

## CHAPTER 3

# Forming a New Culture

### *The May Fourth Movement*



Demonstrators carry signs denouncing the Chinese government ministers who collaborated with the Japanese and were therefore considered traitors. Known as the May Fourth Incident, this demonstration took place at the Gate of Heavenly Peace, just outside Beijing's Forbidden City, on May 4, 1919.

*Though warlords' actions created often-catastrophic consequences, the most momentous problem China faced in the first decade or so of the republic was how to put together a new culture. It was a necessary project because most of China's traditional Confucian ideology and its central political and social institutions had suffered mortal wounds when the civil service examination was abolished in 1905 and the monarchy was overthrown in 1912. In addition, there were widespread demands throughout Chinese society to throw off the Confucian stranglehold that still remained on family relationships. In these relationships, being male and being older had always trumped being female and being young. Many times these traditional hierarchical relationships produced a great unhappiness—and sometimes tragedy—for individuals. The years after 1915 saw many Chinese youth rebelling against the old ways and struggling to replace them with something new. Their actions were part of what is known as the May Fourth Movement, named for a student demonstration in Beijing on May 4, 1919.*

*That day, about three thousand students from thirteen colleges and universities gathered at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in front of the Forbidden City—the old imperial palace—to protest the Allied powers' decision at the Versailles Conference that allowed Japan to continue to hold Shandong Province. During World War I, Japan had seized the territory, which had been occupied by Germany. It was symbolically important for Chinese because it was the birthplace of Confucius. After the demonstration, the students marched to the home of one of three*



officials who had been accused of pro-Japanese action. They torched the house. The protesters caught another of the offending officials and beat him. More than thirty students were arrested. But that was only the beginning of the trouble. Further demonstrations were called to protest the student arrests.

Protests spread around the country, becoming most forceful in Shanghai, China's economic capital. There, in early June, students, teachers, industrial workers, merchants, businessmen, urban professionals, even the city's organized crime machine launched a general strike. Because of Shanghai's economic centrality to the nation, a long strike with everything shut down could have caused governmental collapse. The goal of the protests was to apply enough pressure on the Chinese delegation at Versailles that it would not sign the peace treaty. In early July word came that the delegates had indeed refused to sign it. Direct political action and pressure had carried the day.

Though the May Fourth Incident and its aftermath were political, the May Fourth Movement that bracketed the incident was a social, literary, and cultural revolution of great importance for the new China. There was no central direction of this movement. Instead, many leaders and participants acted in different social and political arenas and on various levels in society. The dates usually given for the movement are 1915, when the most significant journal of the day, *New Youth*, was first published, to 1924, when political issues began to overshadow other concerns. One important laboratory for working to form a new culture was Beijing University, whose chancellor assembled a faculty with a wide range of intellectual allegiances—from Marxism to Anarchism to Christianity to Confucianism. The hope was that out of the contending ideas a new China might be created.

A crucial aspect of the movement was its commitment to language reform. Up until this time, Chinese was written not as people spoke it (in the vernacular) but in a complex and difficult literary language that only scholars could read. The May Fourth cry was that a new culture must have a new living language; and practically speaking, a new nation had to have a literate population, which would be an impossibility if language reform did not happen.

Over the course of the May Fourth Movement, its goals and directions changed. From the beginning until about 1919, the movement emphasized breaking traditional family constraints and stressed the self-realization of the individual. It was the only period in the entire twentieth century when personal freedoms and the individual were so openly championed. Then, after the May 1919 demonstration, the movement veered off this course in a new direction that emphasized reforming the nation and ending its plight inflicted by the hands of outside imperialists

and inside warlords. This new emphasis rapidly swallowed up the focus on the individual.

## Political Activity

Students distributed this "Manifesto of All the Students of Beijing" at the Gate of Heavenly Peace on May 4, 1919.

Japan's demand for the possession of Qingdao and other rights in Shandong is now going to be acceded to in the Paris Peace Conference. Her diplomacy has secured a great victory; and ours has led to a great failure. The loss of Shandong means the destruction of the integrity of China's territory. Once the integrity of her territory has been destroyed, China will soon be annihilated. Accordingly, we students today are making a demonstration march to the Allied legations, asking the Allies to support justice. We earnestly hope that all agricultural, industrial, commercial, and other groups of the whole nation will rise and hold citizens' meetings to strive to secure our sovereignty in foreign affairs and to get rid of the traitors at home. This is the last chance for China in her life and death struggle. Today we swear two solemn oaths with all our countrymen: (1) China's territory may be conquered, but it cannot be given away; (2) the Chinese people may be massacred, but they will not surrender.

Our country is about to be annihilated. Up, brethren!

## A Cultural Revolution

Many women suffered greatly in the old family system. In a society that valued males (who could take care of their parents in old age), the birth of a girl (who would grow up to marry and leave her parents), was often an unwanted event. In poor areas where food was often in short supply, infant girls were sometimes killed. In most areas of China, at about the age of five or six, girls had their feet bound, a centuries-old practice that supposedly increased their marriageability, but left them hobbled for life. When girls were married, they left their birth families to go to their husband's family, perhaps never to return to their parents' home. A girl was generally not married to anyone she knew or loved, but to someone selected by her family or a matchmaker. Once in her husband's home, she was under the autocratic rule of her mother-in-law. If her husband (or fiancé) died, there was great social pressure for her to remain unmarried and chaste for the rest of her life. Little wonder that the female suicide rate in China among young women was the highest for that age group in the world.

### The May Fourth Incident in Perspective

The patriotic movement had actually a deeper meaning than mere patriotism. The taste of colonialism in its full bitterness had never come home to the Chinese until then, even though we had already had the experience of several decades of foreign exploitation behind us. The sharp pain of imperialistic oppression then reached the marrow of our bone, and it awakened us from the nightmares of impractical democratic reforms. The issue of the former German possessions in Shandong, which started the uproar of the student movement, could not be separated from the larger problem.

—Qu Qiubai, a writer and political leader who headed the Communist Party briefly in the late 1920s

### The Importance of Language Reform

Hu Shi graduated from Cornell University; during his undergraduate study there he became a proponent of language reform. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University, studying under famed pragmatic philosopher John Dewey. In 1917 he published "A Tentative Proposal for the Reform of Literature."

The conscious advocacy of vernacular literature began only with the literary revolution movement since 1916. . . . The vernacular style not only is the instrument for "enlightening the people's minds," but also is the only instrument for the creation of Chinese literature. The vernacular style is not a bone fit only to feed the underdog, but a treasure which the people of the entire country should appreciate. Secondly, this movement honestly attacks the authority of the classical style, and regards it as "dead literature."



One of the key leaders of the movement to reform the Chinese language, Hu Shi (left) studied at Cornell and Columbia universities. He espoused an evolutionary approach to solving China's problems. Hu Shi later served as Chinese ambassador to the United States (1938–42). Here he hosts a wedding in the gardens of the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., in May 1939.



In this 1918 essay, "My Views on Chastity," Lu Xun challenges the traditional social views on chastity for women.

First of all, is chastity a virtue? Virtues should be universal, required of all, within the reach of all, and beneficial to others as well as oneself. Only then are they worth having. But in addition to the fact that all men are excluded from what goes by the name of chastity today, not even all women are eligible for his honor. Hence it cannot be counted a virtue, or held up as an example. . . . When a rough man swoops down on one of the weaker sex (women are still weak as things stand today), if her father, brothers, husband, and neighbors fail her too, her best course is to die. She may, of course, die after being defiled; or she may not die at all. Later on, her father, brothers, husband, and neighbors will get together with the writers, scholars, and moralists; and no whit abashed by their own cowardice and incompetence, nor concerned how to punish the criminal, will start wagging their tongues. Is she dead or not? Was she raped or not? How gratifying if she has died, how shocking if she has not! So they create all these glorious women martyrs on the one hand and these wantons universally condemned on the other. If we think this over soberly, we can see that, far from being praiseworthy, it is absolutely inhuman.

In the May Fourth period, women emerged as politically assertive, participating in demonstrations, attending schools in much greater numbers, and unbinding their feet—a psychologically, if not physically, healing action. Traditionally, Chinese women did not attend schools, but generally began to do so in the first decade of the twentieth century. In this 1949 memoir, Deng Yingchao, the wife of important post-1949 governmental premier and foreign minister Zhou Enlai, reflects on her role in the May Fourth activities when she was sixteen and seventeen years old.

At the beginning we, as female students, did not enjoy the same freedom of movement as our male counterparts, insofar as our speaking tours were concerned. According to the feudal custom of China, women were not supposed to make speeches in the street; we, therefore, had to do our work indoors. We gave speeches in such places as libraries and participated in scheduled debates, all inside a hall or room. The audience was large and responsive in each of these meetings, as we emphasized the duty of everyone to save our country and the necessity of punishing those who sold our country out to the enemy. Many speakers broke down when they spoke of the sufferings of the Koreans under Japanese rule, the beatings of the Peking [Beijing] students by the secret police, and our inherent right to assemble for patriotic purposes. . . .

Besides making speeches, we also conducted house-to-house visits which often took us to more remote areas of the city and also to

the slums. Some of the families we visited received us warmly, while others slammed their doors in our faces before we could utter a single word. In the latter cases we simply moved on to the next house instead of being discouraged. I recall on our way home from a speaking tour in the western suburb of Tientsin [Tianjin], the clouds suddenly burst and each of us, drenched in a heavy thunderstorm, looked like a wetted-down chicken.

In addition to our speaking tours and house-to-house visits, we also paid great attention to the use of written words as a means of spreading patriotic sentiments. The Association of Tientsin Students published a journal which started as a half-weekly but became a daily shortly afterwards. It had . . . a circulation of 20,000—quite an achievement at that time. In case you are interested, the editor-in-chief was none other than comrade Chou Enlai [Zhou Enlai]. The Association of Patriotic Women in Tientsin, being smaller in membership, published a weekly.

Deng then goes on to describe a specific political clash between student protestors and the police.

On October 10, 1919, the various patriotic organizations in Tientsin sponsored an all-citizen congress, in which the participants would demand the punishment of such traitors as Ts'ao Julin [Cao Rulin], Lu Tsung-yu [Lu Zongyu], and Chang Tsunghsiang [Zhang Zongxiang], the boycott of Japanese goods, and the exercise of such inalienable rights as those of free speech and demonstrations. Before the congress was called into session, we received information that Yang Yi-teh [Yang Yide] (nicknamed Gangster Yang), the police commissioner of Tientsin, was ready to use force to dissolve the congress if it were held and disperse any crowd gathered for the purpose of staging a demonstration. Instead of being intimidated, we made plans to cope with the armed police. We surrounded the speaker's platform with three different groups of people: the citizens' representatives were placed next to



During the May Fourth Movement, feminism became an increasingly common theme in the writings of both reformers and revolutionaries. Here young women in Beijing—having, like most younger women, dispensed with foot binding—take an excursion to the city's Central Park.



*Plays of Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen had been translated into Chinese. Ibsen's A Doll's House (translated into Chinese as Nora) dealt with the plight of Nora in an unhappy marriage and, in a larger sense, with female liberation from male domination. This essay, "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?," is based on a talk Lu Xun gave at the Beijing Women's Normal College on December 26, 1923.*

Nora originally lives contentedly in a so-called happy home, but then she wakes up to the fact that she is simply a puppet of her husband's and her children are her puppets. So she leaves home. . . . What happens after Nora leaves home? . . .

[T]he crucial thing for Nora is money or—to give it a more high-sounding name—economic resources. Of course money cannot buy freedom, but freedom can be sold for money. Human beings have one great drawback, which is that they often get hungry. To remedy this drawback and to avoid being puppets, the most important thing in society today seems to be economic rights. First there must be a fair sharing out between men and women in the family; secondly, men and women must have equal rights in society.

the platform to form the innermost layer and were protected from the outside by the well-organized male students, while we female students were lined up further outside. As soon as the police began to march toward us, we female students would be the first to break through the encirclement. We all carried placards made of hardy bamboo, which could be effectively used as a weapon when occasion called for such a transformation. We were ready for all the eventualities before the meeting began.

As had been expected, the police, with fixed bayonets, quickly moved in to surround us as soon as the meeting began. Surprisingly, they did not interfere with our meeting which went on according to schedule. Not until the meeting was over and the march began did they clash with us. Steadily they closed in, as our vanguards proceeded to march forward.

"Policemen should be patriots too!"

"Patriotic police don't beat up patriotic students!"

We shouted loudly, trying desperately to convert brutal police into compassionate patriots. But the police refused to be converted as they hit us with rifle butts and systematically broke the eyeglasses of many students. In retaliation we hit them with bamboo placards and knocked hats from their heads. When they bent down to pick up their hats, we pushed forward so as to continue our march.

Nevertheless, the police were much stronger and also better equipped than we female students, and we were losing the battle fast. At this critical point, fortunately, the automobile team of propaganda arrived and quickly attacked the police from the rear. Driving their automobiles forward, these male students were soon able to breach a big hole in the police ranks. We female students followed the automobiles through the breach and, a few minutes later, freed ourselves from the police encirclement. We marched through the city streets until we finally arrived at the police headquarters. We demanded to see Commissioner Yang and protested against his brutality toward the students. Not until dawn the next day did we finally disperse and go home.

Angered by the October Tenth Incident . . . we female students in Tientsin decided that no longer did we wish to honor the feudal custom of China and that we, female students in Tientsin, had as much right to speak in the street as our male counterparts. The very next day we began to make speeches in the street. From street to street and before one audience after another, we condemned Commissioner Yang for having committed brutality against the students.

Chen Duxiu studied in both France and Japan. In 1915, he founded and edited the most influential journal in twentieth-century China, *New Youth*. It was in the vanguard of the May Fourth Movement. This editorial appeared in the inaugural year of the journal. It is Chen's charge to youth to change their approach to life in order to change Chinese society.

Youth is like early spring, like the rising sun, like trees and grass in bud, like a newly sharpened blade. It is the most valuable period of life. The function of youth in society is the same as that of a fresh and vital cell in a human body. In the processes of metabolism, the old and the rotten are incessantly eliminated to be replaced by the fresh and living. . . . [I] place my plea before the young and vital youth, in the hope that they will achieve self-awareness. . . . As for your understanding what is right and wrong, in order that you may make your choice, I carefully propose the following six principles, and hope you will give them your calm consideration.

- (1) Be independent, not servile. Emancipation means freeing oneself from the bondage of slavery and achieving a completely independent and free personality. I have hands and feet, and I can earn my own living. I have a mouth and a tongue, and I can voice my own likes and dislikes. I have a mind, and I can determine my own beliefs. . . . [T]here is definitely no reason why one should blindly follow others. . . . [It should be clear that] loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness are a slavish morality.
- (2) Be progressive, not conservative. Now our country still has not awakened from its long dream, and isolates itself by going down the old rut. . . . All our traditional ethics, law, scholarship, rites and customs are survivals of feudalism. . . . Revering only the history of the twenty-four dynasties, and making no plans for progress and improvement, our people will be turned out of this twentieth-century world, and be lodged in the dark ditches fit only for slaves, cattle, and horses. . . . Whatever cannot skillfully change itself and progress along with the world will find itself eliminated by natural selection because of failure to adapt to the environment.
- (3) Be aggressive, not retiring. It is our natural obligation in life to advance in spite of numerous difficulties.
- (4) Be cosmopolitan, not isolationist. If at this point one still raises a particularistic theory of history and of national



Chen Duxiu, founder of the important journal *New Youth*, served as dean of the School of Letters at Beijing University. He was also a founder and the first head of the Chinese Communist Party.



circumstances and hopes thereby to resist the current, then this still indicates the spirit of an isolationist country and a lack of knowledge of the world. When its citizens lack knowledge of the world, how can a nation expect to survive in it?

- (5) Be utilitarian, not formalistic. Though a thing is of gold or jade, if it is of no practical use, then it is of less value than coarse cloth, grain, manure, or dirt. That which brings no benefit to the practical life of an individual or of society is all empty formalism and the stuff of cheats. And even though it were bequeathed to us by our ancestors, taught by the sages, advocated by the government and worshipped by society, the stuff of cheats is still not worth one cent.
- (6) Be scientific, not imaginative. To explain truth by science means proving everything with fact. Although the process is slower than that of imagination and arbitrary decision, yet every step is taken on firm ground; it is different from those imaginative flights which eventually cannot advance even one inch. The amount of truth in the universe is boundless, and the fertile areas in the realm of science awaiting the pioneer are immense! Youth, take up the task.

#### Chinese Characters Romanized

There are various ways to put Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet. In the nineteenth century the most common romanizations were Wade-Giles and the old post office romanization. Today the common romanization is called *pinyin*. In the personal name of Lu, "Hsun" is the Wade-Giles romanization, while "Xun" is *pinyin*. In names of cities, the old form is usually the post office romanization where, for example, the current Beijing and Tianjin were written Peking and Tientsin, respectively.

Lu Xun, who is generally recognized as China's greatest twentieth-century author, first set out to become a doctor, a career he thought that would be most helpful for China. In 1902 he went to Japan, where he studied Japanese for two years. In 1904 he entered the Sendai Provincial Medical School. Two years later he had the experience that opens this preface to his short-story collection *Call to Arms*, published in 1922. He makes clear the reason for his career switch from medicine to writing.

I do not know what advanced methods are now used to teach microbiology, but at that time lantern slides were used to show the microbes; and if the lecture were ended early, the instructor might show slides of natural scenery or news to fill up the time. This was during the Russo-Japanese War, so there were many war films, and I had to join in the clapping and cheering in the lecture hall along with the other students. It was a long time since I had seen any compatriots, but one day I saw a film showing some Chinese, one of whom was bound, while many others stood around him. They were all strong fellows but appeared completely apathetic. According to the commentary the one with his hands bound was a spy working

for the Russians, who was to have his head cut off by the Japanese military as a warning to others, while the Chinese beside him had come to enjoy the spectacle.

Before the term was over I had left for Tokyo, because after this film I felt that medical science was not so important after all. The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles; and it doesn't really matter how many of them die of illness. The most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit, and since at that time I felt literature was the best means to this end, I determined to promote a literary movement.

Lu Xun describes how the first effort to start a literary magazine failed.

Only later did I feel the futility of it all; at that time I did not really understand anything. Later I felt if a man's proposals met with approval, it should encourage him; if they met with opposition, it should make him fight back; but the real tragedy for him was to lift up his voice among the living and meet with no response, neither approval nor opposition, just as if he were left helpless in a boundless desert.

And this feeling of loneliness grew day by day, coiling about my soul like a huge poisonous snake. Conversations with an editor of *New Youth* revealed that about the journal there seemed to have been no reaction, favorable or otherwise, and I guessed they must be feeling lonely. However I said:

"Imagine an iron house without windows, absolutely indestructible, with many people fast asleep inside who will soon die of suffocation. But you know since they will die in their sleep, they will not feel the pain of death. Now if you cry aloud to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making those unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you think you are doing them a good turn?"

"But if a few awake, you can't say there is no hope of destroying the iron house."

True, in spite of my own conviction, I could not blot out hope, for hope lies in the future. . . . From that time onwards, I could not stop writing. . . .

Leaders of the May Fourth Movement's attack on "Confucius and sons" targeted filial piety as a value to be tossed into history's trash bin. Filial piety was the obligation that children had to look after their parents' every need and to be obedient and respectful at all times. For many teenagers and young adults who grew up in the traditional Chinese family

#### On Expressing an Opinion

I dreamed I was in the classroom of a primary school preparing to write an essay, and asked the teacher how to express an opinion.

"That's hard!" Glancing sideways at me over his glasses, he said: "Let me tell you a story—

"When a son is born to a family, the whole household is delighted. When he is one month old they carry him out to display him to the guests—usually expecting some compliments, of course.

One says: 'This child will be rich.' He is heartily thanked.

One says: 'This child will be an official.' Some compliments are paid him in return.

One says: 'This child will die.' He is thoroughly beaten by the whole family.

"That the child will die is inevitable, while to say that he will be rich or a high official may be a lie. Yet the lie is rewarded, whereas the statement of the inevitable gains a beating. You . . ."

"I don't want to tell lies, sir, neither do I want to be beaten. So what should I say?"

"In that case, say: 'Aha! Just look at this child! My word. . . . Did you ever! Oho! Hehe! He, hehehe!'"

—Prose poem by Lu Xun, 1925



### Oppose Filial Piety

Shi Cuntong was a young intellectual from Zhejiang province during the May Fourth Movement. He is most well-known for his essay, "Oppose Filial Piety," which appeared in the May Fourth journal *The Zhejiang New Tide* in 1919. He was upset about his father's treatment of him and his mother. The essay argued that filial piety was the same as "the virtue required of a slave" and that when parents "invoke the imperatives of filial piety these days [it is a] demand [for] absolute obedience from the younger generation."



无产阶级专政万岁  
纪念无产阶级革命的伟大导师列宁一百周年诞辰

Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, preached that the backward state of such countries as China stemmed directly from the imperialism of the West. The caption of the poster reads: "Long live the movement of the propertyless class."

system, filial piety simply became a tool by which the older generation restrained and limited the younger generation's freedom of action.

This 1929 sketch from *Zhenshang suibi* [Sketches Written in Bed] by Zhang Yiping, known generally for his humorous prose, shows what kinds of "acts of rebellion" became common in the war on the family system.

The thoughts of Chinese youth underwent the most drastic change about the time of the May Fourth Movement. At the time, most of them protested in an uproar against the family system, the old religions, the old morality, and the old customs, in an effort to break up all traditional institutions. I was then studying in a summer school in Nanjing. I knew a young man who abandoned his own name and substituted the title "He-you-I." Later when I went to Beijing, I met at the gate of the School of Letters of Beijing University a friend of mine accompanied by a young girl with her hair cut short. "May I ask your family name?" I asked her. She stared at me and screamed, "I don't have any family name!" There were also people who wrote letters to their fathers, saying, "From a certain date, I will not recognize you as my father. We are all friends, and equal." [Zhang] Tiemin was among those who had denied their fathers; but when his father died in 1921, he wrote a very touching poem to explain his grievous mourning for him.

## The Russian Model

Many students and intellectuals were disheartened over China's plight and doubtful that any meaningful and widespread positive change was likely to occur. The hopes of some, at least, were buoyed by the Communist victory in Russia in the fall of 1917. It was the Bolshevik party that led the revolution in Russia. Might it not also succeed in China?

To many in the May Fourth generation, the watchword of the day was "science." And Marxism and Leninism indeed were seen as scientific. Karl Marx, the foremost theoretician of communism, explained how and why history moved through different stages until communism was reached; Vladimir Lenin, who led the Bolshevik party in Russia, explained why the imperialist powers needed colonies, how imperialism was related to capitalism. The appeal of the thoughts and program of Marx and Lenin (often called Marxism-Leninism) to many idealistic Chinese was its "scientific" explanations that shed light on China's predicament. Also appealing was the fact that communist ideology had already succeeded in Russia.

Li Dazhao was a librarian at Beijing University who, along with *New Youth* editor Chen Duxiu, championed Marxism-Leninism. Their support of the doctrine spread among students, leading to the formation of

Marxist study groups and eventually to the founding of the Communist Party. Li's essay, "The Victory of Bolshevism," in celebration of the first anniversary of the Bolshevik victory, appeared in the journal *New Youth* in 1918.

[The ending of World War I] is the victory of humanitarianism, of pacifism; it is the victory of justice and liberty; it is the victory of democracy; it is the victory of socialism; it is the victory of Bolshevism; it is the victory of the red flag; it is the victory of the labor class of the world; and it is the victory of the twentieth century's new tide. . . .

At the end of the war there were a number of short-lived efforts in Europe to establish Bolshevik-like regimes. Li comments on them.

The pattern of the revolutions generally develops along the same line as that in Russia. The red flag flies everywhere, the soviets are established one after another. Call it revolution entirely *à la Russe*, or call it twentieth century revolution. Such mighty rolling tides are indeed beyond the power of the present capitalist governments to prevent or to stop, for the mass movement of the twentieth century combines the whole of mankind into one great mass. The efforts of each individual within this great mass, following the example of some of them, will then be concentrated and become a great, irresistible social force. Whenever a disturbance in this worldwide social force occurs among the people, it will produce repercussions all over the earth, like storm clouds gathering before the wind and valleys echoing the mountains. In the course of such a world mass movement, all those dregs of history which can impede the progress of the new movement—such as emperors, nobles, warlords, bureaucrats, militarism, capitalism—will certainly be destroyed as though struck by a thunderbolt. Encountering this irresistible tide, these things will be swept away one by one. . . . Henceforth, all that one sees around him will be the triumphant banner of Bolshevism, and all that one hears around him will be Bolshevism's song of victory. The bell has rung for humanitarianism! The dawn of freedom has arrived! See the world of tomorrow: it assuredly will belong to the red flag! . . . The revolution in Russia is but the first fallen leaf warning the world of the approach of autumn. Although the word "Bolshevism" was created by the Russians, the spirit it embodies can be regarded as that of a common awakening in the heart of each individual among mankind of the twentieth century. The victory of Bolshevism, therefore, is the victory of the spirit of common awakening in the heart of each individual among mankind in the twentieth century.

Soviet

Ruling council

*à la Russe*

French for "in the Russian manner"



## CHAPTER 4

# Which Way Do We Go? *Revolution in the 1920s*



Sun Yat-sen, whom many Chinese saw as the "father of the country" after his death, is pictured between two national flags in this souvenir poster of the Northern Expedition which aimed to defeat warlords and unite the country. The characters above his head read "The revolution is not yet completed; you comrades must continue to make efforts." Chiang Kai-shek, on horseback, is pictured below with his troops.

As the May Fourth Movement veered in the direction of solving national problems rather than individual ones, the twin evils of the nation seemed to many to be the continuing threat of imperialism and the ongoing scourge of the warlords. The political model of the Soviet Union was most appealing to those who wanted rapid change. It had also become the darling of Chinese nationalists, for the Soviet Union had renounced its claims to special privileges in China, the only major foreign power to do so at this time. Agents of the Communist International (Comintern), the organization founded by the Soviet government and charged with inciting revolution around the world, began to meet with interested Chinese in early 1920. By that summer a Communist cell group had formed in Shanghai. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was officially formed in July 1921.

The best-known nationalist of the past two decades had been Sun Yat-sen. In the late 1910s he had tried to form an alliance with a rather progressive warlord in Guangdong Province, but these efforts had been unsuccessful. Sun was now open to receiving help from wherever he could get it. It is also likely that the idea of a tightly organized vanguard party loyal to its leader struck a chord with Sun as an important strategy for realizing his goals. Sun met with representatives of the Comintern each year from 1920 to 1922. The Comintern was interested in an alliance with Sun's Nationalist Party because it was well aware that the numbers of Communists alone were insufficient to ignite a revolution. According to an agreement between Sun and Soviet representatives in early 1923,