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# *Introduction*

## **The Arduous Course of the Establishment of the People's Republic of China**

**T**he founding, in 1949, of the People's Republic of China (PRC) marked the end to China's semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and the victory for the new-democratic revolution. It marked the realization of the Chinese people's wish, long-cherished since the Opium War in 1840, for national independence and popular liberation, and their entry into a new era, one in which the people became masters in their own home.

The People's Republic is a new country, one established by the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and representing the fundamental interests of the majority of the people. It was established in the process of the CPC's allying with each oppressed class, each people's group, each democratic party and non-party personages, each minority ethnic group, and overseas Chinese, and allying with the Kuomintang (KMT, or the Nationalist Party) – breaking from it and then allying again before finally overthrowing

the imperialist, feudalist and bureaucratic capitalist rule represented by the regime of Chiang Kai-shek. Even more it was established through a process in which the CPC led the Chinese people through bloody struggle and hard exploration, integrated Marxism-Leninism with the realities of the Chinese revolution, pioneered the correct course of encircling the cities from the rural areas to capture national political power by force of arms, and constructed regimes in different periods of the revolution and in various revolutionary base areas.

The People's Republic of China was hard-earned, won by the blood and lives of countless revolutionary martyrs. According to incomplete statistics, during the years of revolutionary wars, an estimated 20 million revolutionary martyrs sacrificed their lives on battle fields and execution grounds.

### **1. China's earliest attempts at "the working class building the state anew"**

The Chinese are a great people, diligent and brave. By dint of their wisdom and the sweat of their brow, they created five thousand years of glorious history of civilization and made great contributions to the development and progress of human society. But in modern times, owing to the corruption of feudalistic rule and imperialist invasions, China was reduced to a poor and weak semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, at the mercy of bullies. Since the beginning of modern age, the Chinese people struggled ceaselessly against internal and external enemies, but every struggle had ended in failure. Countless people with noble ideals advanced, wave upon wave... in wars against foreign invasion, in old-fashioned peasant wars such as the Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Uprising, in the 1898 Reform Movement or in the Revolution of 1911 that overthrew the feudal monarchy. Every time they failed to realize national independence and liberation of the



people; notably, they failed to overthrow the rule of the exploiting class and put the working class to rebuilding the country. The people were brought to a state of extreme perplexity.

It was at this juncture that the encouraging news came from the north. Victory in Russia's October Revolution led by Lenin brought hope to Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, chief commanders of the New Culture Movement, men who held high the banner of democracy and science and vehemently attacked the old thoughts, old morals and old culture of feudalism. They found the tool of proletarian world view to analyze the destiny of a country and re-explore a way out for China. This also brought hope to the many times defeated Sun Yat-sen, a leader "committed to National Revolution," inspiring him with the belief of "learning from Russia" and "restarting revolution." Just as Mao Zedong summed things up 30 years later, "The Russian



Founding of the CPC in 1921. Picture shows: site of the Party's First National Congress in Shanghai.

Revolution of 1917 awakened the Chinese,” and “from that time on, China changed her direction.”

On May 4, 1919, the submission of the Beiyang (Northern Warlord) Government accepting imperialist damage to China's territorial sovereignty triggered a patriotic mass movement. In the May Fourth Movement, the working class made an independent entrance onto the political stage. Swathes of advanced individuals, adherents of Marxism, joined with the working class in the struggle. In terms of ideas and organization the right conditions for the birth of a proletariat party now existed.

The founding of the CPC in 1921 was “an epoch-making event” in Chinese history. This party of the working class, taking Marxism as its ideological weapon, in line with the requirements of social progress and revolutionary development in modern times, pointed out the direction for the Chinese revolution, and the Chinese people found their backbone. The First National Congress of the CPC held in July that year declared: “Use the proletariat revolutionary army to overthrow the bourgeoisie and have the working class build the state anew,” “Wipe out private ownership by capitalists,” and “Establish public ownership.” Then the Secretariat of the Chinese Labor Organization was established to lead the Chinese working class to a high tide of workers' movements.

Between January 1922 and February 1923, over 100 strikes were organized, with more than 300,000 workers participating. The most influential were the strikes of the Anyuan railroad and mines and the five Kailuan mines. The Beijing-Hankou Railway Workers' Strike in February 1923 pushed the labor movement of this period to a peak. This large-scale strike ended in defeat, being bloodily suppressed by the Beiyang warlord Wu Peifu. The painful lesson showed that where the enemy was strong and the forces weak “for the working class to



build the state anew,” it was essential to do everything possible to form alliances with all revolutionary forces.

In July 1922, the CPC held its Second National Congress. After an analysis of the national situation, it formulated the guiding principle and strategy that the Chinese revolution should be carried out in two steps. The manifesto passed by the congress explicitly stated that the supreme guiding principle of the Party was to realize socialism and communism; the lower guiding principle was the overthrow of warlords, ending the oppression of international imperialists and unifying China as a true democratic republic. The congress stressed that to realize the latter guiding principle, “the Communist Party should come out and associate with the reforming parties nationwide to organize a democratic allied front which takes it as its duty to wipe out feudal warlords, overthrow imperialist oppression and establish an independent country with real democratic politics.” It also stressed: “Our participation in the democratic revolution front is totally as a process for the working class to seize political power in China.” It was here that the objectives of “the working class to seize political power in China” and “establish an independent country with real democratic politics” were presented for the first time. The congress also passed a resolution affirming that the Communist Party of China was a branch of the Communist International led by Lenin and accepted its leadership.

At that time, the Comintern executive committee, following the proposal of Maring, its representative in China, made plain in the Resolution on the Relationship Between the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang: Since the central task for China is the national revolution against imperialists and their feudalistic proxies in China, it is necessary for the Communist Party to cooperate with the Kuomintang, “the only major national revolutionary group in China.”

Pushed by the Comintern, the CPC convened its Third National Congress in June 1923 to discuss the issue of its cooperation with the Kuomintang. On the basis of observation of the Kuomintang since the Second CPC National Congress, the Party considered that despite its many shortcomings and mistakes, the Kuomintang were “after all the only revolutionary democrats in China and should of course count as an important factor in the united front of democracy.” The congress accepted the Comintern proposal and passed the Resolution on the National Movement and Cooperation with the Kuomintang, calling on members of the Communist Party to join the Kuomintang as individuals and, through cooperation within the Kuomintang, strive to broaden that party’s organization, concentrating revolutionaries throughout China into the Kuomintang in line with the needs of the revolution.

Meanwhile, under Comintern pressure, Sun Yat-sen also made up his mind to cooperate with the Communist Party and to reorganize the Kuomintang. In January 1924, the First National Congress of the Kuomintang was held in Guangzhou. Sun Yat-sen’s opening speech defined the fundamental task of the congress as being “to organize the Kuomintang into a strong and concrete party once more,” and then “to use the strength of the party to reconstruct the country.” The congress made a new interpretation of the Three People’s Principles (nationalism, democracy and livelihood of the people) in the form of a manifesto, which stressed the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks, established the Three Great Policies of alliance with Russia, cooperation with the Communist Party and assistance to the peasants and workers, in effect accepting the lower guiding policy of the Communist Party as the political foundation for cooperation between the two parties.

Having learned the lesson of the Revolution of 1911 that “there is only a revolutionary party struggle, not a revolutionary army struggle,”

Sun Yat-sen accepted the Communist Party suggestion to establish a military academy, namely, the Whampoa Military Academy. The congress also passed the Constitution of the Kuomintang of China, confirming that members of the Communist Party and the Socialist Youth League could join the Kuomintang as individuals and deciding to recruit KMT members from among workers and peasants. Li Dazhao, Tan Pingshan, Lin Boqu, Qu Qiubai and Mao Zedong were among the 10 Communist Party members elected to the KMT Central Executive Committee, one-fourth of the total members. The First National Congress of the Kuomintang marked the realization of the first cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party.

The first cooperation promoted the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle centered on Guangzhou, and brought together the revolutionary forces across China. The labor movement rose to a climax after the low point of the February 7th Massacre of 1923, giving rise to the May 30th Movement and the Hong Kong-Guangzhou Strike. Peasant movement also started to revolt. It was under this political precondition that military rebels such as local warlord Chen Jiongmeng were put down one by one and the Guangdong revolutionary base was unified and consolidated.

Following the death of Sun Yat-sen, the National Government was established in Guangzhou on July 1, 1925 and Wang Jingwei was appointed chairman. Next, the student army of Whampoa Military Academy and the Guangdong, Hunan and Yunnan armies stationed in Guangdong were united and reorganized into six army corps of the National Revolutionary Army (NRA). Previously and subsequent to this, Chiang Kai-shek, representative of the new rightist forces in the Kuomintang, served successively as head of Central Organization Department of the Kuomintang and head of the Soldiers' Department, chairman of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the