

5.11 THE THREE PEOPLE'S PRINCIPLES AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE (1906)

Perhaps no single political ideology of early twentieth century China is better known than Sun Zhongshan's "Three People's Principles: Nationalism, Democracy and Livelihood." The Three Principles themselves never changed, though, the manner in which Sun described them evolved over time (compare with Document 8.5). His description often depended on the audience being addressed. The explication he gives below captures the key concerns of the Chinese in the twilight of the Qing but before the Republic of China actually existed. Sun neatly encapsulates three main forces that will ultimately fuel the 1911 Revolution: the still lingering anti-Manchu sentiment, a desire for a democratic government, and China's need for economic viability in the modern world. His ideas also reflect a new generation of political leaders who unabashedly embraced Western political philosophy. His explanation, unlike many of his predecessors, avoids a defense of Western methods, while revealing that his listeners are quite familiar with competing modes of governance in place around the world. The following appeared in the official newspaper of the Tongmenghui (the leading revolutionary party of the period of which Sun Zhongshan was a central figure).

Questions

1. Why does Sun suggest the need for 5 separate branches of government instead of the 3 employed in the American constitution?
2. Sun's third People's Principle, "Livelihood" is often translated as "Socialism" because of its emphasis on redistribution of wealth. From Sun's description what do you think his main concern is?

... The first issue of *Minbao* dealt with three issues: first, the principle of Nationalism; second, the Principle of Democracy; and third, the Principle of the People's Livelihood.

It is not necessary to do research in order to know what nationalism is. A person always recognizes his parents and never confuses them with strangers. Nationalism is analogous to this. It has to do with human nature and applies to everyone. Today, more than 260 years have passed since the Manchus entered China proper, yet even as children we Han would certainly not mistake them for fellow Han. This is the root of nationalism. On the other hand, we should recognize that nationalism does not mean discriminating against people of a different nationality. It simply means not allowing such people to seize our political

power, for only when we Han are in control politically do we have a nation. If that political control is in the hands of people of another nationality, then there is no Han nation.

Let us pause to consider for moment: where is the nation? Where is the political power? Actually, we are already a people without a nation! The population of the globe is only one billion, several hundred million; we Han, being 400 million, comprise one-fourth of that population. Our nation is the most populous, most ancient, and most civilized in the world, yet today we are a lost nation. Isn't that enormously bizarre? ... We Han are now swiftly being caught up in a tidal wave of nationalist revolution, yet the Manchus continue to discriminate against the Han. They boast that their forefathers conquered the

THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PEOPLE—A political philosophy developed by Sun Zhongshan grouped into the three guiding principles of Nationalism, Democracy and Livelihood.

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Han because of their superior unity and military strength and that they intend to retain these qualities so as to dominate the Han forever. . . .

On the other hand, I have heard claims that the nationalist revolution is aimed at exterminating the Manchus as a people. This is utterly mistaken. The reason for the nationalist revolution is our unwillingness to let the Manchu extinguish our nation and dominate us politically, and our determination to restore our nation by liquidating their regime. Thus, we do not hate the Manchus per se, but only those Manchus who are harming the Han. . . . If the Manchus stubbornly continue to hold onto political power and keep the Han under their yoke, then as long as breath remains in the Han, the Han will refuse to accept it meekly. I presume you gentlemen will agree.

These are the basic ideas behind the nationalist revolution.

As for the Principle of Democracy, it is the foundation of the political revolution. In the future, to be sure, the vicious politics of today will be swept away after the nationalist revolution triumphs, but it will also be necessary to eradicate the roots of such politics. For several thousand years China has been a monarchical autocracy, a type of political system intolerable to those living in freedom and equality. . . . The study of what a political revolution entails is a very difficult undertaking. As to practice, a political revolution must proceed simultaneously with the nationalist revolution. When we overthrow the Manchu regime, we will achieve not only a nationalist revolution against the Manchus but also a political revolution against monarchy. They are not to be carried out at two different times. The aim of the political revolution is to create a constitutional, democratic political system. In the context of the current political situation in China, a revolution would be necessary even if the monarch were a Han. Neither the French Revolution nor the Russian Revolution involved racial issue; the issues were strictly political. A democratic political system has been achieved in France, and in Russia the Nihilist party will also ultimately reach this goal. After the revolution in China, this will be the most appropriate political system. This, too, everyone knows.

[. . .]

Now, let me begin by discussing the origins of the Principle of the People's Livelihood, a principle that began to flourish only in the latter part of the

nineteenth century. Before that it did not flourish because civilization was not as highly developed. The more civilization developed, the more pressing its social problems became. The reasons are very difficult to explain, but we can use a simple analogy. As civilization advanced, people relied less on physical labor and more on natural forces, since electricity and steam could accomplish things a thousand times faster than human physical strength. . . . In view of this, everyone in Europe and America should be living in a state of plenty and happiness undreamed of in antiquity. If we look around, however, we see that conditions in those countries are precisely the opposite. Statistically, Britain's wealth has increased more than several thousand-fold over the previous generation, yet the poverty of the people has also increased several thousand-fold over the previous generation. Moreover, the rich are extremely few, and the poor extremely numerous. . . . The reason the Socialist party advocates the Principle of the People's Livelihood is precisely that it seeks to remedy the unequal distribution of wealth. As its advocates grew in number, the principle became a highly complex science that has given rise to numerous schools. Some of them advocate getting rid of the capitalists and replacing them with state ownership. Others want to distribute wealth evenly among the poor, while still others propose public ownership. There are many opinions, but every informed person knows that a social revolution is inevitable in Europe and America.

[. . .]

After all, at present it will be much easier to implement the Principle of the People's Livelihood in China than in Europe and America because social problems are caused by the advance of civilization and are correspondingly less serious where civilization is less advanced. . . .

I have heard it said that the Principle of the People's Livelihood would entail killing half of our 400 million people and taking the land of the rich for ourselves. This irresponsible talk is based on ignorance, and we can ignore it. With respect to a solution, although the socialists have different opinions, the procedure I most favor is land valuation. For example, if a landlord has land worth 1,000 dollars, its price can be set at 1,000 or even 2,000 dollars. Perhaps in the future, after communications have been developed, the value of his land will rise to 10,000 dollars; the owner should receive 2,000, which entails a profit and no loss, and the 8,000 increment

will go to the state. Such an arrangement will greatly benefit both the state and the people's livelihood. Naturally, it will also eliminate the shortcomings that have permitted a few rich people to monopolize wealth. This is the simplest, most convenient, and most feasible method. . . .

In short the objective of our revolution is to promote the well-being of our people as a whole. Because we are unwilling to let a small number of Manchus enjoy all the privileges, we want a nationalist revolution. Because we do not want one man, the monarch, to enjoy all the privileges, we want a political revolution. And because we do not want a small number of rich people to enjoy all the privileges, we want a social revolution. Anything short of these three revolutions will not fulfill our original aims. When they have been accomplished, our nation of China will be a most perfect nation.

There remains another issue worth studying: the future constitution of the Republic of China. Recently, the word *constitution* has been on everyone's lips. Even the Manchu government has been shrewd enough to send lackeys abroad to inquire into the political situation there so that they can concoct some imperial edicts having to do with constitutionalism. They're only creating a disturbance for themselves. . . . As to the future constitution of the Republic of China, I propose that we introduce a new principle, that of the "five separate powers."

Under this system, there will be two other powers in addition to the three powers just discussed. One is the examination power. Citizens have the right to freedom and equality, and officials are public servants of the citizenry. American officials are either elected or appointed. Formerly there were no civil service examinations, which led to serious

shortcomings with respect to both elected and appointed officials. . . . Therefore, the future constitution of the Republic of China must provide for an independent branch expressly responsible for civil service examinations. Furthermore, all officials, however high their rank, must undergo examinations in order to determine their qualifications. Whether elected or appointed, officials must pass those examinations before assuming office. This procedure will eliminate such evils as blind obedience, electoral abuses, and favoritism. From the beginning, China selected its officials according to their qualifications, and those qualifications received great emphasis. . . .

The other power is the supervisory power, responsible for monitoring matters involving impeachment. For reasons that should be evident to all, such a branch is indispensable to any nation. The future constitution of the Republic of China must provide for an independent branch. . . .

With this added to the four powers already discussed, there will be five separate powers. As such a system is unknown among the nations of the world and has rarely been mentioned even in theory, it should be termed a political innovation. I have invented only the foundations of that system, leaving the details and the rest of the structure to the devoted efforts of all my comrades, who, by remedying my own inadequacies, will create the future constitution of the Republic of China. The constitution will form the basis of the sound government of a nation that belongs to its own race, to its own citizens, and to its own society. This will be the greatest good fortune for our 400 million Han people. I presume that you gentlemen are willing to undertake and complete this task. It is my greatest hope.

5.12 WANG JINGWEI ON WE WANT A REPUBLIC, NOT A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY (APRIL 25, 1910)

Born in the southern province of Guangdong, Wang Jingwei as a young man traveled on a government scholarship to study in Japan. He returned to China in early 1910 intent on assassinating Regent Zaifeng (father of the young emperor also known as Prince Chun). On April 16, his plans were discovered and he was arrested. He and his collaborators were imprisoned on May 1. In prison and fully expecting to be executed, he composed the following defense of his political views, emphasizing the need to move beyond a constitutional monarchy. His commentary offers an eloquent rebuttal to the conservatives of the period who sought to retain key vestiges of the imperial system. Wang remained in prison until December 1911, a month after the Wuchang