The Nanjing Decade (1927-37) & Colonial Modernity

Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命: 1911
First United Front, 1923-1927
May 30th Incident, 1925
Northern Expedition, 1926-1928
Nanjing Decade, 1927-1937

Sun Yatsen 孫逸仙 (1866-1925): considered the “father of modern China”; anti-Manchu activist who founds the Revolutionary Alliance; spends much of his time prior to the 1911 Revolution in exile; engages in propaganda work and fundraising among the overseas Chinese communities in SE Asia and the U.S.; becomes the first President of the Republic of China in 1912; in the face of the greater military power of Yuan Shikai, Sun quickly forced to abdicate in favor of the general.

Guomindang 國民黨 (Nationalist Party): founded in 1912; lead by Sun Yatsen and then later by Chiang Kai-shek.

Three Principles of the People (Sanmin zhuyi 三民主義): the official ideology of the Guomindang; formulated by Sun Yatsen; the three principles are – anti-imperialist nationalism, democracy, and people’s livelihood.

Comintern: Communist International; international organization founded in Moscow in 1919; formed to spread the cause of socialist revolution around the world; agents in China by the 1920s; they advocate nationalist revolution in China as a precondition for socialist revolution; supply money, training, and advice to the Guomindang Party, beginning with Sun Yatsen, but continuing into the Chiang years; supportive of the Whampoa Academy; help to forge the alliance of GMD/CCP forces known as the First United Front; help to structure the GMD along Leninist models of democratic centralism; CCP would also inherit this party organizational structure.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP): founded in the French Concessions area in Shanghai in 1921; encouraged to work within the Guomindang party structure during the years of the First United Front; more on this soon…

Whampoa Military Academy (Huangpu junxiao 黃浦軍校): military training academy founded near Guangzhou in 1924 by Sun Yatsen; trains officers for the Guomindang; many of the important military and political figures of both the GMD and CCP camps were trained at this academy; most of the cadets trained at this academy remained fiercely loyal to Chiang Kai-shek and greatly expanded his power base.

Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石) (1887-1975): Military and political leader of the Guomindang following the death of Sun Yatsen; joined the Tongmenghui as a student in Japan prior to the 1911 Revolution; studies military training in the Soviet Union in 1923; later named leader of the Whampoa academy; launches the Northern Expedition to rid China of warlord control in 1926; by 1928 sets up a new political regime with its capital in Nanjing; following defeat in the civil war with the CCP in 1949, retreats (with his army) to Taiwan; remains leader of the Guomindang on Taiwan until his death in 1975.
Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1898-1976): Important figure in the CCP; begins his political and military training at the Whampoa Academy; works in the propaganda department of the Guomindang during the years of the First United Front; more on him soon…

Green Gang (qingbang 青帮): secret society active in Shanghai from the 1920s up to 1949; involved in organized crime and drug smuggling; headed by the notorious Du Yuesheng 杜月笙 (1887-1951); Green Gang ties were exploited by businesses and the Guomindang to suppress leftist activity in Shanghai.

White Terror: purge of leftists, communists, and unionists within the Guomindang in April 1927; most vicious in Shanghai, but spreads to other major cities later in 1927; continues into the 1930s.

New Life Movement (xin shenghuo yundong 新生活運動): Launched in 1934 by Chiang Kai-shek; promoted a set of values and practices that were part Confucian, part fascist, and part Christian; enforced through the Nationalist government’s secret police forces; intended to reform the moral character of the Chinese and bring militarized order to society.

Blueshirts: paramilitary association modeled on the fascist Brownshirts of Nazi Germany; in the 1930s functioned as Chiang Kai-shek’s secret police; staffed by many loyalists to Chiang from the Whampoa Academy.

New Culture Movement (1915-1924): term used to describe the revolution in culture launched by leading intellectuals in the 1910s and 1920s; includes the founding of New Youth and other literary journals; iconoclastic in spirit; attacks old culture, old language; old religion, the Confucian family system; embraces Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy; often also talked about at the May Fourth Movement.

May Fourth Movement: Technically refers to the patriotic protests against the outcome of the Versailles Treaty ending World War I, in which old German Concessions areas were ceded to Japanese control; protests against the treaty and against Chinese officials succumbing to Japanese pressure break out on May 4, 1919; the movement lead by students at Peking University and other institutions of higher education; they march to the Tiananmen gate to express their political will; movement spreads to other major cities; helps to disseminate the ideas of the New Culture Movement; sets a precedent for student activism in twentieth-century China and into the current century.