

Brief History of Dr. Sun Yat-sen Father of the Chinese Republic



(Nov. 12, 1866 - Mar. 12, 1925) Also known as Sun Wen, alias Deming and Rixin, he was the great forerunner of the Chinese Democratic Revolution. He received his college education in medicine in Hong Kong and after graduation, he practiced medicine in Macao and Guangzhou; meanwhile he engaged in political activities for national salvation. In 1894 he founded the Xing Zhong Hui (Society for the Revival of China) in Honolulu with the revolutionary aim of "driving out the Manchus, reviving China and establishing a government for the people." The following year he tried to organize an uprising in Guangzhou, but failed. Again in 1900 he organized another uprising in Huizhou and failed once more. In 1905, Chinese revolutionaries formed the Zhongguo Tong Meng Hui (Chinese Revolutionary League) in Tokyo and Sun Yat-sen was elected its president. The League adopted a programme to "drive out the Manchus, restore China, establish a republic and equalize landownership." It put forth the Three People's Principles - the Principle of Nationalism, the Principle of Democracy, and the Principle of People's Livelihood. The League organized a series of uprisings in the southern Chinese provinces, but without success. After the successful Wuchang Uprising in 1911, Sun Yat-sen returned to China. On January 1, 1912, he was sworn in as Provisional President of the Republic of China in Nanjing. However, as a result of the compromise between some revolutionaries and the warlord Yuan Shikai, Dr. Sun Yat-sen was forced to resign and recommend Yuan Shikai to take his place. In August of the same year, the Tong Meng Hui was reorganized into the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang in Chinese, KMT for short) and Sun Yat-sen was elected president. He went to Japan again in 1913 after the aborted "Second Revolution." There he set up the Chinese Revolutionary Party the following year and was elected president. In 1917 when the military government of the Hu Guo Jun (Republic Protection Army) was established in Guangzhou, Sun Yat-sen was appointed Generalissimo of the Army and Navy forces to lead the North Expedition. He resigned from the position so that he could devote his time to writing his Programme for National Construction. In 1919 he reorganized the Chinese Revolutionary Party into the Chinese Nationalist Party and two years later convened an extraordinary congress in Guangzhou. Later Chen Junming, one of the revolutionary leaders betrayed the revolution and staged an armed rebellion. Sun Yat-sen went to Shanghai. The Nationalist Party held its first national congress in Guangzhou in January 1924. With the assistance of the Chinese Communist Party and the Communist Party of Russia, Dr. Sun Yat-sen effected a reorganization of the KMT into a party aimed at becoming an alliance of all revolutionary classes based on the three major policies of uniting with Russia, uniting with the CPC and supporting the workers and peasants, turning the old Three People's Principles into new ones. In November the same year, despite his ill health, Dr. Sun Yat-sen went to Beijing with a

proposal for convening the national assembly, ending the rule by the warlords, abrogating the, unequal treaties, safeguarding national independence and preserving in the struggle against the imperialists and the Beiyang warlords. Because of overwork, he died of illness in Beijing on March 12, 1925.

The history above appears in "An Overview of China's Coins of Past Ages - Gold and Silver Coins and Medals of Modern China" by Chief Editor Dong Wenchao

SUN YAT SEN was born on November 12, 1866 in the village of Choyhung, situated about 30 miles north of Macao, in the great delta of the West River district of Heungshan. His parents were poor peasant folks, his father's name being Sun Tao-chuan. While Sun Yat-sen was still a small boy, visiting the village school, his brother Sun Mei, 15 years his senior, migrated to Hawaii, where laborers were eagerly sought by the sugar plantations. In 1876 Sun Mei came home for the first time, bringing tales of prosperity in Hawaii and money with him. His suggestion to take young Sun Yat-sen with him to Honolulu, while creating feelings of "Wanderlust" in the child, was turned down by his parents: However, when in 1879, a small steamer packed with human cargo for Hawaii left the port of Macao, the 12-year-old farmer boy Sun Yat-sen was carried with it to opportunities of an entirely new direction.

In Honolulu the elder brother put him to work in - his small store, but appeared anxious to provide the younger brother with opportunities which he himself had never enjoyed. Soon young Sun was put in an Anglican Church School at a cost of \$100 a year as a boarder. Special emphasis was laid during the 3 years of tuition on the English language and on religious instruction. In 1883 he left for his native village, where surroundings appeared to him almost unbearable. In the fall of that year he asked to be sent to Hong Kong to continue his schooling. There and then he adopted Christianity as his religion. In May of 1884 he was married. He planned to become a preacher of the gospel. But finally he decided to study medicine, and he actually graduated in that line. By that time revolutionary ideas had pervaded his mind, and he and his associates had laid secret plans for the removal of the Manchu dynasty. Shortly thereafter a futile attempt was made to seize power at Canton. The plot leaked out, and only with difficulties did Dr. Sun and his collaborators escape being caught and executed.

From that time onward Dr. Sun became a wandering refugee, since the Peking authorities had set a large price upon his head-dead or alive. When in London, where he wished to continue his medical studies, he was decoyed into the Chinese Embassy and held prisoner there. But Dr. Sun found means to communicate with Dr. Cantlie, a former Hong Kong teacher, through whose efforts he was finally released. This was in 1896. After his liberation Dr. Sun traveled in Europe, America and the Far East as revolutionary propagandist. Between 1904 and 1907 Dr. Sun made Japan his domicile where, together with a group of similarly minded Chinese (aided under the benevolent eyes of the Japanese police), the Tung Men Hui was founded; its main object was to drive the Manchus from China. At that time it was projected to seek another, Chinese imperial dynasty; the republic was not yet envisioned. As a journeying speaker Dr. Sun found considerable enthusiasm for his doctrines, not only amongst Chinese students, but amongst overseas Chinese, who contributed liberally toward the funds of the Society.

For 18 long years Dr. Sun was banished from his country. When the revolution broke out at Wuchang (October, 1911), Dr. Sun was absent from China. However, he was immediately proclaimed first President, to be domiciled at the new capital, Nanking. It was planned to make China a constitutional country after provisional reforms had been in force for 6 years. On January 1, 1912, Dr. Sun Yat-sen was inaugurated President of China.- At that occasion he did away with (what could not have been thought feasible) the age-old custom of adhering to the lunar calendar.

However, meanwhile the boy-emperor Hsuen Tung at Peking remained seated on his throne. The constitutionally created Assembly there had nominated Yuan Shih-kai Premier, and as such he had sent representatives to Shanghai to conduct a peace conference. The North was unwilling to accept a republic with Sun Yat-sen as its President. They pointed to his inexperience in governing, to his revolutionary history and to his being native of Canton Province. Probably after a deep inner conflict Dr. Sun, having had the option of either a serious civil war, or the frustration of his principal aim - the overthrow of the Manchus - cabled to Yuan Shih-kai on January 15, 1912, offering him the presidency of the Chinese Republic. After the customary oriental hesitation Yuan accepted and Dr. Sun Yat-sen retired.

Meanwhile the plans for self-aggrandizement on the part of Yuan Shih-kai made it impossible for Dr. Sun to calmly view the threat of failure of his life-long struggles. He cast aside the sinecure position of Director General of Chinese Railways and went to Japan for the purpose of reorganizing the revolutionary movement, mainly with a view to ousting Yuan from his position. In July 1913, the governors of Kiangsi and Kwangtung raised the banner of revolt against Peking, and severe fighting spread to Shanghai. The incident is known as the second revolution. Yuan Shih-kai made use of the occasion to dismiss all the Kuomintang members of the Peking Parliament and had himself then elected as permanent President for the duration of 5 years. When attempting to have himself elevated to the exalted position of emperor of China (December, 1915) Yuan Shih-kai caused Yunnan and other southern provinces to revolt against his breach of faith. Yuan died in June, 1916.

In 1918 a complete break between the Kuomintang and the Peking Government came about; 7 southern provinces announced their independence from the North. Dr. Sun Yat-sen again was heading the southern movement. In 1919 South China had its own Government. In 1921 Dr. Sun was elected President of China at Canton. But soon some generals in Kwangtung and Kwangsi were revolting against him. Dr. Sun had to take flight; at first on a Chinese gunboat, but thereafter a British gunboat landed him at Shanghai. When his party, the Kuomintang, returned to China, it was under the influence of communism. Many Chinese students were sent to Soviet Russia, to be indoctrinated in the aims and views of communism, so that they could spread it upon their return to China. Within the Kuomintang there was a wing strongly favoring communist teachings. But there also was a section (to which Sun Foo, the son of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, belonged), strongly opposing communistic doctrines. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, however, was furthering the movement, as suitable for China. With him were veterans, like Hu Han-ming and Wang Ching-wei.

In 1925 Dr. Sun Yat-sen died at Peking from cancer. He certainly did not see his life-work crowned with lasting success when he departed from this world. And neither had conditions improved a quarter of a century after his demise.

Nevertheless, it must be recorded that Dr. Sun's life was unselfishly devoted to a good cause. For many years he was hunted and had to live the life of a poor fugitive. He brought untold sacrifices and harvested but little concrete success.

The history above appears in "Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Coins (Gold, Silver, Nickel and Aluminum)" by Eduard Kann, 1953