom his own son K'o-ting was doubtlessly one, <sup>(40)</sup> a man who would not even stop at informing against his own brother when his plans were crossed. We learn that around the time when the *Ch'ou-an hui* (the committee to prepare Yüan Shih-k'ai's installation as emperor) was to be officially established in August, 1915, Yüan K'o-wen, Yüan Shih-k'ai's second son who was known to be opposed to the monarchical scheme, composed some poetry in the *ch'i* style, imploring in elegiac lines an unnamed addressee not to aim too high as there was "an ill wind blowing over that highest peak". <sup>(41)</sup> K'o-ting, who had had him observed, snatched his brother's verses and showed them to their father, which led to K'o-wen's quasi house-arrest while the number of his visitors was limited. <sup>(42)</sup> If this anecdote is true, it does not only reveal how far K'o-ting would go to satisfy his desires but also to which degree Yüan Shih-k'ai already backed the scheme, in spite of his constant disclaimers.

The *Ch'ou-an hui* seems to have been mostly Yüan K'o-ting's work, although in his typical fashion he would not come to the fore but use a figure-head, the presidential adviser Yang Tu, as its ostensible initiator. Ever since 1911, often under cover of secrecy and/or an assumed name, he had been busy trying to win sympathies for the monarchical scheme. In February, 1914, he had invited the (then still) minister of justice Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Yang Tu for dinner to "discuss" the merits of monarchism versus republicanism, and gained Yang's co-operation. Liang, however, in spite of his earlier monarchical leanings, was alarmed by those vulgar machinations. Also, he

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(40) In fact, F. W. Houn concedes that "the effort to get Yüan Shih-k'ai formally crowned undoubtedly resulted from the fact that a desire for a monarchy was still lingering in the hearts of some Chinese leaders...", *Central Government of China*, p. 109; see also note 20, above; E. P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 222, plainly names Yüan K'o-ting and Yang Tu as "the initiators of the Movement before Yüan Shih-k'ai made it his own".

(41) Liu Ch'eng-yü, *Hung-hsien chi-shih-shih*, p. 11.

(42) *Ibid.*, p. 13; for the contradictory situation in 1914-15, see also J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, pp. 164-5.

felt that public opinion had changed and would no longer welcome a retrogression to the old system, particularly after Yüan Shih-k'ai had so clearly let the nation know what he thought of constitutionalism. Soon after, Liang resigned from the "celebrity cabinet".<sup>(43)</sup> The journey to Berlin had been an earlier attempt to secure support in high places, but as in the case of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Yüan K'o-ting had overreached himself, as we shall see. That he was indeed behind the scheme was eventually admitted even by Yüan Shih-k'ai himself who, in an article in *Shen-pao* of 9 September, 1914, is quoted as saying that "some say" K'o-ting wanted him to be emperor, but he was not so inclined. Was he perhaps still wavering? The reasons he gives for his unwillingness make one wonder: "Already I have obtained the highest position, the only difference being that a presidency cannot be passed on to one's sons. However, K'o-ting is in ill health; K'o-wen, a man of letters, is indifferent to politics; (K'o-liang is not suitable for statesmanship); while my other sons are still too young..."<sup>(44)</sup> In the light of the changes of the presidential election law Yüan had administered—changes that rendered the passing-on of the presidency to one of his sons quite feasible—the argument can only be seen as blatantly hypocritical.

The formation of the *Ch'ou-an hui* was thoroughly interwoven with hypocrisy and trickiness. Obviously, the Yüans did not quite dare to carry through their dynastic plans without some momentous foreign support. Since the Kaiser had not been available, some other prestigious advocate had to be found. The chosen victim was a harmless, if somewhat naive, American university professor, Yüan Shih-k'ai's constitutional adviser Frank J. Goodnow. The role his 1915 memorandum played for the establishment of the *Ch'ou-an hui* is common knowledge; the reason why "such an eminent scholar" should have lent himself to such a dubitable cause has remained enigmatical. It is true that he was intimately acquainted with Yüan K'o-ting who was at some time even acting as the professor's travelling companion, and such closeness might have made him "a known quantity to the monarchists"—but did that

(43) Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *Yin-ping-shih wen-chi*, chüan 33, pp. 22, 85-91 et passim; Liu Ch'eng-yü, *Hung-hsien chi-shih-shih*, p. 59; P. Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, pp. 129-30; J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 164. (P. Huang dates the dinner, December, 1914; I follow J. Ch'en, who places the event prior to Liang's resignation.)

(44) Quoted from Pai Chiao, *Yüan Shih-k'ai yü Chung-hua ming-kuo*, p. 165.

compel Goodnow to “prostitute” his scholarship?<sup>(45)</sup> As pointed out before, one must remember the venerable age of the institution of an emperor in China and the fact that many eminent Chinese thinkers themselves thought a gradual transition through a constitutional monarchy towards republicanism more suitable for their country than the revolutionary option. I tend to accept Reinsch’s version (with a grain of salt, since the American minister would of course defend his own fellow countryman), namely that Goodnow was used by Liang Shih-i and his clique who jumped on the bandwagon of monarchism as their own power was waning. Goodnow was made to believe that his memorandum was meant for Yüan Shih-k’ai’s eyes only as a point of information on political theory, and the scholar *did* refrain from pronouncing a judgment on “the expediency of an actual return... to the monarchy...” In addition, the role of foreign advisers in China had been so generally ornamental that he could not suspect “that in his case his memorandum would be made the starting point of positive action”.<sup>(46)</sup> But that is certainly what happened, since Goodnow’s voice as “a citizen of a republic, and an outstanding political scientist lent an aura of objectivity and respectability to (the monarchical movement)”.<sup>(47)</sup> Not only vis-à-vis the foreign powers, such an aura was sought by the Yüans and their helpers. As opposition grew at home, they had to engage some Chinese celebrities as well. True, Liu Shih-p’ei had volunteered to join the *Ch’ou-an hui*, and for the sake of appearances there were also three Kuomintang members in it; but Yen Fu, another “founding member”, had been tricked into membership by a fait accompli. On 19 August, 1915, the *Ch’ou-an hui* was established. Liang Ch’i-ch’ao

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(45) E.P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k’ai*, p. 221.

(46) J. Ch’en, *Yuan Shih-k’ai*, pp. 167-68; P.S. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, pp. 172-73. F.W. Houn, *Central Government of China*, p. 110, claims that it was Chou Tzu-ch’i who persuaded Goodnow but sustains the version that the professor was used by Yüan; “However, (Yüan) still kept carefully in the background, always posing as the defender of the Republic.” For the impression by foreign advisers of playing a “decorative” role, cf. P.S. Reinsch, p. 47, where he blames the “bland self-sufficiency” of Yüan and his government for this; also, see GFMA, China 5: *Militärbericht* 12, German Legation, Peking, 6 Nov., 1913, p. 2, stating that the German military advisers during that summer had little else to do but to draft some purely theoretical plans which would then “lead a rather contemplative existence in some filing cabinet.”

(47) J. Ch’en, *Yuan Shih-k’ai*, p. 168; for the establishment of the *Ch’ou-an hui*, see also I.C.Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 569; Pai Chiao, *Yüan Shih-k’ai yü Chung-hua ming-kuo*, pp. 188-89.

wrote an article, sarcastically headed "How Strange Is the So-called Problem of the Form of the National Polity!",<sup>(48)</sup> in which he refuted the arguments in favour of a restoration. Yüan Shih-k'ai offered him 200,000 yüan for withholding publication—in vain. Then, Yüan tried to bribe Yen Fu (by means of 40,000 yüan) to write a refutation of Liang's essay, but met with another refusal.<sup>(49)</sup> Obviously, he was about to overstep his zenith. But the chain of events that began with rebellion in Yünnan and ended by sealing Yüan's fate are beyond the scope of this paper.

#### IV. YÜAN SHIH-K'AI AND THE FOREIGN POWERS

Although it was claimed as early as 1903 that one of Yüan's ambitions would be to ultimately free China from foreign control and that, in spite of the seeming hopelessness of the task, he should find the Powers' conflicting attitudes towards the "China Question" his effective ally,<sup>(50)</sup> he obviously enjoyed their confidence. He tried to apply the art of *I-i chih-i* ("contain the barbarians by means of the barbarians"). He had endeared them by safeguarding foreign nationals and their property<sup>(51)</sup> both during the Boxer rebellion and the 1911 revolution. He was generally regarded by the foreign governments as the man to maintain law and order in China, whether under the old system or under a republic, thus protecting their profitable "interests" in that country. The Germans with their traditionally conservative bias favoured the Manchus and continued their arms trade with the dynasty even after January, 1912;<sup>(52)</sup> but even the republics of France and the USA warned against a destruction of the Ch'ing dynasty. The general attitude of the Powers was pragmatic: Rather the Manchus who maintained order in the interior (i. e. "the guarantee for the preservation of this valuable market" as Komura put it) than revolutionaries who destroyed it and would administer all sorts of reforms! But if the fall of the dynasty really was inevitable, a republic that established a new and more solid order was to be preferred<sup>(53)</sup>

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(48) "I tsai suo-wei kuo-t'i wen-t'i che", cf. P. Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, pp. 130 and 190, note 55.

(49) P. Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, p. 130; J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 172.

(50) O. Franke, *Ostasiatische Neubildungen*, p. 102.

(51) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 140.

(52) W. Stingl, *Der Ferne Osten*, p. 673; Chen Chi, *Beziehungen*, p. 43.

(53) W. Stingl, *Der Ferne Osten*, p. 664.

and Yüan seemed to be that sort of personality while Sun Yat-san did not.

Understandably, the revolutionaries were not pleased at German arms sales to the Manchus, nor about Germany's continued support of Yüan, and developed an anti-German attitude. The Japanese who had long been wary of the influence of German military advisers and the flourishing arms trade made use of this mood and launched an anti-German press campaign.<sup>(54)</sup> Japanese public opinion hailed the Chinese revolution, and for a while Tokyo supported it. Of course, both Russia and Japan had already actually invaded Chinese territory and hoped to profit from inner turmoil in this respect.<sup>(55)</sup> In addition, Sun Yat-sen seemed "personally interested in good relations with Japan",<sup>(56)</sup> while Yüan Shih-k'ai was known to harbour feelings of "japonophobia". It seemed natural for Tokyo to go along with Sun. However, at the core of the matter lay one of Yüan's tricks. In the summer of 1911, apparently still eager to save the Manchus, Yüan had managed to convince the Japanese minister to China Ijuin that the system was in no danger. Upon Ijuin's reports, Tokyo abstained from its plans to annex Manchuria and decided to support Yüan in his alleged effort to save the dynasty. But Yüan was already steering for the republican presidency. When Britain, then allied with Japan, also let Tokyo down by refusing any foreign intervention in China (not so much for China's sake as for fear of Japan's competition in the Yangtze valley), Tokyo changed ends and backed the revolution.<sup>(57)</sup>

Yüan Shih-k'ai's star was rising, and Japan once again turned with the tide. While the Powers were undecided as to a recognition of the new republican government (only America urged an early recognition),<sup>(58)</sup> Japan demanded a "concerted action" by all of them to safeguard "the rights and interests of the Powers in China" and prevent one-sided action by any one of them.<sup>(59)</sup> By April 1913, when the "celebrity cabinet" was set up, the Powers

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(54) *Ibid.*, p. 675; for the fierce competition between Japan and Germany to dominate (military) influence in China by placing advisers, training officers at their own institutions, etc., also see GFMA, China 5: *Militärbericht* 12, German Legation, Peking, 6 Nov., 1913; *ibid.*: Dispatch, German Consulate, Mukden, 31 July, 1914.

(55) P. S. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, p. 191.

(56) Scalapino/Yu, *Modern China*, p. 378.

(57) W. Stingl, *Der Ferne Osten*, pp. 675-76.

(58) R. W. Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pp. 30-32; T. Li, *Woodrow Wilson's China Policy*, p. 140.

(59) Cf. Chen Chi, *Beziehungen*, p. 46.

were practically united in backing Yüan, and accepted Japan's demand. They would recognize the Chinese Republic on the condition of Yüan's presidency. Also, in spite of the opposition offered by the revolutionaries then still sharing the government, Yüan was granted the Five-Power Consortium loan that would lead to the events known as the "Second Revolution". Within the scope of this paper, the above outlines of the complex foreign constellation in China at the time must suffice.

As for Germany, she maintained a strong preference for Yüan who in turn favoured German militarism, as mentioned before. The Germans held that what China needed most to curb Japan's further penetration (as well as giving Germany the hoped-for arms trade monopoly) was to strengthen her military.<sup>(60)</sup> These were of course exactly Yüan's sentiments. Local factors added to the Germans' popularity with Yüan. Thus in the years before 1911 when the Revolution worked underground often searching the shelter of foreign concessions, it found a haven in Hong-Kong (at least at first) and Shanghai, but in the German leasehold of Chiao-chou political propaganda was strictly forbidden. Also, military officers trained in Germany were known to be conservative, utterly loyal and obedient (in short: men after Yüan's own heart) while those returning from France would show liberalistic leanings.<sup>(61)</sup>

In 1912, Germany hoped to place a number of chief advisers in Yüan's administration, but the project failed because of the opposition of Japan and the Japanese-backed anti-German revolutionary faction in the government. Sun Yat-sen openly blamed the Germans for their support of the Manchus (tacitly adding their bias in favour of Yüan, no doubt). Still, with the growing consolidation of Yüan's regime, Germany

would not think any longer of leaving China's future to the Japanese and their Chinese allies while abandoning her own economic interests, although this meant that her political relations with Japan kept worsening. While the Japanese armed the KMT even before the "Second Revolution" with 200,000 rifles and 72 guns, the *Auswärtiges Amt* (Foreign office)... in mid-1913 let it be known to German firms that (war materials were only to be sold to Yüan's Peking government and) a support of the

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(60) U. Ratenhof, *Chinapolitik*, pp. 223-24.

(61) GFMA: *Militärbericht* 12, p. 22.

South was considered undesirable. <sup>(62)</sup>

Apart from political considerations in Berlin, Yüan's plan to establish a central arsenal (to be taken up again by the KMT government in the 1930s) made his regime attractive to state-backed German munitions factories.

Japan accused Germany of a breach of neutrality (as in 1911) which Berlin refuted "sharply". Although the suppression of the Revolution by Yüan Shih-k'ai was not only desired but supported by the German government, Berlin was eager to avoid the open appearance of partiality "lest, apart from Japan, the other Powers should feel provoked as well." <sup>(63)</sup>

The Kaiser took a personal interest in the events. Reports from his legation at Peking on German support for Yüan Shih-k'ai caused him to scribble gleeful remarks on the margin. <sup>(64)</sup> Yen Hui-ch'ing, then Chinese minister to Germany, recalls an encounter with Wilhelm II at the Royal Opera in Berlin in 1913:

It was soon after the commencement of the Second Revolution... and a Sino-German incident had happened on the Yangtze River, when a German gunboat fired on one of our forts, occupied by revolutionary soldiers. To extenuate that highly improper act the Kaiser endeavored to explain by saying that it had been committed as a sign of support of President Yüan Shih-k'ai. <sup>(65)</sup>

How thoroughly Japan (reputedly "following the German example") had gone over to Yüan by the time the Revolution was defeated is demonstrated by a change of her ministers to Peking in July, 1913, followed by arms sales to Yüan's government. <sup>(66)</sup>

Yüan was duly elected permanent president of the Chinese Republic on 6 October, 1913, and international recognition followed swiftly. On the 7

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(62) U. Ratenhof, *Chinapolitik*, pp. 240, 247; see also GFMA, China 5: Letter Carlowitz & Co, Peking (Krupp's agents), 31 July, 1913, to AA on plans for an "Arms Consortium".

(63) U. Ratenhof, *Chinapolitik*, p. 241.

(64) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, p. 134.

(65) W.W. Yen, *Kaleidoscope*, p. 91.

(66) U. Ratenhof, *Chinapolitik*, p. 241; I challenge this author's view that Japan "followed" Germany. Rather, she pursued her own interests which ultimately surfaced in the "Twenty-one Demands". Also see GFMA, China 5: *Militärbericht* 30, 17 July, 1913; and 49, 16 Dec., 1913, Mil. Attaché v. Falkenhausen, German Legation, Tokyo.



October, the Chinese legation at Berlin in a verbal note informed the Auswärtiges Amt of Yüan's election; on the following day, the AA returned a verbal note to the Chinese legation, recognizing the Republic under President Yüan. In Peking, Yüan had received a congratulatory note by the German minister to China; on the 7 October, the President cabled his gratitude directly to the Kaiser; on the 9 October, after having consulted his Auswärtiges Amt who advised him to telegraph back his congratulations as the British King was said to have done so already, Wilhelm cabled his own best wishes to Yüan Shih-k'ai, expressing his satisfaction at a continuation of "our two countries' friendly relations".<sup>(67)</sup>

With regard to Yüan's monarchical aspirations, the Powers were again mainly concerned with the preservation of law and order, but generally took a favourable view. The Americans wished to protect China's independence against Japan, and although the "Mother of Republics" could not have been too enthusiastic about the development, she complied.<sup>(68)</sup> Germany was, as we have seen, an emphatic supporter. Only the Japanese found it difficult again to make up their minds. Although they seem to have been on the side of the monarchists when the movement emerged in August, 1915, they suddenly surprised the Powers by inviting them to "join in advising the Chinese President against continuing this policy"; the USA declined on the grounds of the non-interference principle, but on 29 October, 1915, the Japanese chargé d'affaires together with the British, French, and Russian ministers called on the *Wai-wu-pu* to deliver their "friendly counsel".<sup>(69)</sup> Of course, the rest is common knowledge: In yet another about-face Tokyo finally bartered away their acceptance of Yüan's *Hung-hsien* reign in exchange for moderations of their notorious "Twenty-one Demands". Yüan had hesitated too long. Now, any option (except his complete withdrawal from politics) was bound to lead to popular unrest. As the German chargé d'affaires at Stockholm cabled to the Auswärtiges Amt in November, 1914 and February, 1915,<sup>(70)</sup> the Japanese had only to gain from Yüan's dilemma: reportedly, Tokyo had plans ready for each possible event.

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(67) For the diplomatic documents mentioned, see GFMA, China 9, 2.

(68) R. W. Curry, *W. Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pp. 151-52; T. Li, *W. Wilson's China Policy*, pp. 151-54.

(69) P. S. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, p. 178.

(70) GFMA, China 5.

## V. YÜAN K'O-TING IN BERLIN

The President's son chose an unorthodox way to prepare his projected journey to Germany in the autumn of 1913. Instead of making his arrangements through the Chinese legation at Berlin, he approached a personal acquaintance, Heinrich Cordes. An old China hand who had been wounded by the Boxers in the attack on 14 June, 1900, at which Baron Ketteler was killed, Cordes served now as director to the Peking branch of the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank (D. A. B.). In early September, 1913, Yüan K'o-ting called on Cordes and told him about his wish to go to Germany. For his choice of Berlin as his domicile he gave the following reasons: Firstly, he hoped for treatment of his skull injury, relying on the high reputation of German physicians—the choice of an excellent specialist, who might be easiest found in the German capital, was crucial because he would have to undergo head surgery; Secondly, “his father was of the opinion that Sino-German interests were quite close, and deemed it advisable to establish, in an inconspicuous way, intimate contacts with leading German circles through himself”; Thirdly, he hoped to improve his German and to study German institutions. Particularly for the second reason he wished to remain absolutely incognito which was why he would travel under the name of one of his father's secretaries, Tung Yüan-chun.<sup>(71)</sup> For the same reason he did not plan to contact the Chinese legation but hoped for the assistance of the D. A. B. in the necessary arrangements such as renting a furnished house in healthy environs yet within easy distance of the centre of Berlin. He would be travelling by train via Siberia in the company of his wife, his physician Dr Huang, an amah and two servants.<sup>(72)</sup> We do not know whether he told Cordes that a seventh person would be included in his entourage, Cheng Ching-shih, a civil officer in his father's cabinet;<sup>(73)</sup> Cordes certainly never mentions this in his subsequent correspondence to Berlin.

After this conversation (the exact date of which Cordes does not disclose)

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- (71) I was not able to trace this person and therefore render the transcription of his name as it appears in GFMA.
- (72) GFMA: Letter H. Cordes to D. A. B. of 19 Spet., 1913 (“Geheim!”). If not indicated otherwise, the diplomatic documents quoted hereafter are all in the Cina 9, 2 file.
- (73) GFMA: Letter Rehders to Cordes, 25 Nov., 1913 (“streng vertraulich”); again, transcription is that of the document.

and some further telegraphic communication between him and Yüan K'o-ting, Cordes wrote to the Board of Directors of the D. A. B. at Berlin, asking them to rent a furnished villa at Wannsee, a quiet middle-class suburb, but guard the tenant's true identity. As a personal aide to Yüan during his stay in Berlin, Cordes recommends the retired Colonel Riese who knew Yüan Shih-k'ai during his military service at Tientsin. "He has a great preference for China and is an unselfish, independent man", Cordes tells the D. A. B., pointing out, "If ever possible, it must be avoided that the younger Yüan is approached by petitioners; he is very touchy." Four days later, Cordes wrote a long letter to Riese, <sup>(74)</sup> reminding him in cordial tones of his long-standing friendship with the Yüan family and asking him to look after K'o-ting's personal needs in Berlin; with regard to the younger Yüan's injuries, he quotes a detailed anamnesis derived from Dr Huang for the benefit of Col. Riese's brother, the medical professor Dr Heinrich Riese, who, Cordes hopes, will be of help in finding the best specialist available which, "in view of the younger Yüan's close relationship with his father, (is) of national significance". Cordes adds, "According to his tastes, the younger Yüan does not wish for any great display. He only hopes to recover his health and engage in some sensible studies." Again, he points out the highly sensitive temper of his charge, urging Riese to keep "certain (German) patriots" out of Yüan K'o-ting's way. Finally, he reminds Riese, too, of the importance of secrecy, although "Liang Tun-yen whom you know, as well as our bank, are in the picture. Please keep in contact with them."

Liang Tun-yen, educated in the USA under the China Educational Mission, had been a special envoy to Germany in 1910<sup>(75)</sup> and Foreign Minister in the so-called "Clan Cabinet" which the Ch'ing convened in April 1911. He had "always been an imperialist" (i. e. monarchist) and was to support Yüan Shih-k'ai's dynastic plans.<sup>(76)</sup> In the summer of 1913, he went to Berlin on a long private holiday, where he bought himself a "handsome villa at Wannsee (sic!) and a large motorboat. He went to Germany entirely on a pleasure trip and, in fact, avoided official contacts."<sup>(77)</sup> We shall presently meet him

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(74) GFMA: Letter Cordes to Riese, 23 Sept., 1913.

(75) W. Stingl, *Der Ferne Osten*, p. 671.

(76) J. Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, pp. 82, 275.

(77) W. W. Yen, *Kaleidoscope*, pp. 98-99; Yen also notes that Liang was "not particularly enthusiastic about the republican form of government for China".

again.

As a matter of course, Cordes confidentially informed the German minister v. Seckendorff at Peking about the matter. The diplomat for his part dispatched copies of Cordes' correspondence to Reichskanzler (chancellor) Bethmann Hollweg,<sup>(78)</sup> adding in his first dispatch that "it would be desirable to advise the Prussian customs officers at the Russian-German border to make exceptional concessions in handling (Yüan's) luggage without giving away the traveller's identity." Bethmann Hollweg complied with Seckendorff's suggestion and personally contacted the Finance Ministry, noting in an aide-mémoire that no objections existed in those quarters. The Auswärtiges Amt also tried successfully to procure exemptions from state and municipal taxes for resident aliens "as (Yüan) is probably staying for only a brief visit"; but even if he should extend his sojourn, the relevant authorities were asked to oblige. Furthermore, the AA hoped that the local police would spare Yüan the trouble of the customary personal registration procedure "in consideration of his frail health".<sup>(79)</sup> No stationery was spared to "make Yüan K'o-ting's stay as comfortable as possible, since it is of utter political significance", as Under Secretary of State Dr A. Zimmermann put it. However, it would be too tedious to detail all the red-tape behind the scenes.<sup>(80)</sup>

Even before Yüan K'o-ting arrived, a strange bit of contradictory information reached Bethmann Hollweg from Peking. Seckendorff, in his second dispatch (cf. note 78), enclosed another letter ("Secret!") from Cordes to the D. A. B. in Berlin containing Yüan's arrival date and a number of practical instructions; the last sequence of Cordes' letter ran as follows:

Day before yesterday (i. e. on the 21 September, 1913), (Yüan K'o-ting) said to me, "My father does not care very much about Dr Yen (i. e. Yen Hui-ch'ing, then Chinese minister to Germany). We all like Mr Liang Tun-yen much better." I take this to indicate that a

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(78) GFMA: Dispatches Seckendorff to Bethmann Hollweg, 23 and 25 Sept., 1913.

(79) GFMA: AA to Home Office and Finance Ministry, 7 and 14 Oct., 1913 ("Vertraulich!").

(80) GFMA: Seckendorff to Bethmann Hollweg, 13 Oct.; Melchers & Co to Cordes, 4 Oct.; Cordes to Melchers & Co., 7 Oct.; D. A. B. to U. Secr. St. Montgelas, AA, 23, Oct.; Home Office and Finance Ministry to Royal Government, Potsdam, 29 Oct.; also a lengthy correspondence concerning Yüan K'o-ting's luggage quarantined at Hamburg.

change of ministers there is being considered.

Recently, Yüan K'o-ting also mentioned casually and quite naively, "You know, of course, that the definite form of the Chinese government has not yet been finally decided. The republican form has so far proved a failure." I am adding this as it may be useful for you to know.

Seckendorff in his dispatch added the following remarks:

With regard to (Cordes') observations about the minister Dr Yen, I may say that I, too, was recently sounded out confidentially by a gentleman from the closest surroundings of the President on whether Berlin was content with Dr Yen or might be satisfied with his replacement by Yin-ch'ang who would appreciate a change of climate. Upon this, I only replied that I did not know of any reason why the Kaiser's government should consider a replacement of Dr Yen at this moment. However, the fact that the younger Yüan's journey takes place under complete exclusion of the Chinese legation remains remarkable.

Yin-ch'ang, an old comrade-in-arms of Yüan Shih-k'ai, had received his military training in Germany and served as minister to Berlin from 1901-1906; we have met him above as German language tutor to Yüan's sons; he fought the revolutionaries at Wuch'ang,<sup>(81)</sup> and in 1913 his republican sentiments were still considered "dubitable" by the German military attaché at the legation in Peking.<sup>(82)</sup>

As for Yen Hui-ch'ing, the scheme had no effect: He was not to leave Berlin until China entered the First World War on the side of Germany's enemies in 1917. But the fact that he was persona non grata with the Yüans helped explain the exclusion of the Chinese legation by Yüan K'o-ting—such behaviour went rather against the grain of German respect for the *Dienstweg*, the way of doing things correctly and according to regulations.

Meanwhile, Yüan K'o-ting and his travelling party had left Peking on the 30 September and arrived on the "Northern Express" from Moscow at the Berlin Zoologischer Garten ("Zoo") station in the evening of Saturday, the 11

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(81) "Halfheartedly" according to I. C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 558; also Cf. A. W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, p. 952; Boorman/Howard, *Biographical Dictionary*, passim.

(82) GFMA: China 5: *Militärbericht* 12.

October. There was no red carpet, and no band was playing, but Yüan and his entourage were met by D. A. B. director E. Rehders and Col. Riese (and probably a few other inconspicuously dressed gentlemen as everybody was eager to protect Yüan K'o-ting's incognito). Yüan and his wife were in traditional Chinese dress, the young Dr Huang wore a Western suit. According to K'o-ting's wishes, the Party were driven to the villa at once, where the landlord, a Dr Brasch, seems to have been helpful in many ways. <sup>(83)</sup>

With the assistance of Dr Riese, the colonel's brother, Yüan K'o-ting was introduced to some leading medical authorities and given a thorough examination. An x-ray test revealed that surgery would not be necessary, after all. Instead, Yüan was given some "electrical" treatment under the supervision of the celebrated Berlin neurologist Prof. H. Oppenheim. Yet, when Director Rehders met Yüan K'o-ting for a private talk more than a month later, he did not feel that the visitor looked greatly recovered but described him to Cordes as frail and enervated. <sup>(84)</sup>

Apart from his daily visits to the clinic, we learn little about how Yüan spent the October and November at Wannsee. Cheng Ching-shih reportedly called on General Petzel who lived in retirement at Laubegast near Dresden, and Petzel in turn paid a visit to Yüan K'o-ting on the 23 November. On the following day, Yüan told Rehders that Petzel had impressed the Chinese very favourably during his command of the German garrison; he was hoped to return to the Far East and carry out a re-organization of the army Yüan Shih-k'ai was planning. <sup>(85)</sup> Rehders brought this to the notice of the AA where Petzel did not seem to enjoy the same regard. Zimmermann, in a letter to the new German minister to China, v. Haxthausen, utters his doubts in the general's qualification for Yüan Shih-k'ai's assignment but concludes, "Still, if the Chinese want him so badly, let them have him." <sup>(86)</sup>

Yüan K'o-ting had timed his visit rather skillfully. We know that five days prior to his arrival at Berlin, his father had been elected permanent president (which was of course no surprise result); two days later, Germany had (also foreseeably enough) recognized the Chinese Republic and on the day

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(83) GFMA: Rehders to Cordes, 25 Nov., 1913.

(84) *Ibid.*

(85) *Ibid.*

(86) GFMA: Zimmermann to Haxthausen, 26 Nov., 1913.

before the younger Yüan alighted from his compartment at the "Zoo" station, his father had been inaugurated at Peking in a regal ceremony at the *T'ai-ho tien*, the throne hall of the former imperial Winter Palace, with the entire diplomatic corps present. But if the younger Yüan had hoped to be received as a state visitor, he was certainly frustrated. The fact that the Kaiser had disclosed his august concern about Yüan K'o-ting's health<sup>(87)</sup> obviously did not satisfy his ambitions which were turned, we may presume, on a personal audience. In early November, he complained in a private letter to an undisclosed addressee in Peking of official neglect: "The German government have neither eyes nor ears for me, I must be too small for them", indicating his desire to return to China. This letter was brought to Haxthausen's discretion, and the alarmed minister telegraphed the AA at once, suggesting,

to avoid discord, suitable personality contact (Yüan K'o-ting) with offer of some attentions.<sup>(88)</sup>

The telegram was received in Berlin on the 14 November, and it must have been on one of the next days when Zimmermann, now Secretary of State, personally went to Wannsee for a courtesy call on the sulking visitor, taking Yen Hui-ch'ing along, who complied without apparent misgivings. In a letter to Haxthausen, Zimmermann describes how, to his consternation, Yüan ignored the presence of the Chinese minister during the entire visit, and adds the acrid remark, "The young man seems to regard himself as 'crown prince of China'".<sup>(89)</sup> As ever with diplomats, Yen, in his memoirs, prefers not to mention Yüan K'o-ting's flagrant lack of manners, but even this soft-spoken gentleman betrays a tinge of impatience when he recalls:

His object in visiting Germany was not quite clear, though some surmised that it had something to do with the President's monarchical ambitions, his son endeavouring to ascertain European views on the question. As at that time the Republic was not even recognized... (here, Yen's memory fails him), there could be no question of any formal-reception at Court or exchange of visits between the German officials and (Yüan K'o-ting), who was a private citizen anyway.<sup>(90)</sup>

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(87) GFMA: Haxthausen to Bethmann Hollweg, 9 Dec., 1913.

(88) GFMA: Telegram, Haxthausen to AA, 14, Nov., 1913; also: Haxthausen to Zimmermann, 5 Jan., 1914.

(89) GFMA: Zimmermann to Haxthausen, 26 Nov., 1913.

(90) W. W. Yen, *Kaleidoscope*, p. 98.

This corroborates my suggestion that the younger Yüan had set his mind on an audience with the Kaiser to sound him out on Germany's attitude towards his father's plans, or even procure some written statement of approval. After all, Wilhelm had shown his preference of Yüan Shih-k'ai to the revolutionaries obviously enough.

Apart from the enormous "loss of face" a courtesy call from the man he had tried to oust must have meant for him, Yüan K'o-ting might also have been prompted to break off his visit so abruptly by some disconcerting news from Peking. A dispatch by Haxthausen of 14 October<sup>(91)</sup> reported the incidence, "as announced only now", of an assassination attempt against Yüan Shih-k'ai during the inauguration ceremony on the 10 October. The would-be assassin, a Police Major-General Chen Chou-ying, a man who reportedly had served in the police force for seven years and was thought to be absolutely reliable, was found out on the eve of the event by Lu Cheng-hsiang, master of ceremonies, for his suspicious request to be posted near the President during the inauguration and to be allowed to wear civilian clothes. At a search of his home, bombs were found as well as a correspondence with the revolutionaries ("rebel chiefs") Huang Hsing and Ho Hai-ming who had apparently paid him for the task of killing Yüan.

This dispatch was filed at the AA with the incoming mail of 26 October, and there is of course a chance that the intelligence found its way to Yüan K'o-ting within the following days. This would account for his low spirits in early November, for the news showed him that his father's enemies were near at hand and the Revolution was by no means shattered while he, K'o-ting, was getting nowhere in his attempt to win the kind of support of his father's cause he had wishfully been thinking of. Although the coup d'état of 4 November had consolidated Yüan Shih-k'ai's dictatorship—K'o-ting must have known about it for it had certainly been premediated; also, he could have read about it in the German press—the news of the murder attempt was bound to worry him and make him feel he was needed at home. Such sentiments would explain a rather tangled tale he served Rehders on their meeting of 24 November, as Rehders wrote Cordes:

Yesterday, Mr Yüan was exceptionally open and talkative. This was

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(91) GFMA: Dispatch, German legation to AA, 14 Oct., 1913.



the first time I was able to talk to him alone. He said that prior to his departure from Peking he had already received the visit of several generals who were very intimate and friendly with his father; they had tried to persuade him to settle in Nanking and live there as his father's governor—as vice president, so to speak.

As soon as his time would permit after his return to leave Peking again, he would first go to Chang-te to stay at the Honan ancestral estate with his family and await the development of things. After all, it was not far from Nanking. In the meantime, further events might well take place. The Chinese people were not made for a republic. The aforementioned generals had already offered his father to form a new empire, etc. In such an event, he would also have to choose Nanking for his residence in order to serve his father as viceroy and form a bridge between the North and the South.

Quite off-handedly, Yüan K'o-ting then also revealed that T'ang Shao-i had by now openly fallen out of grace with the Yüans, as Rehders recalls:

Yüan K'o-ting further remarked that T'ang Shao-i had badly compromised himself during the recent disturbances. The rebels (meaning the revolutionaries) had held out the prospect of the presidency to him in return for which he had rather openly taken their side...<sup>(92)</sup>

Whatever the reason or reasons—while some German government offices were still producing red-tape about tax exemptions and the like for Yüan K'o-ting, he decided to definitely leave Germany. This time, he chose the correct way to inform the German government of his decision, probably because after Zimmermann's and Yen's visit, he realized that his secret had not been kept from the Chinese legation. As for the scene he must have delivered his father's subjects there when he called on the 17 November to notify them of his intention to return to China, we can only infer from Zimmermann's aide-mémoire for the files of the Auswärtiges Amt, to wit:

Mr Wang, the secretary of the Chinese legation, verbally informed me that Yüan K'o-ting... had decided to travel back to China via Moscow on the 26 instant. The cause for this sudden decision was "homesickness and the circumstance that the young man was not quite

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(92) GFMA: Rehders to Cordes, 25 Nov., 1913.

right in the head".<sup>(93)</sup>

Strong words indeed from a diplomat! But the "crown prince of China" did not stop at offending his own fellow countrymen. In a last affront one cannot help but call childish, he also let the German authorities know what he thought of their lack of subservience: Secretary of State Zimmermann was preparing to see Yüan off at the railway station on the appointed day (a great kindness afforded a "private citizen") when, in the morning of that day, secretary Wang rang him up on the telephone to tell him that Yüan K'o-ting had already left Berlin on the "Northern Express" the previous day, i. e. on the 25 November, 1913. Zimmermann must have felt a bit of a fool and asked Wang to tell minister Yen of his intention to see the Chinese president's son off in a fitting manner.<sup>(94)</sup> In a dispatch to Haxthausen of 26 November, he was unable to conceal his exasperation (cf. note 89).

Zimmermann was by no means the only one perplexed. Yüan K'o-ting had also broken off his medical treatment without further notice, and Germans, particularly in high positions, were unaccustomed to such erratic behaviour. The Kaiser himself was irritated, his sympathies for Yüan Shih-k'ai's "straight-forward and successful policies"<sup>(95)</sup> notwithstanding. The younger Yüan seems to have been too impatient to realize the great personal interest the German monarch was taking in his well-being. All he seems to have thought due to himself was an immediate audience; little did he know that Wilhelm, whom the Germans nicknamed "der Reiseonkel" (the travelling uncle), spent only the brief winter season from January to March in Berlin and was at the time of K'o-ting's visit enjoying the hunting season at Hubertusstock Mansion. But even out there in the forests, Wilhelm had Count Montgelas, head of the Far Eastern Affairs section of the AA, repeatedly report about Yüan's condition. In fact, the Kaiser wished, as soon as Yüan K'o-ting's health would permit, to have him introduced to "leading circles" and pave every way for him, and preparations to this effect were already under way.<sup>(96)</sup> This, in addition to all the other trouble taken for the visitor's sake (never without the remark that Yüan's comfort was of "utmost political significance" because of

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(93) GFMA: Aide mémoire, 17 Nov., 1913.

(94) *Ibid.*

(95) GFMA: Maltzan to Bethmann Hollweg, 11 July, 1914.

(96) *Ibid.*

the close relations between the German Reich and Yüan Shih-k'ai's government) indicates that, given a little patience, Yüan K'o-ting might have reached his object yet. However, this chance was lost.

In a dispatch of 9 December, 1913, Haxthausen notified the AA that Yüan K'o-ting had returned to Peking on the 6 December. He relates that the official reason for his premature departure was given as "homesickness" but indicates his impression that "other reasons" may have been involved. (97)

This time, Yüan Shih-k'ai's favourite son seems to have overstepped his first-born privileges even in the eyes of his all-too lenient father. We learn that, on the 8 December, Yüan K'o-ting's travelling companion Chen Ching-shih called on the German minister to China and, on behalf of the President, submitted "Yüan Shih-k'ai's profound gratitude for Kaiser Wilhelm's august concern about his son's health (which had caused the President to be) highly pleased". (98) This came quite close to an apology, particularly when Chen added that the President hoped it would be made known to "His Majesty."

Eager to smoothen out tensions between the two countries, Haxthausen wrote another, personal, letter to Zimmermann a month later in which he made light of the entire affair, assuring Zimmermann that no ill feelings seemed to remain on the Chinese side, particularly after he had brought word to "the appropriate places" that no pains had been spared by German authorities during K'o-ting's visit. In fact, Haxthausen adds, the younger Yüan was showing his good will by taking regular German lessons while he (Haxthausen) might suggest in order to account for Yüan's conduct in Germany that the young man was just a little spoilt by the excessive attention he customarily enjoyed in China; his abrupt departure certainly had been prompted by his worries about events at home and his wish to return to his father's side. (99)

By way of an epilogue, Yüan K'o-ting made an effort to prepossess the Germans in his favour in the summer of 1914 when he invited the young diplomat A. v. Maltzan to his residence at *Chung-nan hai* (after Baron v. Haxthausen's sudden death, Maltzan was chargé d'affaires with the German legation at Peking). In a dispatch to Bethmann Hollweg, Maltzan describes his visit: After the exchange of civilities, Yüan directed the conversation

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(97) GFMA: Haxthausen to Bethmann Hollweg, 9 Dec., 1913.

(98) *Ibid.*

(99) GFMA: Haxthausen to Zimmermann, 5 Jan., 1914.

towards his trip to Berlin in the previous year, expressing his hope that the Kaiser no longer frowned upon his sudden departure; after all, he (Yüan) had demonstrated in recent months how he loved Germany by taking lessons with Major Dinkelmann and Captain König... Maltzan adds:

The younger Yüan asked me to see to it that his good intentions were made known in Berlin...

Yüan K'o-ting is now studying ancient and contemporary Prussian uniforms. Reportedly, he plans to combine for himself a general's uniform... after the pattern of the Langfuhr Brunswick Hussars. In view of his child-like character so very susceptible to outward attentions he should doubtlessly consider it an exceptionally kind favour if some official German agency presented him with a work on historical German uniforms, containing perspicuous colour-print plates. At the same time, such an official gift should prove conducive to the position of the two German officers in his environment (i. e. Dinkelmann and König) whose task is not always easy with French and Japanese competition going to any length...<sup>(100)</sup>

Once again, Berlin's willingness to please the whims of the "crown prince of China" reflects the political significance attributed to friendly relations between Germany and the Peking regime. Upon receipt of Maltzan's dispatch, the Auswärtiges Amt contacted the German War Minister, enclosing Maltzan's request:

In view of the dictatorial position Yüan Shih-k'ai now holds, it appears to me important to eliminate as thoroughly as possible a slight irritation on the part of his son... who felt too little attended to while in Germany. The suggestion of (our) chargé d'affaires to present him with a... work on German uniforms deserves consideration, and I should be grateful if (you) could send me a copy of such a book... I am willing to defray the expenses...<sup>(101)</sup>

The War Minister complied.<sup>(102)</sup> However, shipment to Peking of the valuable three-volume illustrated folio was not to take place. Instead, the AA returned it to the War Ministry,

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(100) GFMA: Maltzan to Bethmann Hollweg, 11 July, 1914.

(101) GFMA: AA, Montgelas, to Kriegsministerium, 31 July, 1914.

(102) GFMA: Kriegsminister to AA, 11 August, 1914.

since at this moment a safe way to send it to President Yüan Shih-k'ai's son does not seem to exist... subject to a later date... (103)

The "European" War had broken out.

By the time it ended four years later, Yüan Shih-k'ai had been emperor "for a day", fallen, and died, and with his father, Yüan K'o-ting had lost the only greatness he ever possessed; while Germany had lost the War, the Kaiser had abdicated and gone into exile, and the Weimar Republic had been set upon its troubled path. Two chapters of history had been concluded, and whatever the relations between the two governments had been before they collapsed seemed now of little relevance.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The Picture we obtain from the German archives of Yüan K'o-ting's visit to Berlin and his erratic behaviour there raises a number of questions of which I shall tackle only a few for reasons of space. The easiest one to answer appears to be why Yüan K'o-ting should have observed such secrecy when at the same time he claimed to travel on an explicit assignment by his father to seek contact with German "leading circles". Apart from the fact that Yen Hui-ch'ing had fallen out of favour with the Yüans and contacts with the Chinese legation at Berlin were therefore inopportune, such precautions did seem to be called for with regard to the sensitive nature of international competition in China, as I tried to outline above. If the Yüans openly sought German favour and support, this might easily have caused violent equal-rights remprimands from the other Powers, particularly from Japan who had so jealously been watching German activities in China and was making ever more threatening demands; if, however, our "crown prince" was seeking such support in pursuit of the monarchical scheme (as we must assume with Yen Hui-ch'ing) while still naively believing it a secret in 1913, his camouflage appears even more plausible.

Although the attempt to oust Yen Hui-ch'ing seems comparatively insignificant since it did not only fail but lead to Yüan K'o-ting's "loss of face", it is interesting in that it reveals disagreement between Yüan, father and son, about his envisaged successor. Why Yen, a perfectly harmless man who,

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(103) GFMA: AA to Kriegsministerium, 16 September, 1914.

though abroad, remained faithful to the Peking regime throughout the "Second Revolution",<sup>(104)</sup> should have displeased the Yüans is a mystery to me. Did they distrust him because he was the brother-in-law of Sun Pao-ch'i (who had mildly opposed Yüan Shih-k'ai in 1911)?<sup>(105)</sup> Or because he had been affiliated to Wu T'ing-fang (who had embraced the Revolution, retired from office upon Yüan-k'ai's assumption of the presidency in 1912, and been an early warner against the restoration of the monarchy)?<sup>(106)</sup> Or perhaps because he had been too close to T'ang Shao-i who, as we have seen, was another of Yüan's former comrades who had fallen in disgrace? (Yen himself thought T'ang's dismissal a little unreasonable, musing whether Yüan Shih-k'ai might not have been influenced "by the men around him".)<sup>(107)</sup> It may well be that Yüan was simply beginning to develop those symptoms of phobia typical of dictators throughout history (e. g. Stalin, Hitler, Mao).

The story about Yüan K'o-ting's dinner with the Kaiser that served as my point of departure was clearly invented since, as the Goodnow episode illustrates, the younger Yüan would have made maximum capital out of it had it really taken place. Why then should Liu Ch'eng-yü have told it? He was a close affiliate of Sun Yat-sen who, as I have shown, harboured anti-German sentiments at the time. But it does seem far-fetched to presume that Liu gave full rein to his imagination, blackening the Kaiser's name, out of friendship for Sun. Had Yüan K'o-ting in his overly self-confident way bragged about the possibility of such an encounter before he departed for Germany? Had he, for that matter, perhaps corresponded with Yen Hui-ch'ing, demanding of the Chinese minister the arrangement of an audience (which would account for Yen's untypical slip of memory in his recollection of K'o-ting's visit to Berlin)? This would certainly offer yet another explanation for his hostility towards Yen.

One reason why Yüan K'o-ting felt frustrated about Wilhelm's lack of attention has to be seen in a misunderstanding on his side of the real power the German monarch held. The Kaiser was not equipped with anything like

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(104) Boorman/Howard, *Biographical Dictionary* IV, p. 50b.

(105) W.W. Yen, *Kaleidoscope*, p. 60; Boorman/Howard, *Biographical Dictionary* III, pp. 169-170.

(106) Boorman/Howard, *Biographical Dictionary* III, p. 455a.

(107) W.W. Yen, *Kaleidoscope*, p. 80.

Yüan Shih-k'ai's autocratic freedom of action (we have seen how Wilhelm consulted his AA even about a simple congratulatory telegram). Much as he might have wished to invite the Chinese president's son, this was not for him alone to decide while the appropriate agencies might have hesitated in view of Yüan K'o-ting's highly improper omission of the Chinese legation. The younger Yüan could not expect the German government to join in his schemes. In this respect, one harsh opinion seems justified, viz. that K'o-ting was "an individual of whom it has been said that he had absorbed every theory his foreign teachers had taught him without being capable of applying a single one". (108)

There remains a very simple explanation, so simple in fact that it may easily escape notice for its very triteness: the difference, East and West, of social manners. Germans are almost bluntly direct and make their wishes known pointblank. Being somewhat inflexible vis-à-vis behaviour patterns differing from their own, however, they might anticipate the same attitude in others. When Yüan K'o-ting made it known that he did not wish for much display and mainly hoped to recover his health in Germany, this was taken for granted: the wishes of a guest are held sacred. The periphrastic way of saying things, the reserve and discretion of the Chinese are rather alien to most Germans and may even be misunderstood as dishonesty. On the other hand, discretion (or understatement) will be observed by any well-mannered European when doing someone a favour. Thus, all the trouble taken by German authorities over Yüan K'o-ting would not have been blazoned abroad but conducted matter-of-factly behind the scenes. Urging a visitor, showering conspicuous favours on him (customary in China as a demonstration of goodwill and care) is against European etiquette as it is regarded as an encroachment on his privacy and maturity. It is quite possible that Yüan K'o-ting did not know anything about the attention he had been given until he returned to Peking where Haxthausen made it known to the "appropriate places". On the other hand, he might not even have expected some of the arrangements as tax and customs legislations for visiting aliens in China at the time were certainly very different from those in Germany. Thus, while the German authorities, including the Kaiser, only waited for Yüan to say the word—

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(108) B. L. P. Weale, *The Fight for the Republic*, p. 110.

namely that his health had improved and he was ready to pay official visits—he, in his Chinese way, expected that word to come from his hosts.



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