

Sun Yat Sen's Three Principles

by STAN RUBENSTEIN

WHETHER revolutions make men or men make revolutions is as debatable today as it was when Thomas Carlyle stated the case during the period of the French Revolution. But one cannot deny that a revolution usually has some individual closely associated with it. We tend to connect Washington with the American Revolution, Lenin with the Russian Revolution and Castro with the Cuban Revolution.

Sun Yat Sen seems to belong to the Chinese Revolution of 1911, for after more than two thousand years of dynastic rule, China, amid the turmoil and chaos of the Manchu dynasty, established its first Republic. And with the emergence of this revolutionary government one man stood out as the leader—Sun Yat Sen.

Prior to 1911 Sun Yat Sen traveled widely, spending some time in Japan and the United States. Influenced by western concepts of industrialization, he carried back to his native land ideas that differed from those normally prevalent in Chinese culture. These ideas affected ensuing events in a significant way.

Of particular importance was his book *San Min Chui*, or Three Principles of the People. This work is still popular among the Chinese and it cuts across political lines. The proposed reform was embodied in what he called the peoples' principle, and the plans were to be altered or revised as the revolution took various turns.

His concepts of nationalism and democracy appealed to the dignity and loyalty of the Chinese and strengthened them in their resolve to rid themselves of all foreign powers and gain

the respect of the international community. Democracy was envisioned to rest with the wishes of the people as interpreted through their leadership.

The principle of livelihood, his third important contribution, was Sun's hope of achieving a desirable living standard for the Chinese based on an equalization of land ownership and regulation of capital. When he was asked what the policy of China was he responded, "We propose that the government shall levy a tax proportionate to the price of the land, and if necessary buy back the land according to its price."

According to this formula the landowners could set the value, and if the value was excessive the landowner would have to pay high taxes. If the value set was too low the government would buy the property. From this point forward all increases in land value would go to the community and increases in value would help defray the costs of government.

Since Sun's ideas were influenced partially by Henry George and partially by Karl Marx, he advocated that the state should regulate capital and serve as a source of promoting industry. He disagreed with Marx's analysis of class struggle however, and attempted to reconcile parts of both systems.

Sun's program was not carried out during his lifetime but it is ironical that the Chinese Communists have been influenced by some of the thoughts concerning the state regulation of capital, and the Nationalist Chinese have incorporated some of his basic views on the equalization of land ownership.