CHAPTER 7 • Revolution, Warlordism, and Intellectual Transformation

7.9 JAPAN'S TWENTY-ONE DEMANDS (JANUARY 18TH, 1915)

On January 18, 1915, Eki Hoiki, the Japanese minister in Beijing, handed President Yuan Shikai the following list of twenty-one demands grouped into five sections. The timing of the demands took full advantage of Great Britain's recent entrance into the First World War. The Japanese calculated that Britain would be hard pressed to hold Japan to the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1905 which stated that both countries would be bound to the "preservation of the ... independence, and integrity of the Chinese Empire." On May 7, the Japanese minister presented an ultimatum including a revised series of demands (in particular the postponement of the demands in Group 5 (see below)) and the threat that if these terms were not accepted within 48 hours the Japanese government would "take such steps as they deem necessary." The next day, Yuan Shikai accepted the demands and on May 25, 1915 he officially signed treaties and diplomatic notes acknowledging China's assent to the terms. His acceptance set off a furor and sparked popular anti-Japanese movements throughout China.

MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

As the military and political crises deepened, intellectually charged movements arose. These movements advocated publicly for a unified response by China's fragmented political and military leaders. The May Fourth Movement is best understood as a popular movement unified by a desire to intellectually redefine China's traditional culture and society, even its language (7.11). The catalysts for these changes were varied, such as the humiliating political and economic demands imposed on China by Japan, the demeaning treatment China received in the Versailles settlement of World War One, and the debilitating effect of the rampant Warlord militarism (7.9). The May Fourth Movement, though a response to these kinds of external pressures, was first and foremost an internal, intellectual movement that sought to alter what it meant for anything or anyone to be Chinese. Journals such as New Youth, intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu, and literary figures like Lu Xun were all part of a broad public dialogue that sought to reshape the basic building blocks of Chinese society. This dialogue covered political ideology, literature, and the composition of Chinese "national essence" (pusuo). In many of the following documents we see the political, social, and cultural seeds of China's future, though the context in which these events took place gave little evidence of their eventual success.

MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT—A movement narrowly defined as events sparked by the student-led demonstrations of May 4, 1919 against the Treaty of Versailles. More often it is used to identify the broad intellectual and cultural transformations that took place after Japan's Twenty-One Demands (1915) lasting well into the 1920s.

CHEN DUXIU (1886-1942)—A gifted May Fourth intellectual who helped launch and edit New Youth. In 1915, was appointed Deans to the School of Arts at Beijing University in 1917, and was a founding member and first party secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921.

NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT (6.1917-1923)—A movement roughly equivalent to the "May Fourth Movement," though some suggest the New Culture Movement indicates a more "thought" oriented movement compared to the "action" agenda of the May Fourth Movement. The conflation of the terms has made them interchangeable in popular discourse.

Questions

1. Rank the five groups of demands into what you name? China (and the Chinese people) found most to least objectionable?

2. In what ways are Japan's twenty-one demands similar or different from the unequal treaties China was forced to sign with Western powers during the nineteenth century (Chapter 4)?

GROUP I

The Japanese Government and the Chinese Government being desirous of maintaining the general peace in Eastern Asia and further strengthening the friendly relations and good neighborhood existing between the two nations agree to the following articles:

ARTICLE 1—The Chinese Government engages to give full assent to all matters upon which the Japanese Government may hereafter agree with the German Government relating to the dis position of all rights, interests and concessions which Germany, by virtue of treaties or otherwise, possesses in relation to the province of Shandong.

ARTICLE 2—The Chinese Government engages that within the Province of Shandong and along its coast, no territory or island will be ceded or leased to a third power under any pretext.

ARTICLE 3—The Chinese government consents to Japan's building a railway from Yantai or Longkuo to join the Jiaochou-Jinan Railway.

ARTICLE 4—The Chinese Government engages in interest of trade and for the residence of foreigners, to open by herself as soon as possible certain important cities and towns in the province of Shandong as commercial ports. What places shall be opened are to be jointly decided upon in a separate agreement.

GROUP II

The Japanese government and the Chinese government, since the Chinese government has always acknowledged the special position enjoyed by Japan in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, agree to the following articles:

ARTICLE 1—The two contracting parties mutually agree that the term of lease of Port Arthur
CHAPTER 7  
Revolution, Warlordism, and Intellectual Transformation

Japanese or Chinese or that the police departments of these places shall employ numerous Japanese, so that they may at the same time help to plan for the improvement of the Chinese Police Service.

ARTICLE 4—China shall purchase from Japan a fixed amount of munitions of war (say 50 percent or more of what is needed by the Chinese government) or that there shall be established in Japanese a Sino-Japanese jointly worked arsenal. Japanese technical experts are to be employed and Japanese material to be purchased.

7.10 MAY FOURTH MANIFESTO (MAY 4, 1919)

China, like many non-Western European nations, had placed considerable confidence in President Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Many non-Western countries took Wilson’s Fourteen Points to mean he advocated equality among all nations in the World War One peace proceedings at Versailles outside of Paris. When word finally reached China that Germany’s holdings would be given to Japan instead of reverting to Chinese control, public outrage boiled over. Students in Beijing took to the streets to protest the peace negotiations. One of the student leaders, Luo Jialun, wrote the following manifesto which was the only publication printed that day. The demonstration by today’s standards was small—only 3,000 students from Beijing’s thirteen colleges. However, the impact was immediate and sparked a nationwide reaction against the treaty and against Japan. The Treaty of Versailles, formally signed eight months after the war’s end in June 28, 1919, did not include China’s signature.

Questions

1. At what target is the anger of the May Fourth demonstrations directed?
2. What political and military contingencies (within China) made it difficult for the Chinese (Beijing) government to oppose the Versailles Peace Treaty?

At the Paris Peace Conference, Japan’s request to occupy and control Shandong, is about to be granted! Their diplomacy has triumphed completely while ours has failed utterly! The loss of Shandong can only denote the end of China’s territorial integrity! The end of China’s territorial integrity can only mean China is done for! Therefore today, we, the students, form a procession and demonstrate in front of every embassy of every country, and demand that they defend justice. We hope people in industry, business and every walk of life all over the country will hold citizens meetings to fight; internationally for China’s sovereignty, and domestically to rid the country of traitors. China’s survival depends on this next move! Today we take two oaths with all our fellow countrymen: China’s territory can be conquered, but not given away!

The Chinese people may be killed, but they will not submit!

The country will be lost! Fellow citizens, rise up!
7.11 CHEN DUXIU’S “NEW YOUTH” MANIFESTO (DECEMBER 1, 1919)

The leading journal of the May Fourth Movement was New Youth (Xin Qingnian). Founded in 1915, it was in the vanguard of an intellectual movement promoting science, vernacular Chinese literature, and an often leftist political ideology. The May Fourth journal issued a novel and idealistic manifesto, which captured the rapidly shifting political mood in China. This was unlike anything it had printed before. Among other things, this manifesto exhibited a far more radical attitude towards political parties than had been previously published. It captured the sharp shift in thought that transpired in the post-May Fourth period, and it asserted that Chinese citizens must begin to participate in political change.

Questions

1. Who in 1919 would disagree that “politics, ethical science, the arts, religion, and education should meet all practical needs for present and future social life”? Why?

2. What is the editorial’s final paragraph suggesting? Why?

We believe that the moral progress of mankind should expand to a standard above the life based on animal impulse (i.e., aggressive and possessive); therefore, we should extend a feeling of friendship and mutual assistance to all worlds of the people. But toward aggressive and possessive warlords and plutocrats, we have to be hostile.

We advocate mass movement and social reconstruction, absolutely cutting off any relations with past and present political parties. Although we do not believe in the omnipotence of politics, we recognize that politics is an important aspect of public life. And we believe that in a genuine democracy, political rights must be distributed to all the people. Even though there may be limitations, the criteria for the distribution will be whether they work or not, rather than whether they own property or not. This kind of politics is really inevitable in the process of introducing the new era and a useful instrument for the development of the new society. As for political parties, we also recognize them as a necessary device for political practice, but we shall never tolerate membership in parties that support the interests of the few or of one class rather than the happiness of the whole society.

We believe that politics, ethical science, the arts, religion, and education should all meet practical needs in the achievement of progress for present and future social life.

We have to give up the useless and irrelevant elements of traditional literature and ethics, because we want to create those needed for the progress of the new era and new society.

We believe that respect women’s personality and rights is a practical need for the social progress in present, and we hope that they themselves will be completely aware of their duty to society.

7.12 LU XUN’S CALL TO ARMS (DECEMBER 3, 1922)

No single literary figure more accurately captured the mood, aspirations, and musings of the May Fourth era than Lu Xun (1881–1936). Still revered in China today (especially for his sardonic tale of a village idiot in “The True Story of A Q”), Lu Xun actively pushed his leftist agenda in his writings. His clear affinity with the lower classes and his ability to capture the choices facing all Chinese in his writings transcended standard political divisions. The following excerpt is taken from his frontispiece to a collection of short stories entitled Call to Arms. The autobiographical themes he describes would have resonated among many of the May Fourthers and with the growing numbers of politically disaffected Chinese.

Questions

1. From his preface can you deduce why Lu Xun entitled his collected works Call to Arms?

2. What are the parallels between the “iron house” metaphor and the May Fourth generation?

When I was young I, too, had many dreams. Most of them I later forgot, but I see nothing in this to regret. For although recalling the past may bring happiness, at times it cannot but bring loneliness, and what is the point of dinging in spirit to lonely bygone days? However, my trouble is that I cannot forget completely, and these stories stem from those things which I have been unable to forget.

For more than four years I frequented, almost daily, a pawnshop and pharmacy. I cannot remember how old I was at the time but the pharmacy counter was exactly my height and that in the pawnshop twice my height. I used to hand clothes and trinkets up to the counter twice my height, then take the money given me with contempt to the counter own height to buy medicine for my father, a chronic invalid. On my return home I had other things to keep me busy, for our physician was so eminent that he prescribed unusual drugs and adjuvants: also roots dug up in winter, sugar-cane that had been three years exposed to frost, original pairs of crickets, and an artificia shrub that had seeded most of which were difficult to come by. But my father’s illness went from bad to worse until he died.

It is my belief that those who come down in the world will probably learn in the process what society is really like. My eagerness to go to N— and study in the K— seems to have shown a desire to strike out for myself, escape, and find people of a different kind. My mother had no choice but to raise eight dollars for my traveling expenses and say I might do as I pleased. That she cried was only natural, for at that time the proper thing was to study the classics and take the official examinations. Anyone who studied foreign subjects was a social outcast regarded as someone who could find no way out and was forced to sell his soul to foreign devils. Besides, she was sorry to part with me. But in spite of all this, I went to N— (translator’s note: Nanjing) and entered the K— Academ (translator’s note: Jiangnan Naval Academy where author studies in 1883); and it was there that I learned of the existence of physics, arithmetic, geography, history, drawing and physical training. They had no physiology course, but we saw woodblock editions of such works as A New Course on the Human Body and Essays on Chemistry and Hygiene. Recalling the talk and prescriptions of physicians I had known and comparing them with what I now know, I came to the conclusion that those physicians must be either unwriting or deliberate charlatans; and I began to feel great sympathy for the invalids and families who suffered from diseases. From translated histories I also learned that the Japanese Reformation owed its rise, to a great extent, to the introduction of Western medical science to Japan.

These inklings took me to a medical college in the Japanese countryside. It was my fine dream that on my return to China I would cure patients like my father who had suffered from the wrong treatment, while if war broke out I would serve as an army doctor, at the same time promoting my countrymen’s faith in reform.

I have no idea what improved methods are now used to teach microbiology, but in those days we were shown lantern slides of microbes; and if the lecture ended early, the instructor might show slides of natural scenery or news to fill up the time. Since this was during the Russo-Japanese War, there were many war slides, 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 companions; but one day I saw a new-reel side of a number of Chinese, one of them bound and the rest standing around him. They were all studly fellows but appeared completely apathetic. According to the commentary, the one with his hands bound behind him was a spy working for the Russians who was to be beheaded 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 this side convinced me that medical science was not so important after all. The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they might be, could only serve to be made examples of or as witnesses of such futile spectacles; and it was not necessarily deplorable if many of them died of illness. The most important thing, therefore, was to change one's spirit, and since at that time I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I decided to promote a literary movement. There were many Chinese studying law, studying political science, physics and chemistry, even police work and engineering, but not one studying literature and art. However, even in this unconvivial environment I was fortunate enough to find some kindred spirits. We gathered the few others we needed and after discussion our first step, of course, was to publish a magazine, the title of which denoted that this was a new birth. As we were then rather classically inclined, we called it Vita Nova (New Life).

When the times for publication drew near, some of our contributors dropped out and then our funds ran out, until there were only three of us left and we were penniless. Since we had started our venture and we an unlucky hour, there was naturally no one to whom we could complain when we failed; but later even we three were destined to part, and our discussions of a future dream world had to cease. So ended this abortive Vita Nova.

Only later did I feel the futility of it all. At that time I had not a clue. Later it seemed to me that if one's proposal met with approval, that should encourage him to pursue if they met with opposition, that should make him fight back; but the real tragedy was for him to lift up his voice among the living against all opposition, that if he were stranded in a boundless desert completely at a loss. That was when I became conscious of insomnolence.

And this sense of loneliness grew from day to day, entwining itself about my soul like some insomnolent shadow. But in spite of my groundless sadness, I felt no indigination; for this experience had made me truly see that I was definitely not the type of hero who could rally multitudes at his call.

However, my loneliness had to be dispelled because it was causing me agony. So I used various means to dull my senses, to immerse myself among my fellow nationals and turn to the past. Later I experienced or witnessed even greater loneliness and sadness which I am unwilling to recall, preferring that it should perish with my mind in the dust. Still my attempt to deaden my senses was unsuccessful—I lost the enthusiasm and fervor of my youth.

In S.-Hostel was a three-roomed house with a courtyard in which grew a lettuce tree, and I was so impressed that a woman had hanged herself there. Although the lettuce tree grew so tall that its branches were now out of reach, the rooms remained deserted. For some years I stayed here, copying ancient inscriptions. I had few visitors; the inscriptions raised no political problems or issues, and so the days slipped quietly away, which was all that I desired. On summer nights when mosquitoes swarmed, I would sit under the lettuce tree with my fan and look at the trees' patterns in the thick foliage, while the belted caterpillars would fall, icy-cold, on to my neck.

The only visitor to drop in occasionally for a talk was my old friend Jin Xinyi. Having put his big portfolio on the rickety table he would talk over his long gown and sit down opposite me, looking as if his heart was still beating fast because he was afraid of dogs.

"What's the use of copying these?" One night, while leafing through the inscriptions I had copied, he asked me for enlightenment on this point.

"There isn't any use." "What's the point, then, of copying them?" "There isn't any point." "Why don't you write something...?"

I understood. They were bringing out New Youth, but since there did not seem to have been any reaction, favorable or otherwise, no doubt they felt lonely. However I said:

Imagine an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates would asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won't feel the pain of death. Now if you shout to awaken a few of the lighter sleepers, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irreparable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn?"

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

True, in spite of my own conviction, I could not give up hope, for hope belongs to the future. I had no negative evidence able to refute his affirmation of faith. So I finally agreed to write, and the result was my first story "A Madman's Diary." And once started I could not give up but would write some sort of short story from time to time to humor my friends, until I had written more than a dozen of them.

As far as I am concerned, I no longer feel any great urge to express myself; yet, perhaps because I have not forgotten the grief of my past loneliness, I sometimes call out to encourage those fighters who are grieving on in loneliness, so that they do not lose heart. Whether my cry is brave or sad, repellent or ridiculous, I do not care. However, since this is a call to arms I must naturally obey my general's orders. This is why I often resort to immeasurable, as when I made a wreath appear from nowhere at the son's grave in "Medicine," while in "Tomorrow" I did not say the Fourth Shian's Wife never dreamed of her little boy. For our chiefs in those days were against pessimism. And I, for my part, did not want to infect with the loneliness which I had found so bitter those young people who were still dreaming pleasant dreams, just as I had done when young.

It is clear, then, that my stories fall far short of being works of art; hence I must at least count myself fortunate that they are still known as stories and are even being brought out in one volume. Although such a fortune makes me uneasy, it still pleases me to think that they have readers in the world of men, for the time being at any rate. So now that these stories of mine are being reprinted in one collection, for the reason given above I have chosen to entitle it Call to Arms.

Beijing
December 3, 1922

7.13 Hu Shih's Literary Revolution and Renaissance in China (1926)

While it is possible to see the May Fourth Movement in largely political terms, it is important to recognize its diverse intellectual dimensions as well. Hu Shih's aggressive promotion of the "vernacular movement" is one of his greatest legacies. Many intellectuals sought to promote a written language that reflected the spoken language (baihua). Up until this point, the bulk of the written literature was "classical Chinese" which differed considerably from the type of Chinese spoken on the street. The foremost proponent of this linguistic revolution was Hu Shih. Educated in the United States on a Boxer Indemnity scholarship, Hu Shih returned to China in 1917 and became a prominent philosophical force among intellectuals. Although liberal in thought, Hu Shih's focus on language reform put him at odds with the socialists and anarchists that dominated many of the May Fourth groups. By the time he delivered this talk he had become a strong supporter of the Guomindang (calling it the "only political party worthy of the name"). His talk offers a forthright assessment of the challenges China faced in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

HU SHI (1891-1962)—Born in Shanghai and educated at Cornell University with funds from the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program, he returned to China to become a leading intellectual luminary, in particular advocating vernacular Chinese. Hu Shih supported the GMD and in 1949 retreated to Taiwan where he became the president of the Academia Sinica.

GUOMINDANG (NATIONALIST PARTY)—The party founded by Sun Zhongshan in 1912 after the founding of the Republic of China. It ruled China from 1928 until 1949. Defeated by the CCP, it retreated to Taiwan where it remains an important political force.