

# REVOLUTION IN CHINA

A GORDON MELVIN

A NEW revolutionary outburst in China is but one more example of the general law that national Revolutions occur in phases. The first phase of the Chinese Revolution in 1911 bore the recognizable characteristics of a first phase. It was rapid, comparatively bloodless, and it set up a new régime which was a direct break with the past. The new government had certainly got rid of the Manchus, the last of the emperors who had ruled China from time immemorial, and had substituted the name "republic" for the name "empire." It had not, however, experienced any of those fundamental changes which were needed to remake such a country as China—bound by its ages of tradition—into a modern State. The symbol of this incomplete change was to be seen in the maintenance within the "republic" of an "emperor", the last of the Manchus, with his enormous retinue, keeping up in the ancient capital, Peking, his round of meaningless state.

It was a comparatively easy matter to set the new flag flying over the land, with its five bars of high colour, but it was a different matter to change the hearts and ways of the many millions of folk above whom it flew so gaily. Shortly after the initiating of this new phase, the so-called founding of the republic, this comment was made by Mr. J. O. P. Bland:

To accept such an interpretation of the present situation in China it is necessary to assume, for the Chinese people as a whole, definite aspirations and fixed goals, an all-pervading instinct of patriotism, subordination of individual to national interests, and authoritative leaders. Of these there has been no evidence. If History teaches that the man comes with the hour, it teaches also that the hour comes not by accident, but only after long years of preparation. In the China of to-day we seek in vain for signs of the Idea, universal in appeal, which makes for regeneration,—the Idea that impels masses of mankind, at their appointed hour, to follow a Mohammed, a Peter the Hermit, a Garibaldi or a Bolivar. Of a Cromwell, nay even of a Danton, there is as yet no sign; nor anything to convince us that, were he to appear, the masses of the people would have ears to hear him.

After the occurrence of the first phase of the movement, an observer as keen and well-informed as Mr. Bland was unable to see any sign

of these essentials of true Revolution. Had he been able to see but a little into the future, he might have written rather in the form of prophecy; for the very things which then seemed missing, a very few years have proved sufficient to supply. The new spirit of nationalism which has swept over China, like a pervading passion, has provided the Chinese people with definite aspirations and fixed goals, too definite and too fixed, in fact, to be convenient for the other great world Powers. Patriotism has developed in many quarters, to a degree of fanaticism which has made for millions of Chinese youth subordination of individual interests an easy matter. Nor is the man of the hour lacking, for he is none other than the now famous Sun Yat-sen whose death two years ago proved to be but his apotheosis. To-day his picture is omnipresent; thousands of Chinese carry watches bearing his miniature on the face, a constant reminder that the minutes are precious in the service of China. For it was Sun Yet-sen who, dying, left to young China the legacy of an Idea. It is to the three principles of Sun Yat-sen that young China pins its faith, and in them it hopes to find the regenerating principle which will carry through the new Revolution.

For fifteen years since the founding of the republic there has been growing in the minds of the thoughtful the idea that the Revolution was incomplete, and in recent years this idea has been openly expressed in the writings of Chinese intellectuals. It has been kept alive by the consciousness of the ever increasing chaos and corruption which has fallen upon the country's government and people. Republican government has there been a spectacle which has taken away the breath of the world; while the sufferings of the people from official corruption, military oppression and the inroads of the ever-increasing troops of bandits which maraud the country have become a wonder in the eyes of the nations. But just in proportion as the world wonders, the electric mind of young China—educated and familiar with the failings of the West—is touched to the quick. To the Chinese, China is still the Middle Kingdom, the centre of the universe. For centuries pride was satisfied by ignoring the outside barbarians; but now that world conditions have made this impossible, pride must fall back on its second line of defence, reform by Revolution.

The initiation of this new second phase might be dated symbolically from the removal of the Manchu emperor from his toy rule in Peking. This was accomplished by Feng Yu-hsiang in the fall of 1924. Materially speaking, the new movement dates from the initiating of military revolution by the Southern troops

in the summer of 1926. The Cantonese are a people prone to Revolution, accustomed through centuries to be objecting to something or other, "the Irish of China." They are also the most progressive and energetic people in the country, so that it is not surprising to find how, having evolved such a leader as Sun Yat-sen, they should evolve a party professing to follow his teachings. The consolidation of this group, calling itself the Kuomintang, the People's Party, in the early part of 1926 afforded the chance for the conduct of a revolutionary campaign which, initiated in the late summer, moved rapidly northward through Hunan and Hupeh with sensational strides.

What, then, are the three principles of Dr. Sun, which have provided the Idea of the Revolution? They may be translated as (1) *Nationalism*, (2) *Democracy*, and (3) *The Right of the People to Live*, or, as it is sometimes translated, *Socialism*. By the word "nationalism" is meant the same thing as the word means in America, France and Germany,—a patriotic movement intended to awaken in the minds of the people a consciousness of their part in a national whole and their responsibilities to the nation. It is the same weapon which Germany and France used so effectively through the public schools to strengthen the government. The same which America, under the name of Americanization, is so strenuously using to-day. Outside of the single disadvantage that it results in international wars, there is much to be said for such a programme. By democracy is meant about the same thing, with all its merits and failings, that democracy means in the United States. The social aspect is added by the third principle of the *Right of the People to Live*, which satisfies the insistent cry of this age for a higher standard of living and greater advantages for the common people. Thus in its broad general outline the Idea of Dr. Sun is merely a working out of republican philosophy with special reference to the situation now existing in China. Charges of Bolshevism and Communism may be hurled at the policy and actions and even the principles of some of those who profess to be putting Dr. Sun's principles into practice, and perhaps at some of the later measures of Dr. Sun himself. The fact remains, however, that the *Three Principles of Democracy*, as expressed on paper and as a philosophy, so far from being Communistic, contain elements which cannot possibly harmonize with a Communistic programme. The nationalism of Dr. Sun is in contrast with the internationalism of Communists, while democracy cannot harmonize with a dictatorship of the proletariat. Nor did Dr. Sun object to capital. Just before he left Canton on his last visit to Peking, a delegation of

labourers called upon him for advice. He advised them not to strike for increased wages; for, he said, the main function of industries from a national standpoint should be to create, not to destroy capital. It is perhaps difficult for us in these days of chaos in China to realize that the principles of Dr. Sun, which are dominating the present revolutionary movement in China, are not Communistic. In the presence of the revolutionary idea and the complication which Russia has introduced into Chinese affairs, it is extremely difficult to see clearly. It seems, however, that it would be impossible to come to a clear understanding of what is going on in China without recognizing the important fact that the Idea of the Revolution is at bottom Democracy, not Communism.

Set in motion by this new spirit the Kuomintang, infused with new life, set to work to carry out the first part of the programme of national regeneration. Dr. Sun did not simply enunciate his principles and allow them to remain in the abstract. He also developed a threefold programme for the carrying on of the great work of making China a modern nation. The three elements of the programme which he developed were: (1.) *Militarism*, or the use of military force to unite the country under one beneficent government, wherein, of course lie the germs of Revolution; (2.) *Tutelage*, or an interregnum in which the beneficent government set up should rule in the interests of the people and train and educate them for the responsibilities of full citizenship, a period during which the rulers would say, "Let us educate our masters"; (3.) *Constitutionalism*, the final goal, a régime under which China would become a real republic, with universal suffrage and the selection of a President by the votes of an educated populace. It is the revolutionary character of the first element, namely militarism, which many western critics will be unable to approve. In the practical carrying out of this part of the programme enters the idea of force, the cancelling of obligations, and a policy of high-handedness. In pursuance of this programme of militarism the Kuomintang, having consolidated its own strength, initiated the recent expedition which has swept northward over the country, scattering the forces of Wu Pei-fu in Central China, and is moving eastward down the Yangtze river, carrying all before it, advancing against the forces of Sun Chuan-fang. This general was, a few months ago, in control of five provinces clustering about Shanghai. To-day he has left but one, and it is doubtful whether or no he can hold what remains to him. The Southern military movement has had a great and rapid success, and is now practically in control of the Southern half of China.

Such military victories are but the beginning of activity. As the armies progress, they are followed by the officials of the revolutionary government, who are rapidly setting up the methods of administration and the institutions favoured by the Kuomintang. A special Bureau of Propaganda gets actively to work, and the streets of Wuchang and Hankow were plastered and hung with Kuomintang posters, while the sounds of the enemies' retreat were still to be heard in the streets. Agitators and lecturers call meetings, promote labour troubles, and carry on violent anti-foreign propaganda, all in the hope of awakening the masses, winning them over, and inspiring them with national consciousness and patriotism. So every attempt is made to follow military victory with a real conquering and remaking of popular opinion along the lines of party ideals.

The questions arise,—What will be the success and what the results of the Revolution? Will it result in a division of the country into South and North? Or will the victorious Cantonese sweep on to the capital, Peking, and set up a new and influential national government? Whatever be the ultimate outcome, China seems to be preparing for a monstrous military struggle. In the North the edict has just gone forth from Chang Tso-lin, the powerful military leader of the upper provinces, to send a large army of his well-equipped and well-disciplined troops southward to aid Wu Pei-fu in the recapture of Hankow and Wuchang, the most strategic points in the Yangtze valley and central China. On the other hand, the forces of Feng Yu-hsiang, the most reliable and best trained of China's soldiery, have cast in their lot with the South. On the whole, therefore, in spite of the fact that there is heavy fighting ahead, the cause of the Kuomintang looks rather hopeful.

In this new Southern cause there is much that seems to augur good for China. If it be successful, Western nations may look for China's rapid rise in the world. One thing is sure, there will be no further toleration of unequal treaties. On this young China and old China seem to be at one. The question will no longer be whether or no other nations will treat China as an equal. With their centuries of continuity and their own oriental culture, the Chinese deep down in their hearts believe in the fundamental superiority of their own race to all the other races of the world. The new question will be—Will China be willing to recognize in the outside barbarians the equals of herself?