

NEW-DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT

February 20, 1940

[Comrade Mao Tse-tung delivered this speech before the Yen-an Association for the Promotion of Constitutional Government. Confused by Chiang Kai-shek's deceptive propaganda at the time, many comrades in the Party thought that perhaps the Kuomintang really would establish a constitutional government. Comrade Mao Tse-tung here exposed Chiang Kai-shek's deceit, wrested the propaganda weapon of "constitutional government" from his hands and turned it into a weapon for awakening the people to demand freedom and democracy from Chiang Kai-shek. Thereupon' Chiang Kai-shek immediately packed up this bag of tricks, and never again throughout the whole War of Resistance Against Japan did he dare to propagate his so-called constitutional government.]

It is highly significant that representatives of the people of all circles in Yen-an are meeting here today to inaugurate the Association for the Promotion of Constitutional Government and that everybody has become interested in constitutionalism. What is the purpose of our meeting? It is to facilitate the full expression of the popular will, the defeat of Japan and the building of a new China.

Armed resistance to Japan, which we all support, is already being carried out, and the question now is only one of persevering in it. But there is something else, namely, democracy, which is not being carried out. Both are of paramount importance to China today. To be sure, China lacks many things, but the main ones are independence and democracy. In the absence of either, China's affairs will not go well. And while there are two things lacking, there are also two superfluous ones. What are they? Imperialist oppression and feudal oppression. It is because of these two superfluous things that China has become a colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. The principal demands of the nation today are for independence and democracy, and therefore imperialism and feudalism must be destroyed. They must be destroyed resolutely, thoroughly, and without the least mercy. Some say that only construction is needed, not destruction. Well, we should like to ask: Shouldn't Wang Ching-wei be destroyed? Shouldn't Japanese imperialism be destroyed? Shouldn't the feudal system be destroyed? Construction is certainly out of the question unless you destroy these evils. Only by destroying them can China be saved and construction be set going; otherwise, it will all be an idle dream. Only by destroying the old and the rotten can we build the new and the sound. Combine independence and democracy and you have resistance on the basis of democracy, or democracy in the service of resistance. Without democracy, resistance will fail. Without democracy, resistance cannot be maintained. With democracy, we shall certainly win even if we have to go on resisting for eight or ten years.

What is constitutional government? It is democratic government. I agree with what our old Comrade Wu [\[1\]](#) has just said. What kind of democratic government do we need today? New-democratic government, the constitutional government of New Democracy. Not the old, outmoded, European-American type of so-called democracy which is bourgeois dictatorship, nor as yet the Soviet type of democracy which is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Democracy of the old type, practiced in other countries, is on its way out and has become reactionary. Under no circumstances should we accept such a reactionary thing. The sort of constitutional government which the Chinese die-hards are talking about is the old type of bourgeois democracy found abroad. But while they talk about it, they do not really want even that; they are using such talk to deceive the people. What they really want is a one-party fascist dictatorship. The Chinese national bourgeoisie, on the other hand, does want this type of constitutional government

and would like to establish a bourgeois dictatorship in China, but it can never succeed. For the Chinese people do not want such a government and would not welcome a one-class dictatorship by the bourgeoisie. China's affairs must be decided by the vast majority of the Chinese people, and the monopoly of government by the bourgeoisie alone must be absolutely rejected. Then what about socialist democracy? Of course, it is very good, and will eventually prevail throughout the world. But today this type of democracy is not yet practicable in China, and we must therefore do without it for the time being. Not until certain conditions are present will it be possible to have socialist democracy. The kind of democratic government we need today is neither democracy of the old type nor yet democracy of the socialist type, but New Democracy which is suited to the conditions of present-day China. The constitutional government to be promoted is new-democratic constitutional government.

What is new-democratic constitutional government? It is the joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes over the traitors and reactionaries. Someone once said, "If there is food, let everyone share it." I think this can serve to illustrate New Democracy. Just as everyone should share what food there is, so there should be no monopoly of power by a single party, group or class. This idea was well expressed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in the Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang:

The so-called democratic system in modern states is usually monopolized by the bourgeoisie and has become simply an instrument for oppressing the common people. On the other hand, the Kuomintang's Principle of Democracy means a democratic system shared by all the common people and not privately owned by the few.

Comrades, in studying constitutional government we shall read various books, but above all, we must study this manifesto, and this passage should be learned by heart. "Shared by all the common people and not privately owned by the few"--this is the substance of what we describe as new-democratic constitutional government, as the joint democratic dictatorship of several revolutionary classes over the traitors and reactionaries; such is the constitutional government we need today. And it is the form which a constitutional government of the anti-Japanese united front should take.

The purpose of our meeting today is to promote or urge the establishment of constitutional government. Why do we have to "urge" it? If everybody were marching forward, then nobody would need to be urged. Why do we trouble to hold this meeting? Because some people, instead of marching forward, are lying down and refusing to move on. Not only do they refuse to move forward, they actually want to go back. You call on them to go forward, but they would rather die than do so; these people are die-hards. They are so stubborn that we have to hold this meeting to give them an "urging". Where does the term "urge" come from? Who first applied it in this connection? Not we, but that great and venerated man, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who said: For forty years I have devoted myself to the cause of the national revolution...." Read his Testament and you will find the following words: "Most recently I have recommended the convocation of the national assembly . . . and its realization in the shortest possible time must in particular be urged. This is my heartfelt charge to you." Comrades, not an ordinary "charge" but a "heartfelt charge". A "heartfelt charge" is not just the usual kind of charge, so how can it be lightly ignored? Again, "the shortest possible time"; first, not the longest time, second, not a relatively long time, and third, not just a short time but "the shortest possible time". If we want the national assembly to come into being in the shortest possible time, then we have to "urge" it. Dr. Sun Yat-sen has been dead for fifteen years, but to this day the national assembly he recommended has not been convened. Fiddling every day with political tutelage, certain people have senselessly fiddled away the time, turning "the shortest possible time" into the longest time, and yet they are for ever invoking Dr. Sun Yat-sen's name. How Dr. Sun's ghost

would rebuke these unworthy followers of his! It is perfectly clear that without "urging", there will be no moving forward, "urging" is needed because many are moving back and many others are not yet awakened.

As some people are not moving forward, we have to urge them. We have to urge others because they are slow. That is why we are calling many meetings to urge the establishment of constitutional government. The youth have held such meetings, and so have the women, the workers, the schools, government organizations and army units. It is all very lively and very good. And now we are holding this general meeting for the same purpose, so that all of us can go into action to urge the speedy enforcement of constitutional government and the immediate application of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's teachings.

Some say: "You are in Yen-an while those people are in various other places. What is the use of your urging them if they take no notice?" Yes, there is some use. For things are moving and they will have to take notice. If we hold more meetings, write more articles, make more speeches and send more telegrams, they will find it impossible not to take notice. I think our numerous meetings in Yen-an to promote constitutional government have a twofold purpose. One is to study the problem and the other is to push people forward. Why do we have to study? Because supposing they do not go forward and you urge them, and they then ask why you are pushing, it is necessary to be able to answer. To do so, we have to make a serious study of the hows and whys of constitutional government. This is exactly what our old Comrade Wu has been talking about in some detail. All schools, government organizations and army units and all sections of the people should study the problem of constitutional government confronting us

Once we have studied it, we can push people forward. To push them forward is to urge them on and, as we push in all fields, things will all gradually move ahead. The many little streams will merge into a great river to wash away all that is rotten and filthy, and new-democratic constitutional government will emerge. The effect of such pushing will be very great. What we do in Yen-an is bound to influence the whole country.

Comrades, do you imagine that once the meetings have been held and the telegrams dispatched, the die-hards will be bowled over, will start moving forward, will submit to our orders? No, they will not be as docile as that. A great many of them are graduates of special training schools for die-hards. Die-hards they are today, and die-hards they will remain tomorrow and even the day after. What does die-hard mean? "Hard" means to be inflexible and "die" means to be dead set against progress today, tomorrow and even the day after. Such are the people we call die-hards. To make them listen to us is no easy matter.

As far as the constitutional governments the world has so far known are concerned, whether in Britain, France, the United States or the Soviet Union, a body of basic laws, that is, a constitution, has generally been promulgated after a successful revolution to give recognition to the actual establishment of democracy. But China's case is different. In China the revolution has not yet succeeded and, except in areas like our Border Region, democratic government is not yet a fact. The fact is that China today is under semi-colonial and semi-feudal rule, and even if a good constitution were promulgated, it would inevitably be hindered by the feudal forces and obstructed by the die-hards, so that it would be impossible to carry it out smoothly. Thus, the present movement for constitutional government has to strive for a democracy that is not yet achieved, rather than to affirm a democracy that has already become a fact. This means a major struggle and it is certainly no light or easy matter.

Those who have all along opposed constitutional government [2] are now paying it lip-service. Why? Because they are under pressure from the people, who want to fight Japan, and they have to temporize a tattle. They are even shouting at the top of their voices, "We have always stood for constitutional government!" and making a terrific din. For years we have been hearing the words "constitutional government", but so far, we have seen no trace of it. These people say one thing and do another and may be called double-dealers in constitutional government. Their "always stood for" is truly an example of their double-dealing. The die-hards of today are precisely such double-dealers. Their constitutional government is a swindle. In the not-too-distant future you may get a constitution, and a president into the bargain. But as for democracy and freedom, heaven alone knows when they will give you that. China has already had a constitution. Did not Tsao Kun promulgate one? [3] But where were democracy and freedom to be found? As for presidents, there have been a number of them. The first, Sun Yat-sen, was good, but he was edged out by Yuan Shih-kai. The second was Yuan Shih-kai, the third Li Yuan-hung, [4] the fourth Feng Kuo-chang [5] and the fifth Hsu Shih-chang, [6] indeed a great many, but were they any different from the despotic emperors? Both the constitution and the presidents were fakes. At the present time the so-called constitutional and democratic governments of countries like Britain, France and the United States are in fact man-eating governments. The same is true of Central and South America where many countries display the republican signboard but in fact have no trace of democracy. Similarly with China's present-day die-hards. Their talk of constitutional government is only "selling dog-meat under the label of a sheep's head". They display the sheep's head of constitutional government while selling the dog-meat of one-party dictatorship. I am not attacking them groundlessly; my words are well-founded, because for all their talk about constitutional government they do not give the people a particle of freedom.

Comrades, real constitutional government will never come easily; it can only be obtained through hard struggle. Therefore, you must not expect that it will come immediately after we have held our meetings, sent our telegrams and written our articles. Nor must you expect that once the People's Political Council [7] passes a resolution, the National Government issues a decree, and the national assembly [8] meets on November 12, promulgates a constitution and even elects a president, everything will be fine and all will be right with the world. That is impossible, so don't get confused. This needs to be explained to the common people so that they will not be confused either. Things will never be that easy.

Should we then lament the cause as lost? Things are so difficult that it seems hopeless. But that is not so either. There is still hope for constitutional government, and great hope at that, and China will certainly become a new-democratic state. Why? The difficulties arise because of trouble-making by the die-hards, but they cannot go on being die-hards for ever, and that is why we still have high hopes. The die-hards of the world may be die-hards today and remain so tomorrow and even the day after, but not for ever; in the end they will have to change. Wang Ching-wei, for example, was a die-hard for a very long time, yet he could not keep on acting the die-hard within the anti-Japanese ranks and had to go over to the Japanese. Chang Kuo-tao, to take another example, was also a die-hard for a very long time, but he, too, took to his heels after we held a number of meetings and struggled repeatedly against him. Actually, the die-hards may be hard, but they are not hard unto death, and in the end, they change--into something filthy and contemptible, like dog's dung. Some change for the better and that is also the result of our repeated struggles against them--they come to see their mistakes and change for the better. In short, die-hards do change eventually. They always have many schemes in hand, schemes for profiting at others' expense, for double-dealing, and so on. But they always get the opposite of what they want. They invariably start by doing others harm but end by ruining themselves. We once said that Chamberlain was "lifting a rock only to drop it on his own

toes", and this has now come to pass. Chamberlain had set his heart on using Hitler as the rock with which to crush the toes of the Soviet people, but since that September day last year when war broke out between Germany on the one side and Britain and France on the other, the rock in his hands has fallen on his own toes. To this day he is still smarting from it. Similar instances abound in China. Yuan Shih-kai wanted to crush the toes of the common people but in the event hurt himself, and he died just a few months after becoming emperor.^[9] Tuan Chi-jui, Hsu Shih-chang, Tsao Kun, Wu Pei-fu and all the rest wanted to repress the people, but finally they were all overthrown by the people. Whoever tries to profit at others' expense will come to no good end.

I think that, unless they move forward, the anti-Communist die-hards of today can be no exception to this rule. On the high-sounding pretext of unification, they are planning to liquidate the progressive shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region, the progressive Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies, the progressive Communist Party and mass organizations. They have any number of schemes of this sort. But I believe the outcome will be not the liquidation of progress by die-hardism but the liquidation of die-hardism by progress. Indeed, to escape liquidation the die-hards have no alternative but to move forward. Hence, we have often advised them not to attack the Eighth Route Army, the Communist Party and the Border Region. If they must, they had better make a resolution starting as follows: "Determined as we are to liquidate ourselves and provide the Communist Party with ample opportunity to expand, we, the die-hards, assume the responsibility for attacking the Communist Party and the Border Region." The die-hards have had plenty of experience in "suppressing the Communists", and should they now want to have another go, they are free to do so. If after eating their fill and having a good sleep, they feel like doing some "suppression", that is up to them. However, they must be prepared for the above resolution to go into effect, for it is unalterable. The "suppression of the Communists" in the past ten years invariably turned out in conformity with this resolution. Any further "suppression" will also conform to it. Hence, I advise them not to go in for "suppression". For what the whole nation wants is not "suppression of the Communists" but resistance, unity and progress. Therefore, anyone who tries to "suppress the Communists" is bound to fail.

In short, retrogression eventually produces the reverse of what its promoters intend. There is no exception to this rule either in modern or in ancient times, in China or elsewhere.

The same is true of constitutional government today. If the die-hards keep on opposing it, the result will certainly be the reverse of what they intend. The movement for constitutional government will never follow the course decided on by the die-hards, but will run counter to their intentions, and it will inevitably take the course decided on by the people. This is certain, for the people throughout the country demand it, and so do the current of China's historical development and the whole trend of world affairs. Who can resist it? The wheel of history cannot be pushed back. However, the work we have undertaken requires time and cannot be accomplished overnight; it requires effort and cannot be done in a slipshod way; it requires the mobilization of the great masses of the people and cannot be done effectively by a single pair of hands. It is a very good thing that we are holding this meeting here today; after our meeting we shall write articles and send telegrams, and we shall also hold similar meetings in the Wutai Mountains, the Taihang Mountains, northern China, central China and all over the country. If we go on doing this and keep it up for several years, that will be just about right. We must make a good job of it, we must win democracy and freedom, we must establish new-democratic constitutional government. If this is not done and the die-hards are allowed to have their way, the nation will perish. This is the way we must work to avoid national subjugation. For this purpose, everybody must exert himself. If we do so, there is great hope for our cause. It must further be understood that after all the die-hards are only a minority, while the majority consists not of die-

hards but of people capable of moving forward. With the majority pitted against the minority, plus the efforts we exert, the hope will be even greater. That is why I say that, difficult though the task may be, there is great hope.

NOTES

1. Old Comrade Wu is Comrade Wu Yu-chang, who was then Chairman of the Yen-an Association for the Promotion of Constitutional Government.
2. "Those" refers to the Kuomintang reactionary clique headed by Chiang Kai-shek.
3. In 1923 Tsao Kun, a big Northern warlord, had himself elected President of the Republic by bribing 590 members of parliament with 5,000 silver dollars each. He then promulgated a constitution, which came to be known as the "Tsao Kun Constitution" or the "Constitution of Bribery".
4. Li Yuan-hung was originally commander of a brigade in the armed forces of the Ching Dynasty. He was compelled by his officers and men to side with the revolution during the Wuchang Uprising in 1911 and was made military governor of Hupeh Province. He later became Vice-President and then President of the Republic under the regime of the Northern warlord clique.
5. Feng Kuo-chang was one of Yuan Shih-kai's underlings. After Yuan's death, he became the leader of the Chihli (Hopei) group of the Northern warlord clique. In 1917 he got rid of Li Yuan-hung and became President himself.
6. Hsu Shih-chang was a politician in the service of the Northern warlord clique. He was elected President in 1918 by the parliament controlled by Tuan Chi-jui.
7. The People's Political Council was a mere advisory body reluctantly set up by the Kuomintang government after the outbreak of the anti-Japanese war. The members were all "invited" by the Kuomintang government. Nominally it included the representatives of all anti-Japanese political parties and groups, but it was actually dominated by the Kuomintang majority. It had no power to influence the policies or the measures adopted by the Kuomintang government. As Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang became more and more reactionary, the number of Kuomintang and other reactionaries on the council increased while the number of democrats decreased and their freedom of speech was severely curtailed, until the council increasingly became a mere tool of Kuomintang reaction. After the Southern Anhwei Incident of 1941, the Communist members of the council boycotted its meetings several times in protest against the Kuomintang's reactionary measures.
8. A resolution demanding that the Kuomintang government convene a national assembly and establish a constitutional government at a fixed date was passed at the Fourth Session of the People's Political Council in September 1939, on the proposal of the Communist Party and the democrats of other parties and groups. In November 1939 the Sixth Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang announced that the national assembly would be convened on November 12, 1940. Though much publicized to dupe the people, this pledge came to nothing.
9. Yuan Shih-kai proclaimed himself emperor on December 12, 1915, but was forced to give up the title on March 22, 1916.