

CHAPTER 8: REVOLUTIONARY CHINA AND COMMUNISM

3. CCP CONSPIRACIES; CONFLICT BETWEEN CCP AND GMD

CCP machinations commence

CCP members who joined the GMD upon the formation of the First United Front wasted no time in showing their true colors. They immediately began conspiring to fragment and demolish the GMD. To spread Marxist propaganda, they made use of their weekly *Guide* magazine, books, and other periodicals. The communists also resorted to provocation and disruption, pinning leftist, rightist, or centrist labels on members of the GMD. To sow dissension and antagonism, they parroted their slogan, “Lean to the left for the revolution!”

Unsurprisingly, it was Borodin, the GMD’s Soviet advisor, who presided over the CCP’s campaign to communize the GMD. His evil influence extended even to the Huangpu Military Academy. First Borodin schemed to corrupt the cadets; then he attempted to gain control of the academy. Chiang Kai-shek, then its superintendent, recalled those days in the following:

On January 25, 1925, the Communists sponsored a Young Servicemen’s Club for dual-party elements in both the academy and the armed units. They even spread the rumor that I, too, had joined the Communist organization. Cadets in the academy and officers and men in the armed forces, who were loyal to the Three People’s Principles and to the Kuomintang, formed under the leadership of Chen Cheng an opposition body known as the Society for the Study of Sun Yat-sen-ism.¹

Early in 1925, only a year after the inception of the First United Front, the CCP drafted a secret resolution entitled “Tactics for Use on the GMD.” The main tactics are listed below:

- (1) Regard each GMD department as a CCP organization dedicated to group activity. Make a concerted effort to use these organizations to achieve the objectives of our party.
- (2) Approach left-leaning members of the GMD, such as Wang Jingwei and Liao Zhongkai, with caution. Indoctrinate them gradually until they become genuine CCP members.
- (3) Disrupt ties between powerful individuals and the GMD.
- (4) Obstruct the establishment of friendly relations between the GMD and any nation other than the USSR.
- (5) Create an environment within the GMD and in society at large that is skeptical and critical of the Three Principles of the People.
- (6) Infiltrate society’s organizations; subvert contemporary society.
- (7) Destroy GMD programs intended to raise workers’ living standards.
- (8) Infiltrate student organizations in Beijing and elsewhere; convert them into organizations that can be used for CCP purposes.

One look at this resolution and we are convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that the First United Front was an illusion. Sensible GMD members thought the communists had ulterior motives. But

¹ Chiang Kai-shek, *op. cit.*, 26.

Sun Yat-sen never lost faith in the CCP. That explains why he launched the First United Front, which taught us how devastating the consequences of an optimistic stance about communism can be. In fact, the blind acceptance of communism was the gravest mistake made by fledgling China. All the ruinous chaos and wars in the Far East during and after the 1920s can be traced to China's (or Sun Yat-sen's) blunders.

Sun Yat-sen dies in Beijing

On November 10, 1924 Sun Yat-sen issued his Manifesto on a Northbound Journey, which called for the abrogation of unequal treaties and the holding of a national convention. He had then planned to travel to Beijing in response to requests from northern warlords Duan Qirui and Zhang Zuolin. His purpose in going there was to broker peace with the Guangdong military government and to make plans for the peaceful unification of China. What were his true reasons for embarking on that journey? According to one GMD member, Sun had at that point already abandoned any hopes for Guangdong. As the saying goes, Sun Yat-sen had rented a garret to the CCP, but the CCP had taken over his whole house. Some historians maintain that Sun did awaken to the enormity of his error in forming the United Front, but not until communism began to penetrate Guangdong. Sun decided that to reverse that trend, he would make his northward journey in the hope of forming an alliance with the Beijing government. When he departed, he was followed by many anti-communist GMD members, presumably because they agreed with him.²

Sun interrupted his journey from Guangdong to Beijing with a 10-day detour to Japan, during which he delivered his famous speech on Pan-Asianism at Kobe Girls' High School.³ By the time he arrived in Tianjin, in the beginning of December, he was very ill. Sun Yat-sen died in Beijing on March 12, 1925, at the age of 60, after all available medical means had been exhausted. The cause of death was liver cancer.

The day before he died, Sun signed two wills drawn up by Wang Jingwei. On his deathbed he stated that he wanted to be buried at Purple Mountain in Nanjing.

One of the two wills was intended for GMD members. It ends with the following:

The Revolution has not yet been successfully concluded. Let all our comrades follow my writings – The Plans of National Reconstruction, the Fundamentals of National Reconstruction, and the Manifesto of the First Congress of Representatives – and make every effort to carry them into effect. Above all, my recent declaration in favor of holding a National Convention of the People of China and abolishing the unequal treaties should be carried into effect as soon as possible.

This is my last will and testament.⁴

² Furukawa Gyōson, *Kindai Shina gaikō hiroku* (Confidential diplomatic records from modern China) (Tokyo: Uedaya Shoten, 1936).

³ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Sun_Yat-sen%27s_speech_on_Pan-Asianism

⁴ C. Martin Wilbur, *Sun Yat-sen, Frustrated Patriot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 278.

The other was addressed to his family.

Apart from those two wills, a third was publicized after Sun's death, both in China and the USSR. Addressed to the Central Committee of the USSR, it expressed his wishes that the association between the two nations would last for all eternity. It read, in part:

I have charged the party to keep in constant touch with you, and I look with confidence to the continuance of the support that your Government has heretofore extended to my country.

In bidding farewell to you, dear comrades, I wish to express the fervent hope that the day may soon dawn when the U.S.S.R. will greet, as a friend and ally, a strong and independent China and the two allies may together advance to victory in the great struggle for the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world.⁵

This third will emerged suddenly on the day before Sun Yat-sen's death; it was produced by Eugene Chen, a left-leaning GMD member and Sun's secretary for English-language matters. Soong Qing-ling (Sun's wife and elder sister of politician Soong Tse-ven) read it aloud. It was written in English, and was apparently drafted by Chen and Borodin. But unlike the other two wills, it was not examined by Sun's close associates, nor was it signed. The GMD never authenticated it. It should be viewed as a malicious Comintern deed intended to capitalize on Sun Yat-sen's death.

CCP commandeers the "whole house"

At around the time when Sun Yat-sen arrived in Beijing, Feng Ziyou and other anti-communist GMD members who had traveled there from Guangzhou suddenly made a move. They demanded that Sun expel communists from the GMD. Additionally, in March 1925 right-wing members like Xie Chi and Zhang Ji, who had gathered in Beijing, joined with other kindred spirits to form the GMD Comrades' Club.⁶ The organization issued a declaration demanding the expulsion of CCP members from the GMD. Here is an excerpt.

The party operates under a prescribed doctrine and platform. Its members are required to work together under the same flag to serve our nation. Nevertheless, while Communist Party members deceive Sun Yat-sen, our leader, swearing that they are loyal to the GMD, they use the name of our party to benefit *their* party, and are destroying the GMD. They accept financial assistance from the USSR, corrupt China's youth, and mislead laborers. They are doing their level best to transform the GMD into a communist party, to which end they are making a concerted effort to sabotage our party. They have become puppets of the USSR, who now call for the relinquishment of Outer Mongolia. They disrupt party affairs. They slander the great majority of our comrades, calling them counterrevolutionaries and traitors to the

⁵ Wilbur, *op. cit.*, 279-80.

⁶ C. Martin Wilbur, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism, and Soviet Advisors in China, 1918-1927: Papers Seized in the 1927 Peking Raid* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 160.

party. The day when the Three Principles of the People and communism walk hand in hand will never come.⁷

The aforementioned CCP resolution, “Tactics for Use on the GMD,” clearly corroborates the claims made in the preceding excerpt. The anti-communist GMD members in Guangzhou adopted a stubborn stance against that resolution. Then Wang Jingwei and other left-wing GMD members who had accompanied Sun Yat-sen to Beijing retaliated swiftly by announcing the expulsion of Feng Ziyou and 320 others from the GMD. It was amidst this left-right conflict in the party that Sun Yat-sen’s life came to an end.

With Sun’s death, the friction between left and right became especially egregious. Communist elements viewed it as an excellent opportunity to divide the GMD. Spurred on by advice from the Comintern and Borodin, they split the party into three factions: rightists, centrists, and leftists. They then attempted to take advantage of the resulting internecine strife to gain control of GMD leadership. Their three-stage strategy was as follows:

First stage: To overthrow the Rightists by allying with the Leftists and the middle of the roaders.

Second stage: To isolate the “New Rightists” from among the Leftists.

Third Stage: After the overthrow of the “New Rightists,” to isolate and attack the middle of the roaders.⁸

July 1, 1925 marked the inauguration of the National Government. At Borodin’s urging, Wang Jingwei was installed as chairman of the State Council. The armed forces were renamed the “National Revolutionary Army.” In December of the same year, Lin Sen and other anti-communists gathered at the Biyun Temple at the foot of the Western Hills in Beijing and issued an anti-communist resolution. This gathering came to be known as the Western Hills Conference, and those who attended it, the Western Hills Group. The resolution included three main items.

1. Expulsion of nine CCP members, including Tan Pingshan, Li Dazhao, and Mao Zedong, from the GMD
2. Dismissal of Borodin
3. Suspension of Wang Jingwei’s GMD membership for six months

The GMD was now in crisis, having split into two: the Western Hills Conference faction and the Guangzhou faction. On January 1, 1926 the Second National Congress of the GMD commenced in Guangzhou. It was dominated by communist members who held sway over the proceedings. CCP members introduced a resolution calling for the censure of the Western Hills Group, which was adopted. Communist members acquired every important party position. As Chiang lamented,

⁷ Ōkubo, *op. cit.*

⁸Furuya Keiji, *Chiang Kai-shek: His Life and Times*, ed. Chun-ming Chang (New York: St. John’s University, 1981), 158.

“CCP members have taken over almost every leadership organization in the GMD. These parasites have truly advanced from the garret to the main house.”⁹

There was no official mention of the Three Principles of the People during that congress. The atmosphere was such that anyone who broached the subject would have been accused of high treason and immorality.

Ascent of Chiang Kai-shek; preparations for Northern Expedition

Chiang Kai-shek first publicly broached his proposal for the Northern Expedition at the Second National Congress of the GMD. When the congress ended, Borodin was suddenly recalled to Moscow. His duties as head of the Soviet advisory group were taken over by Kisanka (whose real name was Nikolay Kuibyshev). Kisanka insisted that the Northern Expedition was bound to fail and began to make efforts to block it. Why did the CCP and the USSR object to the expedition? They were afraid that if it succeeded, Chiang Kai-shek’s popularity and reputation would soar. At the time the CCP had no army of its own. Therefore, the communists were also worried that the GMD would be the beneficiary of any triumphs from the Northern Expedition. The party would then loom so large that the CCP would have a hard time destroying it. Until it had its own armed forces, the CCP had to do everything in its power to prevent Chiang’s Northern Expedition from taking place.¹⁰ The campaign to discredit Chiang, which began after the Second National Congress, was also a campaign to block the Northern Expedition.

The *Zhongshan* Incident of March 1926 provided the impetus for Chiang to crack down on the CCP, and strengthened his resolve to conduct the Northern Expedition. The incident itself was a communist plot whose central figure was Li Zhilong, a CCP member and acting director of the Naval Forces Bureau. The idea was to dispose of Chiang Kai-shek by moving the *Zhongshan*, supposedly under orders from Chiang Kai-shek, luring Chiang on board, and transporting him to the USSR. Once he got wind of the conspiracy, Chiang declared martial law, arrested Li and other communist elements, and recaptured the *Zhongshan*. He also terminated Kisanka and some of the other Russian military advisers, and sent them home. In May GMD left-wing leader Wang Jingwei quietly left Guangzhou and sailed for France, supposedly for medical reasons.

In the wake of the *Zhongshan* Incident relations between Chiang Kai-shek and both the CCP and the left wing of the GMD grew precipitously acrimonious. Chiang had foiled the communist plot to seize Guangzhou and leftist leader Wang had gone abroad. Now backed by the military, Chiang found his status had risen. He proposed the Northern Expedition to the national government, which approved it. Now head of the National Military Council, Chiang was appointed commander in chief in June. Plans for the Northern Expedition moved forward rapidly. On July 1, 1926 the National Military Council issued the mobilization order. Eight armies comprising 100,000 men made preparations as they awaited their marching orders.

⁹ Shō Kaiseki (Chiang Kai-shek), *Shō Kaiseki hiroku* (Confidential records of Chiang Kai-shek) (Tokyo: Sangyō Keizai Shinbunsha, 1974-76).

¹⁰ Kayanuma Hiro, *Chūgoku kakumei 40 nen* (Forty years of revolution in China) (Tokyo: Fukumura Shoten, 1954).