

Document 7.11: Excerpts from ‘The Revolutionary Army,’ by Zou Rong, 1903

Zou Rong was born in Sichuan Province in 1885 to a merchant family. He received a classical education and later became interested in Western ideas. In 1901, he went to Japan to study. He published “The Revolutionary Army” in Shanghai from the relative safety of the foreign concession area. His booklet was widely distributed in China and abroad among the Chinese communities in places such as San Francisco and Singapore. Qing authorities sought to arrest Zou and tried to pressure Westerners to hand him over. Instead, Zou was tried in a “mixed” court, where Western legal protections were in place. The court sentenced him to two years, but Zou fell ill and died in prison in 1905.

1. Introduction

Sweep away millennia of despotism in all its forms, throw off millennia of slavishness, annihilate the five million and more of the furry and horned Manchu race, cleanse ourselves of 260 years¹ of harsh and unremitting pain, so that the soil of the Chinese subcontinent is made immaculate, and the descendants of the Yellow Emperor² will all become Washingtons. Then they will return from the dead to life again...

I follow thereupon the line of the Great Wall, scale the Kunlun Mountains, travel the length of the Yangzi, follow to its source the Yellow River. I plant the standard of independence, ring the bell of freedom. My voice re-echoes from heaven to earth, I crack my temples and split my throat in crying out to my fellow-countrymen: revolution is inevitable for China today. It is inevitable if the Manchu yoke is to be thrown off; it is inevitable if China is to be independent; it is inevitable if China is to take its place as a powerful nation on the globe; it is inevitable if China is to survive for long in the new world of the 20th century; it is inevitable if China is to be a great country in the world and play the leading role. Stand up for Revolution! Fellow-countrymen, are there any of you whether old or in middle years, in your prime of life or young, be it man or woman,

¹ The length of time since the Manchus established the Qing dynasty

² The legendary, heroic emperor of ancient China

who is talking of revolution or working actively for revolution? Fellow countrymen, assist each other and live for each other in revolution. I here cry at the top of my voice to spread the principles of revolution throughout the land.

Revolution is the universal principle of evolution.... Revolution rejects what is corrupt and keeps the good. Revolution is the advance from barbarism to civilization. Revolution turns slaves into masters....

6. The purport of Revolutionary Independence

Zou continues by explaining the reasons for the confrontation between the English Parliament and King Charles, and the causes of the French and American revolutions, citing among them social inequalities and illegally imposed taxes.

With the rapid advances in science, the superstitious doctrine whereby a man becomes an emperor through the gift of heaven and the spirits can be destroyed. With the rapid advance in world civilization, the system whereby the rule of a single man in a despotic form of government can cover the whole country may be overthrown. With the rapid advances in wisdom, everybody will be able to enjoy his or her natural rights. If today our great Han people are to throw off the bonds of the Manchus, to retrieve all the rights we have lost, and is [*sic*] to take its place among world powers (for we wish to preserve in its entirety our natural equality of status and independence), we cannot avoid carrying out a revolution and safeguarding our right to independence. Alas, I am young, ignorant, and brutish, not equal to speaking for the fundamental principles of revolutionary independence. Wary and fearful I have carefully modeled (my proposals) on the principles of American revolutionary independence. I have summarized them under a number of headings, and with the utmost deference I offer to my most revered and beloved 400 million countrymen of the great Han people to prepare them for the path they are to follow:

- China is the China of the Chinese. Countrymen, you must all recognize the China of the Chinese of the Han race.

- Not to allow any alien race to lay their hands on the least rights of our China
- Any obligations subordinating people to the Manchus are one and all annulled
- First, to overthrow the barbaric government set up by the Manchus in Peking
- To expel the Manchus settled in China or kill them in order to revenge ourselves
- To kill the emperor set up by the Manchus as a warning to the myriad generations that despotic government is not to be revived.
- To oppose any intervention directed either by Chinese nationals or from foreign soil against Chinese revolutionary independence
- To set up a central government, which will act as a general body to run affairs.
- In each area and province a deputy to a general assembly is to be elected by vote in public elections. From these deputies, one is to be elected by vote to serve as provisional president to represent the whole country A vice-president is also to be elected, and all *zhou* [prefectures] and *xian* [counties] are to elect a number of deputies.
- The whole population, whether male or female, are citizens.
- All men have the duty to serve as citizen soldiers
- Everybody has the duty of bearing the burden of taxation.
- The whole country has the duty to show loyalty to the newly established state.
- Everybody in the country, whether male or female, is equal. There is no distinction between upper and lower, base and noble.
- All inalienable rights are bestowed by nature.
- The freedom to live and all other privileges are natural rights.
- Freedoms, such as that of speech, thought, the press, etc. cannot be infringed on.
- All rights must be defended. The government, which must be set up by public agreement, must employ all the powers granted purely to defend popular rights.
- If, at any time, the actions of a government lead to an infraction of people's rights, they have the right to carry out a revolution, and overthrow the old government to retrieve their peace and contentment.
- Once these have been obtained, the question of rights must be publicly discussed and a new government set up. This also is to be a right of the people....

- To settle the name of the country as the Republic of China
- The Republic of China is a free and independent country.
- A free and independent state has full rights and equality with other great states in the matter of war and peace, treaties and trade, and all other matters pertaining to an independent state.
- The law of the constitution shall be modeled on the American constitutional law, having regard for Chinese conditions.
- The law of self-government shall be modeled on the American law of self-government.
- Likewise in all matters of a national character, negotiations, the establishment of official departments and the determination of the official duties in the state American practice will remain a criterion....

7. Conclusion

You 400 million of the great Han race, my countrymen, whether man or woman, aged or elderly, in the prime of life, young or child, carry out this revolution. It is the bounden duty of one and all. Think of it as the food and drink which is your daily necessity. You should not act rashly or throw your lives away. Your lands occupy two thirds of Asia: countrymen, you are a fifth of the peoples of the globe. Your tea can provide drink for the countless millions of the world and more; your coal could provide fuel for the whole world for two thousand years and not run short. You possess the omen of the Yellow Peril, you possess the might of the sacred race. You possess government, run it yourselves; you have laws, guard them yourselves; you have industries, administer them yourselves; you possess armed forces, order them yourselves; you possess lands, watch over them yourselves; you have inexhaustible resources, exploit them yourselves. You are qualified in every way to revolutionary independence. Lead the 400 million citizens of your countrymen, intercede for their lives, intercede for your native country. Throw caution to the winds; be prepared to lose your lives in the struggle. Gallop against your hereditary enemies the Manchus, your public enemy the clan of Aisin Gioro through the forest of guns and the rain of bullets, after which sweep away the demons from foreign

parts who have infringed on your sovereign rights. The stain on your history may be washed away, the honor of your country may soar....

Long live the revolutionary independence of the great Han people

Long live the Republic of China

Long live the freedom of the 400 million fellow countrymen of the Chinese republic.

Source: Lust, John. *The Revolutionary Army: A Chinese Nationalist Tract of 1903*. Paris: Mouton, 1968.