

# CHINESE POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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DAVID & CHARLES: NEWTON ABBOT

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## *Chapter V*

### SUN YAT-SEN

LIKE all other influential political doctrines, Sun Yat-sen's has been controversial. That it at one time held tremendous sway over the minds of the Chinese and played an important role in the shaping of modern China's development is indisputable. Under the Kuomintang, it became the guiding principle of China, and during the years when winning the support of Sun's followers was essential to their victory, even the Chinese Communists were compelled to pay it lip service. It is in the interpretation of Sun's doctrine that opinion differs. While some saw in him a continuation of traditional Chinese philosophy, others have pointed to the influence on him of such foreign doctrines as Communism, and it has become popular among his Western critics to expose his "inconsistencies" or "incongruous borrowings."

It was as a revolutionist that Sun distinguished himself, and to revolutionary change that he dedicated his political teachings. In Chinese history there had frequently been rebellions, some of them resulting in the overthrow of a dynasty; but appropriately they had not been called revolutions, for they had never attempted a thorough change of the political and social systems. Sun, in advocating democracy and socialism, was the first to go beyond these merely dynastic changes. Centered around the theme of political revolution, Sun's political thought also included plans for reconstruction, which he believed to be essential to the revolution's completion.

*Program of Revolution*

Sun proclaimed his revolutionary strategy as early as 1905. The revolutionary process, he stated, consisted of three stages: military rule, provisional constitution, and constitutional government. In the first stage, the Manchu regime and all its undesirable political and social practices—such as bureaucratic extortion, exorbitant taxation, cruel punishment, foot-binding, opium-smoking, and the superstition of geomancy—would be overthrown. In the second stage, the people would be granted self-government and would elect local legislators and administrators. Their rights and duties, as well as the powers and functions of the local governments, would be provided for in the provisional constitution. This stage would last for six years, when the final stage would be proclaimed, and all the powers of the military government would surrender to the new constitutional government, elected by the people.<sup>1</sup>

Sun's revolutionary strategy pivoted upon the second of these stages, the period of political tutelage, to which he was to assign increasing importance toward the latter part of his political career. The failure of the Republic in its early years convinced Sun of the tremendous difficulties inherent in establishing democracy in a nation that had neither tradition nor experience. Therefore, in 1918, when he wrote his *Program of National Reconstruction*, Sun placed new emphasis on the transitional period. In this work, Sun held that because they had been "soaked in the poison of absolute monarchy for several thousand years," the Chinese were deficient in democratic knowledge. But, he firmly believed, they were capable of being trained for democracy. In Sun's view, just as a schoolboy must have good teachers and good friends, so the Chinese must be trained by a farsighted revolutionary gov-

ernment. But there was to be no question about the ability of the people eventually to learn the democratic way of life. His optimism led him to maintain, as he did in 1905, that six years would be sufficient for this transitional period.<sup>2</sup>

In his *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*, however, written in 1924, Sun neglected to mention a definite time schedule, and it was this omission that later enabled the Kuomintang under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek to extend the period of political tutelage to twenty years. Much controversy has arisen concerning the intention of the *Fundamentals*, involving the question of possible Communist influence on Sun, and it is worthwhile to examine the work's background and meaning.

The *Fundamentals* was written shortly after the reorganization of the Kuomintang, when it had begun cooperating with the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists. In this document, Sun omitted any reference not only to a time schedule, but also to his concept of a provisional constitution. The latter omission was not inadvertent, for, in Sun's view, the root of the trouble accompanying the early period of the Republic lay not in the inadequacy of the provisional constitution, but in "precipitating the people into constitutional government without passing through the stages of military rule and political tutelage."<sup>3</sup> Believing that the provisional constitution could never achieve what was expected of it without the help of military rule and political tutelage, Sun abandoned it as the fundamental tenet of the transitional stage.

This omission signified an important change in Sun's revolutionary program. From 1905 to 1923, he constantly advocated a provisional constitution for the transitional period, which was to be of six years' duration. As late as January 1923, in his *History of Revolution*, Sun held to this view, and to his notion of the practice of self-

government as a first step toward full-scale democracy.<sup>4</sup> What made him change his mind in 1924? Was it because he had lost faith in the capacity of the Chinese people for democracy,<sup>5</sup> or was it because he had come under the influence of Communism, whose ideology called for a transitional period of dictatorship?<sup>6</sup>

Sun's disappointment with his countrymen after the establishment of the Republic, especially with the behavior of some members of his party who had failed to support him in his struggle against the arbitrary rule of Yüan Shih-k'ai, was first reflected in his reorganization of the party in 1914 into the Chunghua Keming Tang (The Chinese Revolutionary Party, later the Kuomintang) whose members, he stipulated, were to obey the party chief and were to be responsible for all political and military affairs during the revolutionary period.<sup>7</sup> But the idea behind the party was still that of unifying its command, so that its efforts could be efficiently directed toward the overthrow of the warlords and the people's preparation for democracy. In 1920 Sun was still stressing the distinction between the state, which he held should be governed by law, and the party, which should be ruled by men. Obedience to him as its chief, he added, would be no more than observance of the principles of the party. It was not his intention, he emphasized, to be an autocrat whose every word must be obeyed.<sup>8</sup>

It was not until the reorganization of the Kuomintang toward the end of 1923 that the concept of monolithic rule by one party appeared in Kuomintang literature. In a lecture in October of that year Sun for the first time revealed his intention of following the Soviet example of one-party rule.<sup>9</sup> His position was further clarified in January 1924, when he proposed to place the Kuomintang above the state: "There is one thing more which we may take as our model. Russia is governed entirely by

one party, which wields greater power than parties in Great Britain, the United States and France. . . . [The success of the Russian Revolution] was due to the fact that the party has been placed above the state."<sup>10</sup> With the party above the state, a provisional constitution during the revolutionary period was apparently unnecessary, which should explain why in the *Fundamentals* Sun omitted reference to one. But while, in accordance with Soviet principles, he adopted a one-party rule, it is notable that his notion of political tutelage was quite different from the Communist belief in dictatorship of the proletariat. In the first place, the Communist party exercised its dictatorial rule in behalf of the proletariat only. The Kuomintang was to carry out its political tutelage on all class levels. Thus while the Soviet precept aimed at eliminating opponents, in particular the bourgeoisie, the Kuomintang was to represent the entire Chinese people. To the Marxists, dictatorship of the proletariat was to lead to a classless society in which the state had withered away; but to Sun Yat-sen, the period of party rule by the Kuomintang was an interval in the creation of a fully independent, sovereign state, in which people exercised their democratic rights and enjoyed a comfortable livelihood. Sun placed particular emphasis upon local self-government as democracy's foundation.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Three Principles of the People*

To Sun, then, government by a single party was to form the basis of the Chinese state. "At present we have no state to govern, and we can only say that we should use the party to build a state."<sup>12</sup> But what kind of state? Sun felt that the objectives of the revolution and the blueprint for a new China should be the Three Principles of

the People, whose development was, as we shall see, directly related to political events.

The first of these, the Principle of Nationalism, was adopted as early as 1894, when the Hsing-chung Hui (Revive China Society) was organized in Hong Kong. From 1894 to the establishment of the T'ung-meng Hui (League of the Common Alliance) in 1905, the sole nationalistic aim of Sun's revolutionary party was to overthrow the Manchus, who were regarded as aliens imposing their rule upon the Chinese, a fact that the T'ung-meng Hui revolutionaries ransacked Chinese classics and historical works to prove in their debate with the constitutional monarchists.<sup>13</sup> Their arguments were not based entirely on racism; cultural and political aspects of minority rule, with due emphasis on its despotism, were also aired. Still, Sun Yat-sen's early nationalism was aimed internally at the overthrow of the Manchus rather than externally at the expulsion of Western dominance. Thus, in 1912, upon the abdication of the Manchu emperor, Sun was able to declare that the principle of nationalism had been achieved; and when the Chinese Revolutionary party was organized in 1914, Sun defined its objectives to be the realization of the principles of democracy and the people's livelihood, without mentioning nationalism. Toward the end of the First World War, when Woodrow Wilson introduced the principle of self-determination into world affairs, Sun's concern was how to weld the five races of China into a great Chinese nation, and he suggested that the Han Chinese give up the superior feelings they had derived from history and humbly and sincerely take the initiative in mixing with other races.<sup>14</sup>

With such concentration on internal affairs, Sun's nationalism had practically no application to the sphere of foreign relations before the end of World War I. His long residence abroad and prolonged contact with foreigners



had led him to a sympathetic understanding of Western cultures and a yearning for international cooperation. Thus, during the early years of the Republic, Sun consistently advocated world peace and friendly relations between nations. While he recognized the difficulty of getting all men to belong to the same World Commonwealth, he voiced optimism that this could be achieved, and he called on the Chinese people to contribute their part to the worthy cause.<sup>15</sup> He spoke of recovering foreign settlements in China, revising the tariff, and abolishing extraterritoriality, but made it plain that he thought negotiations toward these ends would not begin for quite a while.<sup>16</sup> His goal in this period was to strengthen China through modernization, to promote mutual benefits through expansion of foreign trade, and to industrialize the country with the help of foreign capital. It was his belief that as soon as China had become modernized and prosperous, and hence a strong nation, humiliating treaties with foreign powers would be revised, and China, as a fully sovereign state, could contribute her share to the promotion of world peace and fraternal relations.

Sun persisted in these beliefs until 1920, when he announced that nationalism had yet to be attained,<sup>17</sup> abandoning his earlier stand that the principle of nationalism had been realized in the downfall of the Manchu regime. Japanese aggression in China during the First World War and China's disappointment with the Paris Peace Conference, which failed to rectify her humiliating situation, might well have been the cause of his reversal. Still, as late as May 1921, Sun held that China would recognize legitimate foreign rights based on treaties, contracts and precedents, and he did not as yet associate warlords with foreign imperialists, as he would three years later.<sup>18</sup>

Sun first attacked imperialism in his lectures on *The Three Principles of the People* in 1924, when he had be-

gun to cooperate with the Communists. It has therefore been debated whether his views on imperialism were Communist-inspired. Sun had discussed "imperialism" as early as 1904, and had mentioned it again in 1912 in connection with American policies. But in both instances he had seemed to regard it as a kind of territorial expansion and did not consider it an immediate threat to China's unity or political stability.<sup>19</sup>

In January 1923, the Sun-Joffe Agreement, which provided Russian assistance to the Kuomintang, was concluded. But in October of that year, Sun still maintained that it was not necessary to couple "overthrow of the warlords with resistance against the foreign powers."<sup>20</sup>

In 1924, when the Kuomintang was reorganized and Chinese Communists were admitted, a new chapter began. The Manifesto of the First Congress of the Kuomintang, issued in January, declared that "unequal treaties" which provided leased territories, extraterritoriality, foreign control of the Chinese customs, should all be abrogated, clearly reflecting the party's new Communist bias. For the first time, collaboration between warlords and imperialists was stressed in Kuomintang literature, and China's recurrent civil wars were attributed to conflicts of interest between the foreign powers. Hitherto Sun had regarded foreign capital as a key element in Chinese industrialization; now he condemned it as a form of economic exploitation and regarded it as the curse of Chinese industry and economy. Since it was imperialism, he now felt, that had reduced China to the status of a semi-colony, any struggle for national liberation had to be directed against these extraneous forces.<sup>21</sup>

Sun further clarified his attitude toward imperialism in his lectures on nationalism in 1924. Against Lenin's view of it as the ultimate phase of capitalism, Sun saw it as a policy of aggression upon other countries by means of

political force,"<sup>22</sup> and attributed the First World War to the rivalry between Britain and Germany for control of the sea, and to the great powers' ambition to secure more territory. Imperialism was, in short, political expansion based upon military power. Sun further condemned economic penetration of China by foreign powers, and its ruinous effects on the nation's economic life. But he made a distinction between economic oppression and imperialism, which he felt to be "political oppression."<sup>23</sup> If Sun had been led into anti-imperialism by the Communists, his interpretation differed markedly from theirs.

There has been some question whether Sun's view of war in these lectures was derived from the Communist concept of class struggle, centering around his statement: "Since the occurrence of the new events in Russia, as I study developments of the past and foresee tendencies of the future, I believe great international wars will be inevitable. But these wars will not arise between different races; they will arise within races, white against white, yellow against yellow. These wars will be wars of classes, wars of the oppressed against the tyrants, wars of right against might."<sup>24</sup> Throughout the lectures, class war is mentioned only in this sentence; in other places the examples of war he gave were of wars between nations. Taking the statement at face value, one can hardly say that Sun tended toward Marxist thinking. "Wars of classes" may not necessarily mean wars between the proletariat and capitalists. But even granted that Sun had in mind wars of social classes, he also mentioned other kinds of wars—wars of the oppressed against the tyrants and of right against might. When he spoke of the latter kind, he often made it clear that he meant wars of oppressed nations against aggressor nations. Thus, in his statement Sun was most likely describing only one possible type of future war and not advocating class struggle.

Returning now to the basic precepts of the Principle of Nationalism, Sun's nationalism was, during its later years, directed against foreign aggressors. Sun thought that to attain independence and equality, China now had to free herself from the imperialist yoke, to recover all her lost territory and sovereignty, and to unify herself by the elimination of all separatist elements and the creation of a sense of solidarity in her people. Sun saw a day when the Chinese nation would represent the whole people rather than certain classes, and China would be a melting pot for all races, all equal. He believed the lack of any spirit of nationalism was due to long periods of subjection to alien rule, such as the Manchu regime, and to the traditional Chinese belief in universalism. The Chinese people needed a new surge of patriotism, which would lead to a transfer of loyalty from the family to the state and a sacrifice of individual freedom for national freedom.

Sun was not advocating the arrogant and narrow outlook some modern ultranationalists have been guilty of, for he held that China, while fighting for its own equality with the powers, should also help smaller nations to attain equality. Rescuing the weak and lifting up the downtrodden was a traditional virtue that China could, Sun felt, apply to international relations. In his *Great Asianism*, he called on Japan to become China's partner in the defense of Oriental virtues. The Oriental "kingly way" of persuasion and peace, he said, could successfully challenge the "tyrannical way" of force and aggression the Western powers had adopted in dealing with weak nations.<sup>25</sup> Great Asianism had none of the exclusiveness that characterized the so-called Asian Monroe Doctrine advocated by the Japanese militarists before the Pacific war. It was a sort of regionalism aimed at the defense of the Asian continent against Western aggression, but secondarily it would promote peaceful relations with all coun-

tries. Sun's ideal was of a great commonwealth of nations, founded on equality and fraternity.<sup>26</sup> But before China could become cosmopolitan, he felt, it had first to become an independent state.

Sun's second principle concerned the basic tenets of democracy. Sun thought Lincoln's phrase, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," adequately described his own goal. By "people," however, Sun meant a unified and organized body of men rather than individuals. He was opposed to individualism and rejected the contract theory of the state. To him the state was an organized body for mutual assistance rather than a conglomeration of individuals for the protection of each one's rights. Against Rousseau's theory of natural rights, Sun held that all political rights were to be won through revolution. According to this view, political rights would be conferred only on citizens who were loyal to the republic, and would be denied to those opposed to it, especially those engaged in attempting its destruction.<sup>27</sup>

In like manner Sun viewed liberty as the fruit of mankind's long struggle. To the Chinese, who had experienced no such struggle, liberty was often synonymous with "running wild without bridle."<sup>28</sup> It was this excessive individual liberty that made it difficult for the Chinese people to subject themselves to organizational discipline. So long as they remained a sheet of loose sand, all revolutionary struggle would be impossible, and the hope for a well-organized state could never be fulfilled.

It is because of this position that Sun has been charged with opposing liberty.<sup>29</sup> As a political philosopher, he took up the question of liberty, but as chief of a revolutionary party, he was naturally more concerned with authority and discipline. One may challenge his premise that historically the Chinese had enjoyed ample liberty, but one can hardly question his assertion that after the

establishment of the Republic a wild libertarianism, destructive to corporate discipline and unified action, prevailed. It is true that in 1924 Sun came out quite vehemently against unbridled individualism, but it is hardly correct to suggest that he owed this view to the Communists. He had stated as early as 1904 that the Chinese people were "traditionally free from government interference."<sup>30</sup> In 1912 he warned against thinking that after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy one could do whatever one liked without the least regard for authority.<sup>31</sup> He emphasized in particular that liberty was for the common people, but not for soldiers and government officials, who should be subject to strict discipline.<sup>32</sup> He cautioned students who were eagerly involved in all agitations to restrain themselves, adding that students did not have the qualifications to choose their teachers. If they did, they were no longer students.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, to Sun, it was the duty of members of revolutionary parties to sacrifice their individual liberty for the freedom of the nation. Sun had been greatly disappointed by his own party members' failure in 1913 to answer his call for war against President Yüan Shih-K'ai. In any revolution, unity of command was indispensable to success. All this, however, did not mean that Sun was opposed to liberty in general. Although he agreed with John Stuart Mill that there should be limits on freedom, and was definitely opposed to unbridled libertarianism, he vowed in September 1924, on the eve of his leaving for Peking to confer with the northern leaders on national unification, that his party would "protect the liberty of the people with all its powers."<sup>34</sup>

In Sun's view, "nature originally did not make man equal."<sup>35</sup> It was his belief that since there was no natural equality, any attempt to force equality upon human society would result only in a false equality. Men were endowed

with varying intelligence and ability. If one disregarded these differences and pushed down those who rose to a high position in order to make all men equal, there would be no progress, and organizations would be deprived of essential leadership. What men needed, Sun felt, was an equal position to start with, and an equal opportunity for each to develop his career according to his intellectual endowments and capacities.

The first important step in ensuring equal opportunity was to give men equal political status. "Only when people have won political rights can liberty and equality prevail."<sup>36</sup> But Sun realized that the mere exercise of political rights, as in an election, did not in itself create equal opportunities. He therefore stressed the importance of free education for developing men's native intelligence and talents.<sup>37</sup> In the final analysis, no government action could ever hope to level the abilities of the people. To reduce the evil consequences of this natural disparity, Sun could only appeal to man's conscience:

Although nature produces men with varying intelligence and ability, yet the human heart has continued to hope that all men might be equal. This is the highest of moral ideals and mankind should earnestly strive towards it. . . . Everyone should make service, not exploitation, his aim. Those with greater intelligence and ability should serve thousands and ten thousands to the limit of their power and make thousands and ten thousands happy. Those with less intelligence and ability should serve tens and hundreds to the limit of their power and make tens and hundreds happy. . . . In this way, although men now may vary in natural intelligence and ability, yet as moral ideals and spirit of service prevail, they will certainly become more equal. This is the essence of equality.<sup>38</sup>

Sun held that ability and sovereignty were distinct from

one another. Compared with his other concepts, this idea—first discussed in 1924 in his lectures on democracy<sup>39</sup>—seems to have been conceived by him somewhat late. An attempt to solve one of the great difficulties in modern democracy, it is based on an analysis of Western experience. Sun recognized that in modern democracies the government was usually very weak, owing to people's dread of an all-powerful government they could not control. But at the same time modern civilization required that the multifarious affairs of the state be dealt with by powerful governments. The solution, Sun felt, lay in the distinction between administrative power, which should be exercised by the government, and sovereign rights, which should be retained by the people. The great majority of people are incapable of government work. The operation of the government must be given to the qualified, who must not be hampered by constant interference by the people or representatives of the people. On the other hand, it is essential to a democracy that the government be subject to the control of the people and that its policies and actions be responsive to popular will. Sun compared government to modern industries, and the president and his staff to experts who know how to manage the company, while the people were like shareholders, retaining control over the president but in general not interfering with the management.<sup>40</sup>

To implement this idea, Sun proposed a five-power constitution that would provide China with an all-powerful government, and a "direct democracy" that would ensure popular control. One of the weaknesses of Western government, he said, was its domination by the legislature, which controlled it and interfered with its work. Parliamentary government, especially along the French model of that particular time, was a clear example. But even in a presidential form of government, Sun held, the inter-



ference of Congress weakened the executive. He proposed the division of government into five powers: executive, legislative, judicial, examinatorial, and censorial. The latter two powers were traditional Chinese institutions, which Sun included in the hope that they would be independent of the others and therefore more judiciously and efficiently exercised. But the chief purpose of the scheme was to create a powerful government without domination by any one branch. Under Sun's system, the Chinese legislature, unlike Western parliaments, would not control the executive or exercise powers of impeachment and investigation to the embarrassment of the executive. These functions would be given to the control *yüan* (council). Similarly, the power to appoint a civil service would be taken away from the executive and assigned to an independent *yüan*. A government so constituted would exercise administrative power, or ability, as distinguished from sovereign power. Sovereignty would reside in the people, who would retain the four powers of direct democracy: suffrage, recall, initiative, and referendum. With these four powers the people would be able to control the government directly and not have to fear its becoming too strong.<sup>41</sup>

However, Sun's theory, in spite of its commendable intention of providing a powerful government on the one hand and effective popular control on the other, had its difficulties. In the first place, one must ask whether all the powers of the government could be of an administrative nature without also involving the exercise of sovereign power. Was the legislature merely a body of technical "ability," exercising nothing other than administrative power? If so it would be no more than a drafting bureau, and yet there would have to be some agency to determine the principles and purposes of legislation, and this necessarily involved the sovereign will of the people.

Sun's distinction between ability and sovereign power, in so far as the whole government with its legislative branch was considered to be no more than an administrative body, had, therefore, its theoretical limitations.

There is also the question of whether the five-power constitution could really provide a powerful government as intended. To ensure that the legislative body would not dominate the executive, Sun insisted that the five powers of government be independent of each other.<sup>42</sup> In the West, the separation of powers into three branches to provide the government with a system of checks and balances has often obstructed its exercise of power and rendered it weak and inefficient. The division of power into five branches would necessarily further complicate the governmental process; and if each insisted on its independent power, the purpose of powerful government could well be undermined.

Granted that Sun's idea of a direct democracy had its merits, whether it was practicable for a country as large as China is questionable. In 1916 Sun stated that direct democracy should not be practiced in such large areas as provinces, but should be confined to districts.<sup>43</sup> He maintained the same opinion in his lecture on the "Five-Power Constitution" in 1921.<sup>44</sup> The lecture was given, however, before Sun had formulated his theory of the distinction between ability and sovereignty. In his sixth lecture on democracy, on April 26, 1924, Sun declared that the people should exercise the four powers of election, recall, initiative, and referendum so as to have direct control over the five-power government. "When the four political powers of the people control the five governing powers of the government, then we will have a completely democratic government organ, and the strength of the people and of the government will be well balanced."<sup>45</sup> In this lecture he did not mention the districts as possible

units of direct democracy, nor diagram of the relation between the political power of the people and the administrative power of the government show any national congress that might exercise sovereign rights for the people. However, in *Arti his Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*, on April 12, 1924, he declared that "citizens of a completely self-governing district shall have the right of suffrage, recall, initiative, and referendum."

It was further provided in *Art* that "after the promulgation of the Constitution the governing power of the central government shall be in the People's Congress. That is, the People's Congress shall exercise the powers of election and recall of officials of the central government, as well as the powers of initiative and referendum in reference to laws enacted by the central government."<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, in *Fundamentals*, the Kuomintang was later to maintain that the People's Congress, composed of representatives of the people, was an organ of administrative power rather than of administrative power.<sup>47</sup> This provision was incorporated into the 1936 Draft of Constitution, which delegated the four powers of direct democracy to the People's Congress. In this way the original intention to avoid parliamentary exercise of sovereign power was thwarted, and the four rights of direct democracy considered to be essential to the control of the central government, were no longer exercised by the people.

Sun's third principle was that of the People's Livelihood. "The Principle of the People's Livelihood," declared Sun Yat-sen, "is socialism. Communism, it is Utopianism." Sun's use of the term "communism" here has given rise to serious controversy. Many have regarded the statement as a political tactic designed to create tension between the Communists and the right wing of the Kuomin-

tang; others have considered it to be evidence of Sun's pro-Communism.<sup>48</sup> Actually it was neither. In Sun's mind communism was a term interchangeable with socialism and in its ideals not different from the traditional Chinese concept of utopia. His Principle of Livelihood was intended to be broader than all of these, including something of communism and something of collectivism, a term he often used to mean state communism.<sup>49</sup> To Sun, communism was not necessarily the Marxist brand or the Soviet brand. In February 1924, he stated that Marxism was not communism; what Proudhon and Bakunin had advocated was really communism.<sup>50</sup> Until August 1924, when he delivered his first lecture on the Principle of Livelihood, Sun had never equated his principle with communism; on the contrary, he had often stated that the People's Livelihood was socialism, especially the state socialism that had appeared in Germany and other European countries.<sup>51</sup> As will be seen later, the People's Livelihood, both in principle and in method, was indeed closer to state socialism than to anything else. But it was characteristic of Sun not to adhere to any one person's doctrine; his People's Livelihood was broader than state socialism. Its ultimate ideal was "communism" in the sense that all people should share the natural resources and national wealth. Thus, said Sun, "Communism is the ideal of People's Livelihood, and People's Livelihood is practical communism."<sup>52</sup> But the Principle of People's Livelihood aimed at communizing future property, rather than existing property, so that no one who had property would suffer.<sup>53</sup>

To Sun, communism could not be realized for several thousand years, since the morality of the present world had not reached the stage where the formula "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" was practicable.<sup>54</sup> Particularly in China the conditions

were not suitable for communism, for China had been suffering from poverty, not from unequal distribution of wealth. The urgent need, therefore, was to create wealth through industrialization. "In seeking a solution for our livelihood problem, we are not going to propose some impracticable and radical method and then wait until industry is developed. We want a plan which will anticipate dangers and forearm us against emergencies, which will check the growth of large private capital and prevent the social disease of extreme inequality between the rich and the poor."<sup>55</sup> To Sun the methods of the Russians were ones that would "burn the head and mar the forehead."<sup>56</sup>

Communism was not only impracticable, it was also theoretically unsound. Sun criticized the Marxian materialistic conception of history and agreed with Maurice William that the struggle for subsistence, not the struggle between classes, was the central force in history.<sup>57</sup> For Sun, cooperation rather than war was the law of social progress. In the struggle for subsistence, mutual trust and cooperation were essential to success; in class war the destructive effects might well obstruct social progress and make living difficult.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the Principle of Livelihood was based on mutual dependence and cooperation between the classes. "Society progresses through the adjustment of major economic interests rather than through the clash of interests. If most of the economic interests of society can be harmonized, the great majority of people will benefit and society will progress."<sup>59</sup> Sun did not deny the existence of class struggle, but he considered it to be an abnormal phenomenon in social development.<sup>60</sup> He distinguished between the human world and the animal world. The latter was characterized by natural selection and survival of the fittest; the former was founded on conscience and justice. Mankind has attained the level of morality; it seeks progress

through mutual assistance. Society and state function on ethical principles. Men have not always been able to follow these principles because of the remnant barbaric nature they inherited from the animal world. Hence the ugly side of society, characterized by struggle, defeat, and elimination. But, in Sun's view, the more civilized we become, the less natural selection will apply. And it is the duty of man to develop his human nature, to eliminate the animal instinct, to promote morality—in short, to replace natural selection with mutual assistance.<sup>61</sup>

Sun's adoption of Maurice William's arguments to refute Marx's materialistic conception of history has led to the speculation that it was William who saved Sun from the influence of Communism. Thus Jeremiah W. Jenks, in a lecture at New York University in 1929, stated that "in the early part of his great book *The Three Principles of the People* Sun has apparently adopted the doctrines of Karl Marx and believes in the class struggle. . . . Later on, in the latter part of his book he changed his views quite decidedly and that change was apparently brought about by the falling into his hands of Maurice William's *The Social Interpretation of History*."<sup>62</sup> Prompted by this assertion, William published in 1932 his *Sun Yat-sen versus Communism*, in which he attempted to establish: that Sun's lectures on nationalism and democracy delivered between January 27 and April 26, 1924, were thoroughly Marxian in tone (he "endorses the class struggle" and "repudiates Western democracy"); that Sun at that time was unfamiliar with *The Social Interpretation of History*, which must have fallen into his hands immediately thereafter; that Sun must have devoted the next few months to an intensive study of it; and that in the first lecture on livelihood delivered on August 3, Sun boldly proclaimed that he had completely reversed his views on Marxism and Bolshevism.<sup>63</sup> We have dis-

cussed Sun's views on imperialism above, and we may say here that a careful reading of his lectures on democracy will show that in them Sun adopted the ideas of Western democracy, the separation of powers, and even direct democracy on the Swiss model. The lapse of three months between the last lecture on democracy and the first lecture on livelihood was not due to Sun's coming upon William's book "almost immediately" after the last lecture on democracy nor his need for a period of intensive study, but in reality to an illness of two months. Also, Sun had already mentioned *The Social Interpretation of History* once before, on January 21, 1924, at a meeting of the First National Convention of the Kuomintang.<sup>64</sup> He made use of William's arguments against Marxism because they fit in with his Principle of Livelihood. Maurice Williams did not save him from Communism, since he had never abandoned his own principles, which were quite different from Marxism.

Sun proposed two methods as a solution to the problem of livelihood: equalization of land ownership and regulation of capital. The first, sometimes called land nationalization, was derived from the theory of Henry George.<sup>65</sup> Sun adopted George's socialism because in China the land problem was so much more conspicuous than the problem of capitalism. Thus from 1904 to 1924, Sun spoke of equalization of land ownership as if it were the only solution to all economic inequities.<sup>66</sup> He proposed that all unearned increment in the rise of land prices go to the state and that private ownership of land be gradually abolished through taxation, which would make it unprofitable for an individual to own land. A landlord would be required to report the value of his land to the government, and it would be taxed accordingly. If the landlord reported a value lower than the market price, the government would have the option of buying it

at the reported price. Any increase in land value after the date of the reported price would go to the state. The landlord, finding it unprofitable to own land, would gradually sell it to the government, which alone could handle land transactions. Nationalization would thus be eventually realized.<sup>67</sup>

It is this gradualism that stands foremost in Sun's socialist thought. Believing that capitalism had not yet developed in China and that even the land problem was not very serious for the moment, he regarded his plan as a precautionary measure against future crises.<sup>68</sup> Thus all of China's land did not have to be nationalized at once; the government would not have enough funds for the purpose, nor was it necessary to do so. But although he would let private ownership exist for the time being, he envisaged its eventual abolition. George's theory, in so far as it advocated that land be common property, persisted in Sun's mind. But he thought it necessary to make some modifications. Thus, in 1922 he declared that with modern life becoming daily more complex and political functions undergoing vast changes, it was no longer possible to place all taxes on land alone.<sup>69</sup> Another significant revision of George's theory occurred when, in 1924, Sun proposed "regulation of capital" as a second method of solving the problem of livelihood.

In 1924, during his cooperation with the Communists, Sun gave an address on "Land to the Tillers" at the Institute of Agrarian Movement. The slogan was immediately used by the Communists to stir up the peasants, and it was later interpreted to mean that Sun endorsed seizure of land from the landlords. Is it true that the slogan signified Sun's adoption of a new position toward the problem of land? A study of his statements on the subject indicates that until 1924 his major attention was focused on nationalization of land rights in the cities. He



always spoke of the tremendous increase in land value in the urban centers, and the injustice that this unearned increment should be pocketed by private owners. He did not seem to think that the rural problem was a serious one, and in 1919 maintained that there were few great landlords in China. He declared that "the peasants, though their hardships might perhaps have increased since the well-field system of ancient times, could still be small landowners, . . . and are therefore not entirely cut off from the path of making a living."<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, it is untrue to say that Sun ignored the rural problem in those early years. In 1905 when nationalization of land was proposed in the *People's Journal (Min-pao)*, it was pointed out that the landlords' monopolization of profits would drive the peasants out of work. The revolutionary journal considered it desirable that "those who do not till the land themselves should not receive land from the state."<sup>71</sup> Again, in 1919, Sun stated that as the capitalists began purchasing land in the rural areas, the peasants would have no land to till, and if they became tenants they would be unable to pay the rent.<sup>72</sup>

These views are similar to those of George, who maintained that as the burden of taxation is shifted from production and exchange to the value or rent of land, no one would care any longer to hold land unless he cultivated it himself. As land monopolization would no longer pay, "millions and millions of acres from which settlers are now shut out by high prices would be abandoned by their present owners or sold to settlers upon nominal terms."<sup>73</sup> According to the account of a contemporary, Sun discussed the problem of "land to the tillers" with Yüan Shih-k'ai as early as 1912;<sup>74</sup> not a very surprising fact, since the nationalization of land along lines set down by George leads logically to the conclusion of land for the tillers.

The question arises whether in 1924 when Sun spoke again on "land to the tillers," he had abandoned his former position and adopted Communist principles.<sup>75</sup> A study of the speech will reveal that Sun had no intention of following the Communist policy of confiscating land for redistribution to the peasants, for he believed that, except for the peasants, members of other social classes were in a way small landowners. Any confiscation of land would arouse strong opposition too powerful for the peasants, unorganized and ignorant as they were, to resist. He advised that the peasants be organized first, and a program of propaganda developed to help them understand their situation. Only when the government could count on the organized support of the peasants could it proceed to solve the problem. Still, the methods he proposed were the same that he had advocated previously. The landlords should be taxed according to the value of their land. If they refused to pay, then their land would be confiscated by the state and redistributed among the tillers. The latter would then pay taxes to the state, presumably just as the landlords had done. Sun insisted that the peasant problem had to be solved slowly and peacefully so that on the one hand the peasants would be benefited, while on the other the landowners would not suffer losses.<sup>76</sup> In 1924, Sun did not turn to the revolutionary method of the Communists to solve the peasant problem; what he proposed was in fact based on the same old concept of land nationalization derived from Henry George.

Sun first mentioned regulation of capital, the second method of solving the problem of livelihood, in 1912.<sup>77</sup> But he did not refer to it again until 1924, and throughout this period his emphasis was on economic development by the state, which was to own and operate essential industries. Although it was his belief that private

capitalism was not well-developed in China and that there was therefore no urgent need to regulate it, he recognized the necessity of taking precautions to prevent its development. Sun saw in the Principle of Livelihood a means to achieve industrialization and socialism simultaneously by skipping the stage of private capitalism. He again maintained this position in 1924, when the Kuomintang declared that enterprises of a monopolistic nature or of a scale beyond the capacities of private individuals should be operated by the state.<sup>78</sup> In spite of his cooperation with the Communists, Sun in general succeeded in holding to the principles he had conceived at the end of the nineteenth century.

### *Knowledge and Action*

Sun's political doctrine, as we have seen, was mainly concerned with revolution and national reconstruction. To carry out these tasks, he believed that plans and action, as well as leaders and followers, were necessary. He felt that the followers must have faith in the leaders, whose instructions they should carry out without hesitation or doubts. The bitter experience of the Revolution of 1911 convinced Sun that the great obstacle in his work was the Chinese aversion to action, which was part of the general attitude, traceable to the teachings of ancient times, that "to know is easy and to act is difficult." The psychological effects of this teaching are obvious. It creates hesitation in the minds of the people, who will not take action, even though they know the way to do it, for fear of failure.

To replace the old precept, Sun advanced the theory that "to act is easy but to know is difficult." This conception was based upon his belief that the evolution of mankind is divided into three stages. In the first, when man evolves from primitivism to civilization, it is characteristic