

CHAPTER X

THE ADVANCE TO ANIUI

THE year 1858 was a turning point in the war. Kiangsi was being steadily conquered and the Hunan armies could soon look forward to an advance on Anking and possibly, if the outposts could be captured, to a resumption of the interrupted siege at Nanking.

Had there not been a shake-up at the Celestial Capital certain defeat would have overtaken the Taiping cause. There was no immediate sign of that defeat; their generals were practically all in the field, scattered with their hosts over Anhui, Kiangsi, and Fukien. Nevertheless their organisation and the quality of leadership in Nanking was deteriorating. Providentially there were a number of able men in subordinate positions, foremost among whom was Li Siu-ch'eng (the Chungwang), one of the men who had joined the Taiping rebellion in Kwangsi as a private, but who through sheer ability rose to the highest position in the state and became its prop at the end. He differed from Yang, the Eastern king, in that he did not share the religious delusions of that leader, depending upon good generalship and hard fighting rather than on divine inspiration. If his autobiography is to be depended on, he was singularly fearless and outspoken. At this time he came to the fore as one of the leaders of the cause.

In the first moon (February 14-March 14) 1858, the

T'ienwang, in one of the rare moments when he could be aroused to consider public affairs, issued a lengthy proclamation, recounting the usurpations of the Manchus and picturing the glorious kingdom about to be consummated if only they would stand firm. He also named seven new *wangs*, apparently just constituted. These were (1) the *Ying-wang* (heroic king), Ch'eng Yu-ch'en, a skillful general who had risen through ability; (2) the *Yu-wang* (the ready king), Hu I-kwang; (3) the *T'san-wang* (the assisting king), Mêng Teh-ên; (4) the *Fu-wang* (the protecting king), Yang Fu-ch'ing; (5) the *Chung-wang* (faithful, or loyal, king), Li Siu-ch'eng; (6) the *Shi-wang* (the attendant king), Li Shi-sien; (7) the *Chang-wang* (the polished king), Lin Shao-chang.¹

All these changes were calculated to give greater hope of Taiping success, but one source of difficulty still remained—the religious fanaticism of the T'ienwang which prevented his taking any clear-headed view of affairs or listening to good advice, leading him to rely instead on his religious formulas and his supposed divine power.²

On April 20, 1858, the theater of war was enlarged when Shi Ta-k'ai entered the province of Chekiang with an army of more than seventy thousand men. He captured a number of district cities near the Kiangsi border.³ This threw that province into the utmost agitation. As something of an offset to this disaster the city of Kiukiang, which had remained in the hands of the enemy for three years, fell on May 19 before the combined as-

¹ *Hatsuzoku Ran Shi*, pp. 48-50. There only the surnames are given, and the full name has been supplied in every case from other sources. The *Chungwang, Autobiography*, gives 1859 as the time of these changes, but the dated document seems more trustworthy.

² *Chungwang, Autobiography*, pp. 62 ff.

³ *Nienp'u*, V, 11b. *Dispatches*, X, 15b, 16a, speaking of later operations, placed the number in the Yiwang's army at 70,000 to 80,000 men. Later dispatches and other references speak of as many as 200,000.

sault of the land and water forces under Yang Tsai-fu, Li Shou-pin, and P'eng Yu-ling. The wall was blown up and they entered through the breach. The slaughter of the enemy was terrible, seventeen thousand of them being put to death in the capture of the city.⁴

The insurgents had expected to march down both banks of the Yangtse to the relief of Nanking, which was being oppressed by the loyal troops, but were prevented by this and other reverses. In particular, the Yingwang, Ch'eng Yu-ch'en, in a raid through Anhui to Hupch, was opposed at Mach'en, in northeastern Hupch, by the combined forces of Sheng Pao, Hu Lin-yi, and others, and compelled to withdraw to Taihu, Anhui. This defeat forced the Chungwang to halt at Ch'uchow. He himself hurried on, but left his men with an officer at that place and they were soon compelled to retire before the imperialists. Thus none of the relieving armies got to Nanking.

In October, 1858, a council of their generals was held at Ts'ungyang, Anhui, where they agreed that the Yingwang and the Chungwang should converge on Ch'uchow. These operations were entirely successful. At Wuyi they met armies sent by Tehsinga and Sheng Pao and defeated them. At Shaotien Chang Kuo-liang was also repulsed and pursued to P'ukow, opposite Nanking, where Tehsinga was stationed. The latter was then attacked and overcome, with a loss of ten thousand men, and the rebels were once more in communication with their capital.⁵

But this defeat of imperial armies did not terrify the government so much as the reports from Chekiang, where Shi Ta-k'ai was running amok. General Ho Chun

⁴ *Nienp'u*, V, 11b.

⁵ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, VII, *passim*; Chungwang, *Autobiography*, pp. 19-22.

was too ill to move with his army from Nanking. An imperial edict received earlier in the year, on July 1, had called Tsêng Kuo-fan from his home to hasten to Chekiang. Many of his abler officers were also ordered to go there from Kiangsi.

On July 5 Tsêng made reply through the governor, Lo Ping-chang, that the number of waterways in Chekiang required the use of boats. These might be secured either through the coöperation of Yang Tsai-fu and P'eng Yu-ling, or by Tsêng's leading forces by land to Ch'angshan, where he would build a flotilla, or boats might be sent from the Yangtse to meet him, going into T'aihu and thence into Chekiang. Hunan promised 20,000 *taels* a month for the support of these forces and the emperor was requested to secure an equal amount from Hupeh, which was promised.⁶

In accordance with the order Tsêng set out on July 17, and on the twenty-second held a conference with the governor and Tso Tsung-tang at Changsha. Orders were sent for some of his forces in Kiangsi to proceed through Fuchow into Chekiang, and he himself started down the river to Wuchang. At that place he met his friend, Hu Lin-yi, and secured his coöperation in supporting his increased army and in making certain of grain supplies. Their conference lasted in all about ten days. On the way down the Yangtse he stopped at a small place named Paho, where he met his brother, Kuo-fah, Li Shou-pin, Li Shou-yi, P'eng Yu-ling, and many other officers of lesser rank, and drew up regulations for his new command. At Kiukiang he stopped to offer worship at the temple erected to the memory of T'a Chi-pu. At Huk'ow a bureau was established for receiving and forwarding supplies, in accordance with the plan offered by Tsêng

⁶ *Nienp'u*, V, 12 f. The pay of a private soldier per day was .14 of a *tael*, and of *coolies*, .10. *Ibid.*, 17a.

some time before, and placed in charge of Li Han-chang, a brother of Li Hung-chang.⁷

Meanwhile, however, it became known that Shi Ta-k'ai, was not taking and holding cities, but simply capturing and leaving them. All through Chekiang and Fukien he wandered. While Tsêng was proceeding from Nanchang towards Chekiang he received a mandate countermanding the earlier ones and ordering him to go into Fukien, which was now more troubled by the rebel chieftain than Chekiang. Hastily altering his plan Tsêng selected Yuan-shan, a district town at the eastern tip of Kiangsi, as his base.⁸

The successful termination of the long siege of Kian during the eighth moon, 1858, where dogged determination had won out, cleared Kiangsi entirely of rebels and brought no little fame to Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan, younger brother of Kuo-fan. He received promotion to the rank of *taot'ai* or intendant.⁹ It made possible his choice for more important commands. Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan was much younger than his famous brother. As a youth he had studied for some time in his brother's home in Peking (during 1841 and 1842) but annoyed Kuo-fan by his lack of application and refusal to mend his ways.¹⁰ He received his first degree in 1845.¹¹ When Tsêng's brother, Kuo-hwang, was sent home from Changsha during the trying days after Tsêng's first defeats, Tsêng, it will be recalled, ordered that none of the brothers should come again to the camp. Kuo-ch'üan had sulked over this order and remained in private life until 1856, when Hwang Mien was appointed prefect of Kian and ordered to go and capture it. Hwang Mien, on meeting Kuo-ch'üan, was so

⁷ *Nienp'u*, V, 14b, 15; *Dispatches*, X, 14-17.

⁸ *Nienp'u*, V, 16; *Dispatches*, X, 20.

⁹ *Nienp'u*, V, 18a.

¹⁰ *Home Letters*, September 5, 1842.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1845.

impressed with his ability that he took him into his employ. The Younger Tsêng then enrolled an army of three thousand men and called his command "The Camp of Good Fortune." So important had he become that he was recalled from mourning for his father in the fifth moon, May 23-June 22, 1857, his army having been driven back from Kian to Anfu by Shi Ta-k'ai. His coming gave his men the courage to withstand an attack by that formidable adversary with nearly one hundred thousand men at Chishui-hsien in the eleventh moon.¹² There he was the victor, and the capture of Kian pointed to him as one of the most promising generals on the government side.

The relief to Kiangsi was but momentary. Ten thousand rebels coming over the border from Shaowu, Fukien, struck terror into the hearts of the people in the prefectures of Fuchow, Kiench'ang, Jaochow, and Kwanghsin.¹³ Tsêng Kuo-fan hastened to Iyang and posted detachments in the surrounding regions, determined that he would not leave Kiangsi while this danger threatened. A glance at the map makes apparent the importance of this decision. From Nanchang, the capital of the province, one can proceed as along the ribs of an open fan,—north to the Poyang Lake and the Yangtse at Huk'ow, northeast through Jaochow to Nanking and the coast, almost directly east through Kwanghsin into Chekiang, southeast through Fuchow and Kiench'ang into Fukien, and south through Kian and Kanchow into Kwangtung. To the west lie the provinces of Hunan and Hupeh, reached by several roads, from which came most of the supplies of men, money, and grain for the new-model armies. Sound strategy could not permit the abandonment of this vital region to the possibility of invasion, especially in view of the fact that the invading soldiers

¹² *Ta Shih Chi* (Record of the Chief Events), II, 2a.

¹³ *Nienp'u*, V, 18; *Dispatches*, X, 21-23.

were from Shi Ta-k'ai's army and he himself with his main host might be just behind.

Tsêng's command now numbered about twelve thousand men, exclusive of his brother's force. By the middle of November he was able to move on to his headquarters at Kiench'ang and settle there. Incessant rains, however, prevented his sending forces over the mountain roads into Fukien, and a pestilence that broke out in the camp caused a loss of about a thousand men. Reinforcements, however, came from his brother and from Li Han-chang, which brought his strength back to the original point. Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan moved to the border of Hunan to guard his native province, and the number that actually reached Fukien was very small.¹⁴

The center of war now shifted to Anhui, where the rebels gained a noteworthy victory. The imperialists, under Li Shou-pin, had made rapid progress, capturing in succession Hwangmei, Susung, T'aihu, Kienshan, Ship'ai, T'ungh'en, and Shuch'en, and laying siege to Sanho, where Tsêng's brother Kuo-fah had joined them. But, as has already been narrated, the rebels had succeeded in driving away the imperialists from about Nanking, and were ready to push them out of western Anhui. The Yingwang was attacked by the combined Hunan forces on November 16 with every prospect of success. But just before defeat overtook the rebels, the Chungwang appeared and inflicted on the Hunanese a crushing blow which shattered them utterly. Six thousand of the best Hunan soldiers fell, Tsêng Kuo-fah being among the killed, and the commander, Li Shou-pin, committed suicide in order not to outlive the disgrace. The surviving members of the defeated army and the regulars under Tuhsinga, who had been carrying on the siege of Anking,

¹⁴ *Nienp'u*, V, 19 f.; *Dispatches*, X, 37-40.

alike fled into Hupeh. The defence of T'ungch'en was only perfunctory. The *débâcle* at Sanho and the consequent loss of morale greatly perturbed the Hupeh-Anhui borders.¹⁵

The Taipings followed up their victory by pouring into Kiangsi, appearing in such numbers before Kingtechen that the provincial authorities were wholly unable to cope with them.¹⁶ Detachments of them also appeared in the south of that province. The governor of Hunan, Lo Ping-chang, fearing a revival of rebel activities in Hupeh from the direction of Anhui and possibly later in his own province, asked the imperial authorities to concentrate on the province of Anhui by sending Tsêng Kuo-fan there. Thus the effects of the disaster at Sanho might, to some extent, be neutralised.

Tsêng replied to the mandate that reached him by pointing out the strategic value of Wuyuan and Kingtechen, possession of which enabled the rebels freely to make raids on the four prefectures of Jaochow and Kwanghsin in Kiangsi, Huichow in southern Anhui, and Ch'iehchow in Chekiang. Three regions offered difficulties unless steps were taken to guard them. One of these was Kingtechen, possession of which was essential to keep the Poyang region and Huk'ow under control. Another, most important of all, was north of Lake Ch'iao, in the region of Lüchow and Fêngyang and the Hwai River, where the Taipings and Nien-fei might come together. A third strategic region was south of Lake Ch'iao, where the rebels held several important points. Since Tsêng could not divide his forces it appeared to him best to have thirty

¹⁵ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, pp. 22 ff.; *Nienp'u*, V, 20; *Hatsuzoku Ran Shi*, pp. 55 f. The latter gives the number of rebels as 180,000. *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch* says that the imperialists numbered about one-twentieth the total of the Taipings.

¹⁶ *Nienp'u*, V, 21b; *Dispatches*, X, 32 ff.

thousand men placed in Anhui, north of the river, under Tuhsinga, Li Shou-i, and Pao Ch'ao; twenty thousand under his command south of the river, and ten thousand, led by Yang Tsai-fu and P'eng Yu-ling.¹⁷ Tsêng thought that he could thus hold northern Kiangsi, leaving the governor to care for the southern portion, then fairly free from the rebels. He further advised the emperor that about three thousand Mongolian cavalry would be necessary in northern Anhui in order to cope with the Nien-fei.

With Kingtechen as the first objective under the new plan, Chang Yun-lan had already been recalled from Fukien and had gone forward during January, 1859. The imperialists were successful in a few skirmishes, but were not sufficient in numbers to take the city, and were therefore forced to wait for the coming of the P'ingkiang 'braves.'¹⁸ The last of Shi Ta-k'ai's army in southern Kiangsi was driven out by the efforts of Hsiao Ch'ikiang, who defeated the invaders at Nank'ang-hsien and Nanan in February and March. They went over into Hunan, however, thus making it necessary for the governor to recall Hsiao and his men to defend the province.¹⁹

Tsêng moved his headquarters, now that the campaign into Fukien was definitely abandoned, to Fuchow, and sent to Hunan for additional recruits, which to the number of four thousand arrived in May, followed a little later by Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan. This general then led all the available men, about 5,800, to Kingtechen. He was accompanied by Li Hung-chang. The arrival of this contingent gave the imperialists strength enough to capture the

¹⁷ Memorial, February 13, 1859; *Dispatches*, X, 41-44.

¹⁸ *Nienp'u*, V, 22b, VI 2b; *Dispatches*, X, 61-64.

¹⁹ *Nienp'u*, VI, 3; *Dispatches*, X, 57-60, 69-71.

city, but only after hard fighting. It fell on July 13, 1859, and the rebels retired to Anhui.²⁰

The presence of Shi Ta-k'ai in Hunan, where he had gone through several districts and captured Yungchow-fu on April 11, thence proceeding to lay siege to Paok'ing, threw the province into great consternation. The officials feared that Changsha itself might be attacked before long, and with the help of the gentry began to put it into a state to withstand a siege. Rumor credited the enemy chieftain with several hundred thousand followers and asserted that his encampment stretched out for thirty miles.²¹ From places as far distant as the Hupeh-Anhui border and from Kiangsi Hunanese were hurriedly summoned to Paok'ing; regulars, 'braves,' and country volunteers all joined the ranks.²² As a climax to several battles on successive days, this improvised army joined the besieged from within the city in a concerted attack on the former rebel king and defeated him, July 26. After some hesitation as to the direction he would take, Shi Ta-k'ai withdrew into Kwangsi.²³

These alarms in Hunan did not leave Tsêng's army unaffected. Many of his men were from the very region where Shi had been operating, or from near-by places, and they naturally desired to go home. Applications for leave were so numerous that strenuous measures had to

²⁰ *Dispatches*, XI, 1, 2.

²¹ *Hatsuzoku Ran Shi*, p. 59; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, VIII, 11b.

²² *Nienp'u*, VI, 4b; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, VIII, 6 ff. The estimate is made that 30,000 men there met 300,000, but one feels sceptical on that point.

²³ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, VIII, 11-13, 15, 17b, 18; *Hatsuzoku Ran Shi*, p. 60. The people of this place preserve a story (characteristic of many such stories) that during the siege the apparition of a giant who sat on the wall and washed his feet in the river was instrumental in frightening the rebels and making them withdraw. That apparition was Chang Fei, a blood brother of Kwangti, god of war. A temple was erected in his honor and is there today.

be taken to prevent the Siang army from melting away completely. Equally disturbed were the officials of the province, who feared that their resourceful adversary would retreat into Ssuch'uan as he threatened to do, and there carve out an empire for himself, detaching it from the rest of China. With the Nien rebels north of them and the Taipings in the provinces to the east they feared that the Hukwang viceroyalty would be hemmed in if Shi Ta-k'ai should take Ssuch'uan. Kwan Wen, the viceroy, therefore memorialised the emperor to send Tsêng up to K'weichow-fu, just beyond the gorges, to prevent their entering Ssuch'uan.²⁴

When the mandate ordering Tsêng to proceed to Ssuch'uan reached him, it did not appeal to him as a reasonable proposition. He replied that a great and rich province like Ssuch'uan ought to be able to raise its own forces and defend its own boundaries, also calling attention to the small following at his disposal. Mandate after mandate came, however, four of them in succession, which made it necessary for something to be done. Tsêng therefore obeyed the suggestion of these repeated orders to the extent of consulting with Kwan Wen and Hu Lin-yi, going to Hupeh for this purpose, but without moving his men away from Kiangsi.²⁵

While he was on his way to Wuchang (having stopped at Hwangehow to consult with Hu Lin-yi), he received another mandate countermanding the instruction to go to Ssuch'uan. Nevertheless, he held his consultation with the viceroy and they came to the conclusion that Shi Ta-k'ai was not apt to go from Kweichow direct to Ssuch'uan, because of the difficulty of supporting so large a force in the mountains and of the great distance

²⁴ *Nienp'u*, VI, 6b.

²⁵ Mandates received July 28, July 31, August 2, and August 10. *Dispatches*, XI, 16-19.

between him and the rest of the 'Taiping rebels.²⁶ In case they should be mistaken and Shi Ta-k'ai did attempt the mountain passes into Ssuch'uan, the danger was not as imminent as that which threatened the imperialists in Anhui, where conditions from their standpoint could not be much worse. A large portion of the province was laid waste, the people had left their occupations, the fields in some parts were dried up and in others flooded, and the two imperialist armies under Ung T'ung-shu and Sheng Pao were far apart and unable to come together. The only feasible plan of campaign was to attack the province from the borders of Hupeh, according to the plans of Li Shou-pin a year earlier, plans that had failed because his men had been too few.

The details of his proposal were worked out with Hu Lin-yi on the way back from Wuchang. Two southern sections were to march near the river, the first under Tsêng through Susung and Ship'ai towards Anking, the other led by Tolunga and Pao Ch'ao to T'ungch'eng, passing through T'aihu and Chishan. Similarly two northern sections were to be organised, the first to be led by Hu Lin-yi through Yingshan and Hoshan to Shuch'eng, the second by Li Shao-i through Shangch'eng and Luhan to Lüchow. These plans could only be carried out in case the forces which had gone back to Hunan, those of Hsiao Ch'i-chiang and Chang Yun-lan, should be made available once more at the front.²⁷

The divisions under Hu Lin-yi and Tsêng Kuo-fan attained their objectives in due time. Tolunga and Pao Ch'ao, in the T'aihu and Chishan region, were attacked by the Yingwang, who had effected a juncture with two chiefs of the Nien rebels, Chang Lo-hsing and Kung

²⁶ *Nienp'u*, VI, 10a; *Dispatches*, XI, 22-24.

²⁷ *Dispatches*, XI, 22. Tsêng also asked for leave on account of his health.

Hsia-tsu, thus putting at his disposal a hundred thousand men. Reinforcements were hurried forward from Tsêng's and Hu Lin-yi's commands and after a battle of two days, February 16 and 17, at the Hsiaoeh'i Station, Hupeh, the rebels were defeated. The generals then proceeded to capture T'aihu and Chishan and finally reached their goal.²⁸

In the north of the province Yuan Chia-san, who had been appointed an imperial commissioner and charged with the suppression of the Nien rebels along the Hwai River, won a victory over them, gaining the Linghwai Pass and Fêngyang-hsien.²⁹ A Hunan army from Kiangsi also captured Kienchow, an old Taiping base in southern Anhui, on February 14. These various successes were most gratifying to the government and led them to hope for further conquests.

But reinforcements from Hunan did not come. Hsiao Ch'i-chiang, whose arrival was greatly desired, received a mandate ordering him to proceed to Ssuch'uan with his five thousand men, since the pressure on Anhui had been lightened. That so necessary a force should have been sent to the west at this critical moment shows how completely the emperor's advisers lived from day to day and followed a policy of improvisation. Moreover, it helps us to understand why it required so long to put down the rebellion.³⁰

Towards the end of February appeared the fruits of an undue parsimony in sending reinforcements. A series of defeats in southern Anhui delivered six districts in Ning-

²⁸ *Nienp'u*, VI, 13; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, IX, 1, 2.

²⁹ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, IX, 3.

³⁰ *Nienp'u*, VI, 14a. The general impression in various authorities is that Shi Ta-k'ai was still in the region of Hunan and Kwangtung, but *Hatsuzoku Ran Shi*, p. 62, states that he had already entered Ssuch'uan. This gives more point to the order.

kuo and Huichow into insurgent hands.³¹ This opened a way from Nanking to Chekiang, over which the Taipings proceeded towards Hangchow. That wealthy city fell before the Chungwang on March 19, though the Tartar city still held out. The relieving force sent from Nanking reached the gates on the twenty-fourth and captured the city the following day, but a great conflagration destroyed a large portion of Hangchow and cost thousands of lives.³² The Chungwang meanwhile hurried back to Nanking where, after a conference with the other generals, he surrounded and attacked Ho Chun and Chang Kuo-liang on March 28, forced them to retire to Tanyang, and thus again relieved the pressure on Nanking.³³

This was a brilliant piece of strategy. The diverting of a large army to Hangchow, and the combined attack by all the greater Taiping generals at Nanking, gave the latter an advantage that would not have been theirs had Tsêng felt strong enough to abandon the cautious policy of proceeding only as he could drive all the enemy before him, or had the generals before Nanking not fallen into the trap prepared by the wily Chungwang through his clever feint in the direction of Hangchow. Yet the perturbation of the imperialists at the prospect of losing Chekiang was not unnatural in view of their dependence on that rich province and upon Kiangsu for most of their supplies. Moreover, they had been kept in ignorance of the overwhelming numbers of the enemy that were gathering against them.

³¹ *Nienp'u*, VI, 14; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-lueh*, IX, 4-10, *passim*.

³² *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-lueh*, IX, 10a; *Hatsuzoku Ran Shi*, 63; Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 29. The last says that the capture was purely accidental, the purpose being only to draw men away from Nanking. When Chang Yu-liang arrived with a large army he withdrew his 1,250 men after a pretended show of force.

³³ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, pp. 31 f.; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-lueh*, IX, 14.

Frenzied orders now arrived from Peking, commanding Tsêng to hasten at once to Nanking. This, however, he refused to do because of the lack of sufficient men and his unwillingness to go forward before he had captured Anking and reduced Anhui to imperial control. He recommended instead that Tso Tsung-tang be appointed to this task.³⁴ Tso was then with Tsêng Kuo-fan. During the days of Tsêng's bitter humiliation after his first defeats in 1854 he had been greatly vexed with Tso for helping Wang Hsin in the 'editing' of a memorial to the emperor after Tsêng had approved the draft. But—if common reports are true, through the intervention of Hu Lin-yi—he had come to regard him as one of the coming men, singularly clear-headed, able, and strong, and so he recommended him at this time for an important command. Without waiting for a mandate from the emperor, Tsêng held a conference with him, and it was agreed that Tso Tsung-tang should go back to Hunan and raise a new army. Not long after this Tso secured appointment to a place in the active list and began his eminent career.

Under peremptory orders from the T'ienwang—who held his family as hostages—the Chungwang now started east to capture Ch'angchow and Soochow.³⁵ His progress was a triumphal procession. First, he attacked the imperial camp at Tanyang, where the Taipings succeeded in manoeuvring their adversaries into a difficult position from which escape was well-nigh impossible. Chang Kuo-liang was drowned and ten thousand of his command perished. On learning of the disaster, Ho Chun committed suicide, leaving the army in charge of minor officers. It fell back on Ch'angchow, only in turn to abandon that place shamelessly when the Chungwang appeared there May 26. Wusih was captured on May 30 and Soochow on

³⁴ *Nienp'u*, VI, 16; *Dispatches*, XI, 37 f. (dated June 2).

³⁵ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, pp. 32 f.

June 2.³⁶ Turning towards Hangchow the Chungwang then captured Wukiang and Kashing (June 5).³⁷ Chang Yu-liang there attempted to besiege him, but to no avail.³⁸ The viceroy's army fled to Shanghai—for which the viceroy was cashiered. The governor had been killed in the defence of Soochow.

Tsêng Kuo-fan received the appointment as acting viceroy of the Two Kiang with the rank of president of the Board of War, and was urged to make the recovery of the lost cities his first aim.³⁹ Earlier mandates had laid on him the burden of sending troops to Hupeh to repel a threatened invasion of the Yingwang from Anking. Tsêng, however, thought that the suggestion urging him to move his army to Shanghai was not to be entertained. In a dispatch dated June 21⁴⁰ he outlined his own conception of sound strategy, which, though far less spectacular, promised more permanent results. (1) Obviously without the reduction of Anking, Nanking could not be taken.⁴¹ To take it, the armies now converging on it must

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33 f.; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, IX, 16 ff. The latter does not mention the capture of Wusih, which is mentioned in *Dispatches*, XI, 44a.

³⁷ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 35; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, IX, 20a.

³⁸ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 35. Chang Yu-liang had been kept out of Hangchow and was unable to use it as a base because of the depredations of his soldiers there in March, and had to remain in the open country.

³⁹ *Nienp'u*, VI, 17. These orders all arrived before June 17.

⁴⁰ *Dispatches*, XI, 43-46a.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that on the other side the same argument was being urged on the Taipings to make them stand firm at Anking. At a gathering of the military officers in his palace at Nanking the Chungwang said: "Soochow being now our own, there is no fear of a siege from below, but if besieged from above the siege is sure to be a formidable one. The previous siege (the sixth) was by Chang Kuo-liang and Ho Chun's forces, but the seventh will be undertaken by General Tsêng and is sure to be carried on with vigor. With an able commander at the head of the army, and the [Hunan] men being inured to hardships, and in addition having

continue in their places. (2) Southern Anhui should be attacked by three armies, the first going along the river to Wuhu accompanied by boats under P'eng Yu-ling and Yang Tsai-fu, the second from Keemun, and the third from Kwanghsin. In order to carry on these operations without impairing the campaign in northern Anhui ten thousand men from Hu Lin-yi and recruits from Hunan were necessary, also support from Kiangsi, Hunan, and Hupeh. (3) The provinces of Anhui, Kiangsi, and Hupeh were open to further attacks and men must be found for their defence. In order to secure funds for these different armies Tsêng established *likin* stations all over Kiangsi and left Li Han-chang, as before, in charge of supplies.⁴²

These plans required an addition of ten thousand men in southern Anhui. When they should arrive under Chang Yun-lan and Tso Tsung-tang, Tsêng planned to move his headquarters from Susung to Keemun. He asked for more boats on the Hwai River; at Hwaiian on the Grand Canal; also reinforcements on the Yangtse and on the lakes south of the river, with bases at T'ungch'eng and Ningkuo, respectively. The Hwai fleet was necessary to insure the grain and salt supply from that region, while the one in southern Anhui would be necessary because of the network of waterways in the level land about T'aihu.⁴³

always been victorious without one defeat, they are sure to conduct any siege with characteristic energy. As long as Ngan-hui [i.e., the capital, Anking] is secure no anxiety need be felt, but if that city gives way then it will be impossible to protect the capital: let each of you use your exertions to furnish the place with provisions." *Autobiography*, p. 37. The Kanwang held the same idea. In warning the Chungwang against regarding the east too highly he says: "Let me tell you that the great river may be likened to a snake, the head of which is formed by Hupeh, the body by Kiangnan. Hupeh not being ours, the moment Nganking is lost the snake is divided: and though the tail may survive, it can only enjoy a transitory existence." *Sketch*, p. 7.

⁴² *Dispatches*, XI, 50 f.; *Nienp'u*, VI, 18.

⁴³ *Nienp'u*, VI, 10a; *Dispatches*, XI, 58-61.

According to his plan, Tsêng moved to Keemun, arriving there July 28, 1860. While he was busily engaged in his multifarious duties, civil and military, Kiangsu and Chekiang continued to be overrun by the Taipings under the Chungwang, while from Fukien came the report of invasion.⁴⁴ Ningkuo, to the south of Nanking and one of its most vital outposts, remained in imperialist hands but was in momentary danger of falling. Chang Yu-liang was cashiered for failure and Tsêng Kuo-fan was ordered to assume the office of imperial commissioner in Kiangnan and proceed to the relief of Chekiang.⁴⁵

In his reply Tsêng pointed out the obvious fact that he was unable to leave Anking behind him until it was captured. Even though Hangechow and the province of Chekiang were in danger Tsêng could not go in person to their rescue. Indeed, his forces scarcely sufficed for holding southern Anhui and Kiangsi. Naturally his first duty was to the districts he then held. Since he could not then abandon Keemun he recommended for the governorship of Kiangsu (together with the control of the river forces on the Hwai River) Li Hung-chang, who then held the official rank of *taot'ai* and had proved that he was capable, level-headed, and useful. Pending imperial confirmation Tsêng appointed him temporarily to this post.⁴⁶ Thus Li Hung-chang, until then one of the minor actors in the drama, stepped into the limelight. His province was the very one where he would be under the constant observation of and in constant relations with foreigners of Shanghai; this made him more conspicuous than any other high official outside Peking, far more so in foreign eyes than the Tsêngs. The added fact that he continued

⁴⁴ *Nienp'u*, VI, 10a.

⁴⁵ Mandate received August 10. *Nienp'u*, VI, 24.

⁴⁶ Li Ung-bing, *Outlines of Chinese History*, states erroneously that Tsêng first bethought himself of Li Hung-chang after the fall of Anking.

to hold high positions for forty years, during many stirring events, kept him in the eyes of mankind long after the other great men of this time had passed off the scene and been well-nigh forgotten.

The War Office frantically urged Tsêng to send Tso Tsung-tang and others through Chekiang to effect the recapture of Soochow and Ch'angchow, for the way was now open to the rebels to press north as well as to overrun these coast provinces. To explain the urgent nature of the mandates now showered upon Tsêng (not fewer than four reaching him between August 31 and September 8), urging him to go to Kiangsu and Chekiang, we must recall that this was the year in which the British and French were fighting their way to Peking. They had landed August 2, 1860, defeated the Mongolian tribesmen under Senkolintsin August 12, and were slowly but steadily pushing on towards Peking, which they reached in October. In those days of stress and fear after the defeat of Senkolintsin these orders came to Tsêng, for the imperial court feared—and not without some basis of truth—that the Taiping rebels might take advantage of the foreign war to press on to the north. In fact, the Chungwang had received orders from the T'ienwang to do this very thing and sweep away the Manchus altogether, but demurred because of his own plans to go to Kiangsi to secure large numbers of recruits. He was reprimanded in consequence.⁴⁷

On the other side, Tsêng could not be hustled off into the province of Chekiang. Between his army and Chekiang lay the two important prefectural cities of Ningkuo and Kwangteh, both of strategic importance in the de-

⁴⁷ The advice was so sound that one wonders who stirred up the T'ienwang, or why the Chungwang, shrewd as he was, rejected it. Probably he feared that if he started north Tsêng would at once move on Nanking, capture it, and leave him without a base.

fence of Nanking, and he did not have enough men to capture them, to say nothing of going into the two great coast provinces beyond.⁴⁸ The best he could do at the moment was to send twelve thousand men to the rescue of the imperilled Ningkuo, under the command of Chang Yun-lan, Sung Kuo-yung, and Li Yuan-tu. Tso Tsung-tang, who might otherwise have gone with them, had been delayed by a mandate ordering him to proceed into Ssuch'uan, but Tsêng finally succeeded in having it changed so that Tso could join him in Anhui.⁴⁹

Before Tsêng's reinforcements could reach them Ningkuo had fallen (September 2, 1860). The Yingwang and Shiwang then attacked Li Yuan-tu in Huichow and captured that place October 9. This made it possible for them to extend their power almost to Tsêng's base at Keemun. Another urgent mandate to go to the rescue of Shanghai, Sungkiang, and Chinkiang, all of which had been attacked, afforded Tsêng another chance to consider and set forth his circumstances and immediate plans.⁵⁰ South of the Yangtse he had three armies. The first was under Tso Tsung-tang at Lop'ing, with instructions to move northward or eastward according to the direction in which the rebels should appear; the second and third under Pao Ch'ao and Chang Yun-lan at Hsiuning. So long as these armies kept near each other they were sufficient, but if separated danger of loss would ensue. Until Anhui was pacified there was no way to abandon his position and go to the coast. Here again is a statement of the familiar policy, firm and unwavering, which Tsêng clung to persistently throughout his military career. Though nearly eight years had passed since first he set out to relieve Nanking, the goal was still distant, because he would

⁴⁸ *Dispatches*, XII, 9-12; *Nienp'u*, VI, 27.

⁴⁹ *Dispatches*, XII, 18-20; *Nienp'u*, VI, 28.

⁵⁰ *Nienp'u*, VI, 31b; *Dispatches*, XII, 40-43.

not move from one position until the area behind him was safe. This policy had kept him in Nanchang for many dangerous and tedious months while Kiangsi was over-run, but it resulted in his finally securing the requisite numbers of new levies. It now held him at Kçemun in the same way, for despite the fact that there were larger armies under him now, both north and south of the river, they could no more be broken into small divisions and hurried hither and thither to meet sudden emergencies than they could in earlier crises. For if they were to be dispatched to various places where rebels had appeared or were threatening to appear, the Taipings would be able, unopposed, to march to their rear and seize and hold the provinces of Kiangsi, Hupeh, and Hunan, which formed the military and economic heart of the nation. At all costs these three provinces must be held, for, in the imagery of the Kanwang, they formed the head of the serpent and the rich coast provinces the tail; the head must be preserved, whatever the fate of the tail. If Tsêng moved from above Anking to the coast he felt that it would be an invitation for the Taipings to move from Nanking up the river and settle themselves above the imperialists, thus occupying the most strategic portion of the country.

As the authorities at Peking had each time accepted the reasoning of Tsêng, realising its soundness, so they did now. Nevertheless, their support of his policy was to be subjected to the test of disaster before it eventually justified itself, for Ihsien was captured by the rebels on December 1. They were driven from this place the following day by Pao Ch'ao and Chang Yun-lan, but the success was only temporary.⁵¹ On December 15 Kienteh and Tungliu fell into enemy hands,⁵² and gradually they sur-

⁵¹ *Nienp'u*, VI, 32a.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 32b.

rounded Keemun, despite the faithful attempts of the coöperating generals and armies to prevent.

By the end of the month Keemun was isolated. To the west the insurgents occupied the territory as far as King-techen, to the south the Chungwang himself had taken Wuyuan and from thence spread south to Yushan. To the north they had come across the mountains almost up to Tsêng's camp.⁵³ For the space of two weeks Keemun and Tsêng Kuo-fan and the whole imperial cause were in the gravest danger. Communications were practically severed, although by dint of great exertion by the combined force of Tso Tsung-tang and Pao Ch'ao the road was kept open enough for supplies to pass over it from King-techen to Keemun. Little by little these two generals won strategic points, until they had relieved the pressure on Keemun and saved the illustrious commander-in-chief.⁵⁴ During this period of danger, when he was being advised to move back into Kiangsi, Tsêng utterly refused to do so lest he should cause a serious loss of morale among his troops. His steadfastness during this crisis and his coolness in the face of almost certain capture and death proved to be an object lesson of great value.⁵⁵

Keemun was not the only place where matters were going wrong. Rebels from Kwangtung were entering southern Kiangsi, while on the Yangtse there was danger at Huk'ow, which was guarded by P'eng Yu-ling. Other places were also captured or threatened. Thus not Anhui alone, but Kiangsi as well, was one of the theaters of war. And finally, the rebels were trying desperately to bring help to Anking, the Chungwang having solemnly warned the defenders that they must hold it at all costs.⁵⁶ But if

⁵³ *Nienp'u*, VI, 34a; *Dispatches*, XII, 75.

⁵⁴ *Nienp'u*, VI, 34-36, *passim*. ⁵⁵ *Nienp'u*, VI, 35b.

⁵⁶ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 37. In his dispatch (XII, 69) Tsêng intimates that the rescue of Anking was the objective of the Chungwang and the other rebel chiefs who were pressing on him.

they hoped by these sundry attacks in all directions to effect the recall of any of the forces investing Anking they were disappointed. Instead of bringing reinforcements from Anking, Tsêng preferred to hold his post with his small force and let the siege go on. Tsêng Kuo-ch'ian, who had gone there as commander, successfully beat off the Taipings who came to raise the siege.

Thus the end of 1860 and the first month of the following year found the imperial cause in grave peril. The Taipings had been subjected to a similar danger twelve months before, but the brilliant exploits of the Chung-wang had reopened to them some of the regions from which they had been expelled in the slow, steady progress of Tsêng Kuo-fan and his fellows in Hupeh and Kiangsi, besides opening the way into the almost untapped provinces of Kiangsu, Chekiang, and Fukien. Through the intervention of foreigners at Shanghai when the Chung-wang approached, they had, however, been kept out of that thriving seaport.

While Tsêng was shut up in Keemun the first suggestion of foreign intervention came. In confidence, the proposals of the Russian envoy, Ignatieff, were transmitted from Peking to secure Tsêng's comments. These proposals were that the Russians place at the disposal of the Chinese government a naval force of three or four hundred men to coöperate with the Chinese army in capturing Nanking; also that vessels flying American and Russian flags be used, in coöperation with American and Chinese merchants at Shanghai, in transporting tribute rice to Peking, the usual route by the Grand Canal being subject to interference at the hands of the enemy.

In his reply to the query Tsêng does not directly oppose the plan, but suggests that it is premature to consider such a course when the land forces are so inadequate, and the water forces already exist in practically sufficient

numbers. After Chekiang and Anhui, together with the captured places in Kiangsu, are recovered, foreigners might conceivably be used in the final attack on Nanking. But if such an innovation were to be made everything ought to be specified in the minutest detail—the numbers of ships and men, the exact payments to be made and supplies to be furnished. As to the transport of rice by sea in foreign vessels, Tsêng was more willing, but in that case also the contracts made with the Americans must be clear and explicit.⁶⁷

This reply affords us a slight insight into Tsêng's reputed anti-foreign tendencies. It is not unreasonable prejudice against foreigners as such that actuates him in his apparent unwillingness to make use of them, but rather a consideration for the honor of China. This we shall have occasion to confirm in later incidents. Although Tsêng had had practically no direct dealings with foreigners hitherto, he had nevertheless reached some conclusions regarding them from accounts given him by other officials. England he regarded as the most deceitful of all Western nations, France next. Russia was reputed to be the strongest of the European nations, with which England feared to quarrel. America was of a complaisant disposition as regards China, a fact proved at the time of the Opium War and at other times. Whoever gave Tsêng the information that led to this observation, it shows that among the Chinese administrators of that day the Westerners were by no means classed together as 'barbarians,' but were studied with at least some attempt to understand their different tendencies.

Incidentally it is an interesting speculation whether this Russian offer to aid China—even though the help proffered was not great—did not have something to do with the change of front which led the Allies, almost im-

⁶⁷ *Dispatches*, XII, 55-58.

mediately after their successes in war, to turn around and give active and open help to the imperial government, whereas they had hitherto maintained a scrupulous neutrality.⁵⁸ The usual explanation is that the commercial motive, alone or chiefly, determined the change in policy, anxiety, that is, to secure the river trade opened by the new treaties. While that is doubtless one of the strong factors, it seems possible that the Russian offer, if it was known to the British representative, would have furnished an even more powerful political motive, namely, a desire to prevent the Russians from securing the Yangtse trade which Great Britain regarded chiefly as her prerogative. From now on, at any rate, little or no opposition is registered against the foreign adventurers who were helping the imperialists in the interior near Shanghai. Some of these the Chungwang had encountered first at Tsingpu, apparently just after his capture of Soochow, and frequently thereafter he met them.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ This had been greatly stressed in 1853 when the British visited Nanking. Meadows, p. 265, inserts a letter of Bonham, assuring the rebels that the British were forbidden to break neutrality.

⁵⁹ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 35 and *passim*. But prior to that Ward had already made a name by the capture of Sungkiang with a few daring men, July 17, 1860. Morse, *International Relations*, II, 70.