



大清國當今慈禧端佑康頤昭豫莊誠壽恭欽獻崇熙聖母太后
光緒三十四年

The Empress Dowager Cixi stands before one of her thrones. The empress essentially ruled China from 1861 until her death in 1908. For most of that time, she was ultraconservative, but she herself prompted the first modern institutional changes in the first decade of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 1

An Old World Dies; A New One Is Born

The Boxer catastrophe in 1900 and the Empress Dowager Cixi's subsequent year-and-a-half self-imposed exile in Xi'an, an old imperial capital about 800 miles southwest of Beijing, convinced her of the necessity for reform. The Empress Dowager and her dynasty, known as the Qing, were Manchus from far northeastern China. They had ruled China since 1644. Recognizing that China now faced possible extinction as a state if its leaders did not try to address the horde of problems in front of them, she turned first to education. The court decreed the establishment of a modern school system, and, in one of the most revolutionary acts of any Chinese government in the twentieth century, abolished the civil service examination system. The government instituted military reform, establishing the so-called New Army, trained in modern weapons and techniques and inspired by the spirit of nationalism.

The administration of the national government, existing basically as it had been constructed more than 1,000 years earlier, was totally revamped. Even more revolutionary was the Empress Dowager's political decision to move to a constitutional government, though many scholars believe it was primarily a strategy to maintain the dynasty's power. If she had lived longer, she just might have been able to pull off this revolutionary blitz in the structuring of a new world. But after her death in November 1908, her successors slowed the reforms, in the process stirring up further opposition to the Manchus.

A large part of the Manchus' problems was their ethnic identity: as non-Chinese, they had been in charge of China during its disastrous nineteenth-century fall from wealth and power. No matter how much

the Manchus reformed now, nationalistic Chinese saw them as the root of China's problems. Revolutionary leaders such as Sun Yat-sen, a Western-educated medical doctor, plotted coups and planned for a new Chinese republic. Many, especially in urban areas, joined organizations directed toward both further reform and ousting the Manchus. A rebellion that broke out in central China in October 1911 led to the February 1912 abdication of the Manchu emperor and the end of the Chinese monarchy. With these events, a new, uncharted world came into being.

The Revolutionary Movement

The 1905 abolition of the civil service examination was the most revolutionary act in China's twentieth-century history. Why? First, the examination was the more than millennium-old vehicle that had produced China's political and social leaders. Once it was gone, what would be the source of China's leaders? Perhaps even more important, the civil service examination had provided Chinese leaders with a shared way of looking at life and dealing with problems. All who had taken the exam had to study Confucianism, together with the philosophical commentaries that elaborated on and explained it. The examination system had thus been the principal force that carried forward the Chinese way.

In this poster, officials in the city of Wuchang get ready to board a steamboat on the Yangzi River. They are in a hurry to escape the city and further violence after the 1911 revolution broke out.



In this formal request sent to the court in 1904, key officials urged the abolition of the civil service examination. The court had previously ordered the establishment of a nationwide system of schools that would initially co-exist with the examination system. This petition suggests major problems with putting such a system into place, the foremost being that young men continued to invest in tutorials to pass the examination. If a modern school system was going to work, many saw that the exam system had to go.

Since we received the imperial rescript to improve the management of schools, more than two years have passed. But up to now, schools could not be established in great number in any province because of the embarrassing difficulty of providing funds. Public funds are limited. Everything depends on contributions provided by the population. But the funds cannot be gathered by contributions because the examination system has not yet been discontinued. The literati throughout the empire say that it is not the intention of the court to stress especially the importance of the schools. Thus if the examination system is not transformed and reduced, the people will certainly feel hesitant. . . .

Those entering the schools are depending upon the examination system as a means for backsliding. They are willing neither to turn wholeheartedly to study in the schools nor to observe respectfully the rules of the schools. Furthermore, the papers in the examination system are almost always plagiarized; but study in the schools requires real application. The examination system relies only upon the failure or success of one day; in the schools several years have to be spent in thorough investigation. In the examination system the candidates are selected merely for their polished style; there is no way to test their personal qualities. The schools, however, pay attention to the way of life of the students, and, moreover, the workings of their minds can be clearly shown. A comparison of the examination system and the schools will show clearly which is difficult and which is easy. It is always the inclination of men to evade the difficult and to follow the easy. . . .

But at this time the situation of our country is very dangerous. There can be no rescue without men of ability. Unless schools are established there will be no way to bring forward men of ability to avert the danger of these times. If we continue thus to follow routine, sitting and wasting years and months while the situation of the country is urgent, how can we subsist? . . .

We think, arguing according to the principle of the matter, that it is necessary to discontinue the examination system at once, so that

Literati

Those who passed the Chinese civil service exam



When the Manchus took control of China in the seventeenth century, they ordered that each Chinese man braid his hair in a queue as a sign of subjection. When the Manchus were overthrown in 1912, cutting the queue became a symbol of liberation.

Han

The ethnic Chinese

Tartars

The Manchus

the management of the schools may improve in quality and funds may be provided.

As part of the educational reforms of the Manchu government, many young Chinese studied in Japan, which had modernized with amazing speed after being "opened" to trade and dealings with the West. By the 1890s some Chinese had come to see Japan as a model, though there was something of a love-hate relationship, given Japan's shocking military defeat of China in 1894-95. That war notwithstanding, by 1906 there were about 13,000 Chinese students in Japanese colleges and military academies. Chinese students began to set up associations based on their native place; students from the province of Zhejiang, for example, formed a Zhejiang Association. In these new organizations they began to raise questions such as: "Why is China so 'backward' when compared to the vibrant, changing Japan?" Increasingly the answer was "the Manchus."

It is therefore not too surprising that the central force in the revolutionary movement, the Revolutionary Alliance, was formed in Tokyo in 1905. Founded by Sun Yat-sen, it was the first to set down a plan for what would happen after the Manchus were ousted. Its manifesto's first two points hold high the banner of nationalism; the third describes the nature of the state; and the last deals with Sun's social and economic ideals. The manifesto ends with a description of the stages of the revolution.

We recall that, since the beginning of our nation, the Chinese have always ruled China; although at times alien peoples have usurped our rule, yet our ancestors were able to drive them out and restore Chinese sovereignty so that they could hand down the nation to posterity. Now the men of Han have raised a righteous (or patriotic) army to exterminate the northern barbarians. This is a . . . great righteous cause, . . . a national revolution. . . [We] proclaim to the world in utmost sincerity the outline of the present revolution and the fundamental plan for the future administration of the nation.

1. Drive out the Tartars: The Manchus conquered China, and enslaved our Chinese people. Those who opposed them were killed by hundreds of thousands, and our Chinese have been a people without a nation for two hundred and sixty years. The extreme cruelties and tyrannies of the Manchu government have now reached their limit. With the righteous army poised against them, we will overthrow that government, and restore our sovereign rights. . . .
2. Restore China: China is the China of the Chinese. The government of China should be in the hands of the Chi-

nese. After driving out the Tartars we must restore our sovereign state.

3. Establish the Republic: Now our revolution is based on equality, in order to establish a republican government. All our people are equal and enjoy political rights; the president will be publicly chosen by the people of the country. The parliament will be made up of members publicly chosen by the people of the country. A constitution of the Chinese Republic will be enacted, and every person must abide by it. . . .
4. Equalize land ownership: The good fortune of civilization is to be shared equally by all the people of the nation. We should improve our social and economic organization, and assess the value of all the land in the country. Its present price shall be received by the owner, but all increases in [land] value resulting from reform and social improvements after the revolution shall belong to the state, to be shared by all the people, in order to create a socialist state, where each family within the empire can be well supported, each person satisfied, and no one fail to secure employment. . . .

The above four points will be carried out in three steps in due order. Of these three periods, the first is the period in which the Military Government leads the people in eradicating all traditional evils and abuses. The second is the period in which the Military Government gives the power of local self-government to the people while retaining general control over national affairs. The third is the period in which the Military Government is divested of its powers, and the government will by itself manage national affairs under the constitution. It is hoped that our people will proceed in due order and cultivate their free and equal status; the foundation of the Chinese Republic will be entirely based on this.

In the years after 1905, various violent plots were hatched against Manchu officials and carried out in guerrilla fashion. One involved several men and one woman who all were from the city of Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province, but who did not know one another until they studied together in Japan. The men, led by Xu Xilin, plotted to kill the Manchu governor of neighboring Anhui Province; at the same time, the woman, Qiu Jin, was to rise in rebellion in Shaoxing. The men succeeded in killing the governor, Enming, but were seized immediately and beheaded. Xu's heart was cut out and presented before the governor's corpse. Authorities then

My voice reechoes from heaven to earth, I tear my lungs to shreds in crying out to my fellow countrymen: Listen! Our China must have a revolution today! If we are to throw off the Manchu yoke, we must have revolution today. We must have revolution if China is to be independent. We must have revolution if China is to take its place as a powerful nation on the globe, if China is to survive for long in the new world of the twentieth century, if China is to be a great country in the world and play the leading role.

—From a manifesto written by eighteen-year-old revolutionary Zou Rong in 1903