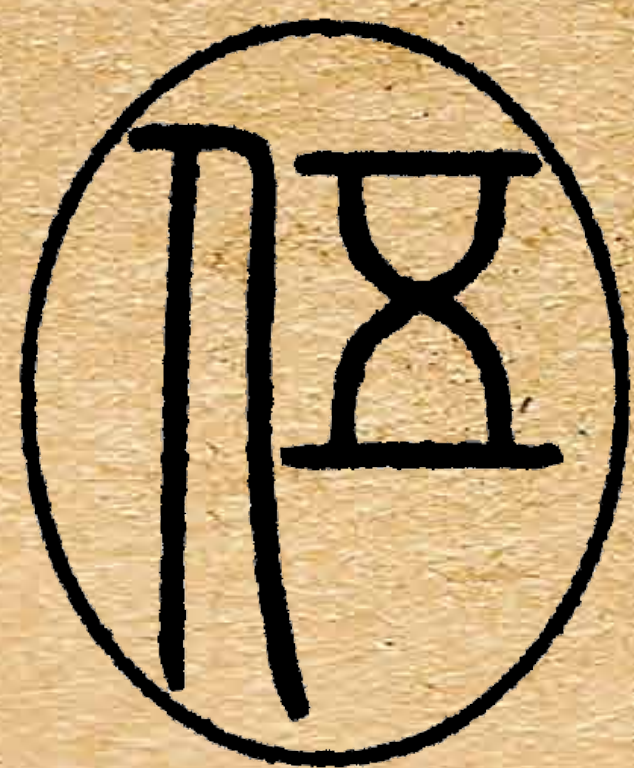


# THE WARLORD ERA AND THE FIRST UNITED FRONT

## 軍閥割據與第一次國共合作



After Yuan Shikai's death in 1916, China plunged into the warlord period, with regional military leaders ranging from local bandits' controlling small bases to powerful heads of large armies' controlling broad swaths of territory.

Despite the chaos, a remarkable intellectual movement was developing in the universities, where the spirit of revolution had awakened interest in political ideologies from the West. The center of activity was Peking University (PKU), whose affiliates included many founding figures of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in particular a little-known library assistant, the man who would lead the peasant revolution and ultimately rule China, Mao Zedong. In May 1919, students at PKU learned of the concessions gained by Japan, including the handover of the Shandong Peninsula, as the result of the Treaty of Versailles, that ended World War I. In response, the students initiated a mass demonstration that spread from city to city, igniting the general population in the largest outpouring of nationalistic fervor China had ever seen. Demanding reforms at all levels of Chinese society, the demonstration became known as the May Fourth Movement.

Meanwhile, Sun Yat-sen continued his attempts to tame the regional warlords and build a national government. After years of fruitless efforts to secure international support, Sun turned to the newly formed Soviet Russia, which was eager to gain influence in China. In 1923, Sun sent Chiang Kai-shek to Moscow to determine how Sun's political party, the Kuomintang (KMT), and Chiang's army could work together to regain control of China. Two Russian agents, Vasily Blücher and Mikhail Borodin, were sent to China to integrate the fledgling CCP within the ranks of the KMT, using the Soviet model. That alliance was attractive to Sun in that the Soviets would provide political training, military assistance, and financial support. The KMT and the CCP, from their base at the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangdong, began training together in 1923 in preparation for the Northern Expedition, the mission to reunite China in their first united front.

After Sun's untimely death in 1925, his followers mounted the Northern Expedition, advancing from Guangdong to the Yangtze River Valley. The combination of Nationalists and Communists proved temporarily successful, with the Communists preparing the territories ahead of the army with propaganda, demonstrations, and strikes. When the army, led by Chiang, arrived in Shanghai, an earlier communist-led uprising of workers contributed greatly to its success. Chiang, however, had begun to resent the Soviet agents, feeling that they were more interested in the international goals of the CCP than the national goals of the KMT. In addition, the CCP's strikes and related activities, choreographed by Stalin, alienated the middle and commercial classes, from which Chiang derived the majority of his support. On April 12, 1927, Chiang staged a successful purge of Communists in Shanghai; the few who escaped went underground.

By 1928, the Northern Expedition mission was completed when the young Manchurian warlord Zhang Xueliang recognized the Nanjing-based Nationalist government. The goal of unifying China had been accomplished, at least nominally.