I remember that a famous Westerner once said that when someone writes a book, that book starts to live independently. That statement is certainly true of this book. In late 1944, the Japanese army of aggression was a spent force, like a strong-bow shot at the end of its flight, and the Shanghai economy was languishing in deep depression. Publishers were no longer accepting manuscripts for publication, so I devoted the time I normally spent each month writing for publishers to recording what I had seen and heard in past years. I wrote ten chapters and then was unable to continue. The war ended. I circulated the manuscript among friends and asked someone to make a copy of it. Then I bundled it up and put it on the top shelf. In late 1952, after ‘liberation’, during the ‘campaign to eliminate Trotskyism’, when Trotskyists all over China were ‘rounded up at one fell swoop’, this manuscript together with the copy and the entire Trotskyist archive was inventoried and confiscated as ‘criminal’ evidence. No doubt the official in charge of the case scoured the manuscript for clues about the organisation and its members. After the case was closed, the Shanghai Public Security Bureau cleared out duplicate documents – a dozen or so sack-fulls according to reports – and sent them to the Ministry of Public Security in Beijing. As luck would have it, there were two copies of my memoir, so one was kept in Shanghai, and the other was stuffed into a Beijing-bound sack. My book, like my person, disappeared into captivity: I behind bars, it into the archive of the Public Security organs.

During the ‘Great Cultural Revolution’ of 1966–1969, it was decided – either by Red Guards who stormed the Ministry of Public Security or by the Ministry itself, in the course of sorting out its archives – to consign these sacks to the paper factory for reprocessing, but someone with a conscience secretly carried away two of the sacks and hid them. He took the sacks at random and had no idea what documents they contained.

After the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party [in 1978], the situation changed, and some historians were instructed to carry out research on Chen Duxiu and the Trotskyists. Materials on Chen Duxiu before his expulsion and after his release from prison were easily available, but there were no materials on the Trotskyists or on the Trotskyist Chen Duxiu. Just as they were about to admit defeat, the fore-mentioned man
of conscience remembered the two sacks and the problem was partly solved. The researchers discovered the manuscript of my book of memoirs. At first, they had no way of knowing who had written it, but when they reached the account of the May Thirtieth massacre, they found my name, and knew that the memoir was by me.

They then began to think of publishing the book. I had already been completely restored to liberty, so they sent someone to Shanghai to ask me if I agreed to their plan. At the same time, they mimeographed several copies of the manuscript under the title Zheng Chaolin’s 1945 Memoirs and distributed them as reference material to important organisations concerned with Party history. I have seen only references to this mimeographed edition in articles by experts on Party history, and not the publication itself. I don’t know if it is the complete text, or excerpts from the text, or summaries of it.

The publication of the printed version went less smoothly than that of the mimeographed edition. Agreement to publish was reached in 1980, but only in 1986 did the book actually see the light of day. In the meantime, its fortunes fluctuated with the ever-changing political tide. Before 1983, the question was whether or not to send it to the compositors. In 1983, after the final proofs had been read and the text had been made into a plate, the question was whether or not to send it to the printer, and whether or not to send it to the distributor. Only in 1986 did the book finally appear.

At that point, the book was finally delivered from the fate of ‘humble prisoner’, but it was certainly not yet an ‘honoured guest’: it had merely regained its ‘civil rights’; I, the author, received my payment at the going rate. The book, published as ‘internal reference material’ by the Association to Edit and Publish Materials on Contemporary History,1 was unobtainable in the shops. It was what Chinese readers called a ‘grey book’. Fewer than ten such ‘grey books’ have been published. What unites them is that their contents are valuable as reference sources for students of the history of the Communist Party, though their standpoint is quite dissimilar to that of the Party. Needless to say, the standpoints of the books themselves also differ one from the other.

When, in 1980, the publishers asked me for permission to publish, they also asked me if I would agree to cut the chapter titled ‘Love and Politics’. In my 1945 ‘Preface’ I had already envisaged cutting this chapter, so I said yes. But I still think it’s a pity. In those days, very many of the conflicts and fights among Chinese Communist officials were explicable only in terms of quarrels about love. So without that chapter, they could no longer be explained. Quite apart from this consideration, to cut an entire chapter from a book inevitably creates

1 The Xiandai shiliao biankan she.