

## **Wang Ching-wei Rises in China**

Trained by Sun Yat-Sen, He is Now Civil Head of the Nationalist Party -- and Anti-Communist-- His Adventurous Career

by Paul Blanchard | The New York Times / September 11, 1927

Out of the storms of the Chinese revolution a new native leader has arisen who is far more popular among his own people than the military dictators. He is Wang Ching-wei, forty-five year-old revolutionist and now head of the Nationalist Government of Central China. His career of adventure and devotion rivals that of the best pirates and saints of history.

Wang Ching-wei, like many of his associates in the Chinese revolution, is extremely youthful in spirit and appearance. When I interviewed him in Hankow in July he was the responsible head of the Hankow Government and Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of China's Nationalist party, the Kuomintang. I expected, therefore, to meet a man of august presence and considerable age. When he finally walked into the parlor where I waited he looked more like a college athlete than a Prime Minister. Garbed in an American palm beach suite with open-throated sporting shirt and wearing white shoes, he stepped forward and greeted me with the half-shy cordiality of a new college friend.

As he talked, his easy gestures and quick, winning smile made me understand why he is considered the most powerful popular speaker in Chinese politics. When the Nationalists have need of any leader to arouse the masses to burning enthusiasm or to tell them in the least unpleasant way about some defeat, ralways call upon Wang Ching-wei.

### **Starting an Insurrection**

Born into a family of moderate means and educated in Japan, Wang Ching-wei first leaped into national prominence when he tried to assassinate a Manchu prince in 1909. Wang told me the story of that

attempted assassination reluctantly, leaving to his aides the portions of the narrative that magnified his own courage.

Nineteen years ago, when a rebellion against the Manchu dynasty was being organized in Southern China, Wang Ching-wei was assigned by the revolutionists to start an insurrection in Peking. He went secretly from Canton to Peking and commenced the work of discovering revolutionists among those who were close to the Manchu household. After much manoeuvring he won the friendship of one of the military commanders of Peking, who agreed to join in a revolt against the dynasty if the revolutionists would create sufficient disturbance to give him a pretext for action.

"How much of a disturbance do you want?" asked Wang.

"If one of the Manchu princes is killed," replied the commander, "that will be enough."

It was precisely the answer that Wang Ching-wei wanted. With five of his young revolutionary friends he canvassed the royal family and decided upon one Tsai Lun as the sacrifice. The five young men learned that the prince rose early and went to his palace at 5 o'clock every morning, passing an empty house which stood isolated.

They manufactured a powerful bomb that could be exploded by electricity, and one Winter morning at 2 o'clock they stole to the house, planted the bomb and waited for the prince. All five of them entered into a pact to set off the bomb when the prince appeared and not try to escape. They were prepared to die with the prince.

### **Defeated by Dog's Bark**

Here a certain dog entered the picture. Probably he was a Manchu dog; at any rate he had an excellent nose for revolutionists. He scented something unfamiliar about that vacant house and began to bark. A suspicious guard came, and summoned other guards. Presently five young men who had been willing to die as martyrs to the republican

cause found themselves sentenced to die.

But Tsai Lun was a prince gifted with curiosity. He was interested to know why five young men hated him so bitterly that they were willing to blow themselves into eternity with him. He had Wang Ching-wei brought before him and asked:

"Why are you a revolutionist?"

For Wang that was an easy question.

"There are so many reasons why I am a revolutionist," he replied, "that it would take me several days to give you an adequate answer. With your permission I would like to write my answer."

### **Saved By His Style**

The prince consented, and Wang Ching-wei wrote for three days. The prince, astonished by the power and finish of Wang's literary style, commuted the sentence of all five young revolutionists to life imprisonment. When the republican revolution finally succeeded, two years later, in overthrowing the Manchu dynasty, Wang Ching-wei issued from prison a national hero.

Wang Ching-wei worked side by side with the late Dr. Sun Yat-Sen for many years as his personal assistant. In the eyes of the Chinese people Wang is the natural successor to Dr. Sun, but the Nationalists do not emphasize his power because they are opposed to one-man domination of their movement. Wang is best known as head of the Kuomintang, which controls the Nationalist Government under a one-party system, but he has held many other posts. In 1918 he served as Minister of Finance and Director of the Salt Administration of the Chinese Republic.

Like so many of the younger leaders of China, Wang Ching-wei was educated abroad and began his revolutionary activities when a student. Up to the age of 19 he attended Chinese schools, and then

won a scholarship in a Japanese university, from which he was graduated in law at the age of 24. In Tokio the Japanese Government discovered that he was engaged in republican activities against the Manchus and his scholarship was withdrawn.

Nothing daunted, Wang set about earning his way through the university by translating Japanese works into Chinese, a difficult task because of the intricacies of both languages. His translations were so acceptable that he was paid ten Chinese dollars for every thousand words and so supported himself and his sister through their college years.

### **Followers of Henry George**

In the Chinese Nationalist movement he occupies a centrist position, being resolutely opposed to the military control of such leaders as Chiang Kai-shek -- now retired -- and also to the Communist program. I saw him in the critical days of mid-July when the question was being hotly debated whether the Communists should be allowed to cooperate further with the Kuomintang. Wang was decidedly pro-labor in his utterances and did not hesitate to denounce the unequal treaties, but he indignantly denied that this had anything to do with Communism.

"We are not Communist," he declared. "Look at our program and you can see for yourself. It is true that we have cooperated with Russia, because Russia has helped us. Sun Yat-Sen favored cooperation with the Communists provided that the Kuomintang and not the Communists should decide the program of common action. We allowed the Communists to join us; we never joined the Communists."

"I want to assure the American public that the Kuomintang and the Communist Party have come to a parting of the ways."

It was about a week after this statement that the Hankow Government split off from the Communists and the Left Wing Ministers of Labor and Agriculture resigned.

"How does your economic program differ from that of the Communists?" I asked.

"The Communists," he replied, favor a general nationalization of the land, but the Kuomintang does not wish to go that far. We recognize the abuses of peasant tenantry and propose to remedy the abuses through a compulsory, legal reduction in the rent of land and through Government land-banks, which will lend money to the peasants at a small fraction of the outrageous interest they now pay.

**"Sun Yat-Sen, as you know, was greatly influenced by your American radical, Henry George, but he was never a Communist. His economic program, which is ours, means three things: Henry George's method of assessing land, definite laws against monopoly under private ownership, and Government ownership of large public utilities. We propose to realize this program without violence and without confiscation."**

As he talked, it was not hard to believe that Wang Ching-wei's power over Chinese audiences is almost hypnotic. His personality is bound to play a large part in the future of the Chinese revolution.