Acknowledgments

On a bright June day in 2017, I sat in the Shanghai Municipal Archives on the Bund, immersed in historical documents glowing on a computer screen. The room was still, save for the hum of the air-conditioning, when the iconic melody of "The East Is Red" suddenly echoed outside. The chime, emanating from the nearby Customs House clock – the Chinese Big Ben – rang out every fifteen minutes with deliberate, resonant notes. I looked up and turned to the towering windows. Below, the Huangpu River shimmered under the summer sun, while across the water, Pudong's futuristic skyline rose, its glass towers cutting into the sky. The melody lingered, reverberating through the air, and I felt a parallel universe unfold – a merging of opposites: the extraordinary and the mundane, foreign imperialism and daily life, war and peace, remembering and forgetting. It was as if China's history, with all its triumphs and tribulations, floated on the air with every note. The spell was broken by the footsteps of patrolling staff, pulling me back to reality. I sat quietly, reflecting on humanity's enduring quest for survival and connection and the layers of historical amnesia.

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Looking back, I feel fortunate to have begun this project at a serendipitous time, before the Covid-19 pandemic, the tightening of archival access in China, and the devastating federal funding cuts to American archives and institutions. Now, as the book reaches completion in 2025, the eightieth anniversary of the end of World War II, we find ourselves at another major crossroads in Sino-American relations and world geopolitics, facing an uncertain future.

Seven years have passed since I moved from Kentucky to Hong Kong, where this book came together. As I navigated new personal and intellectual terrain during this journey, the Du, Shi, and Powell families were my most steadfast support, enduring my exhaustion, frustration, and absences with patience and love. To them, I owe my deepest gratitude. Finally, I dedicate this book to Lincoln 長天, with the hope that he will embrace the motto *Semper Fidelis* and strive to make a meaningful difference in writing the next page of our shared history.

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