May Days

Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命: 1911

Second Revolution, 1913: abortive second attempt to establish a republican form of government in China; quickly suppressed by the Yuan Shikai regime.

Twenty-one Demands: Issued by Japan in 1915; Japan demanded economic and policing rights in Manchuria, and other economic concessions in NE China; demands were secretly accepted by the Yuan Shikai government in spite of popular protests; this gives Japan ammunition to press its rights to control of the former German concessions after the close of WWI.

Treaty of Versailles, 1919

Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916): leader of new style modern army in north China; Qing official loyal to the Empress Dowager Cixi; his reporting on the activities of the reformers during the Hundred Days’ Reforms is partly responsible for the coup against the Guangxu Emperor and the failure of the 1898 reforms; in command of the powerful modern-style Northern Army (Beiyang jun 北洋軍); becomes President of the new Republic in 1912 after Sun Yatsen abdicates in his favor.

Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui 同盟會): Anti-Manchu alliance founded in Japan in 1905 by Sun Yatsen and other Chinese radicals studying in Tokyo; sponsored anti-Manchu propaganda, fundraising, and revolutionary uprisings; indirectly responsible for some of the agitation that leads to the 1911 (Xinhai) Revolution.

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. More on him soon...

Song Jiaoren 宋教仁 (1882-1913): Early leader in the Tongmenghui, and founding member of the Guomindang or Nationalist Party in 1912; fierce opponent of Yuan Shikai; first elected prime minister of the Republic of China; assassinated at the behest of Yuan Shikai while on route to take up his new post in Beijing in 1913.

Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942): Founder of New Youth (Xin qingnian 新青年) in 1915; becomes Dean of Letters at Peking University in 1916; together with Hu Shi launches a literary revolution advocating writing in the vernacular; puts these ideas into practice via New Youth; one of the earliest Chinese Marxists; a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921; later forced to resign from the CCP in 1927; imprisoned by Guomindang for his radical writings in 1933.

Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940): President of Peking University from 1916-1926; works to transform Peking University into the foremost modern-style university in China; supporter of New Culture and May Fourth Movements; passed the highest level of the old-style Civil Service Examinations, but also trained in Germany and France; appointed Minister of Education in 1912, but resigns in protest of Yuan Shikai’s assumption of dictatorial powers.
Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962): philosopher, writer, and leading figure in the New Culture Movement; together with Chen Duxiu helps to launch the literary revolution in 1917; studies at Columbia and Cornell; leading advocate of liberalism in China; splits with the more radical wing of the May Fourth/New Culture intellectuals; later serves as the Guomindang’s ambassador to the US from 1938-1942; chooses to leave for Taiwan in 1949.

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.