

Document 7.14: Excerpts from Emperor Puyi's abdication, 1912

After a bomb accidentally went off in revolutionary headquarters in Wuchang, the revolutionaries fearing arrest sprung into action. They quickly took Wuchang and within weeks revolutionaries had control over central and southern China. The Qing desperate to keep control gave authority to Yuan Shikai. He manipulated both sides, got the Qing emperor to abdicate in exchange for a promise from the revolutionaries that they would choose him as the first president of the new republic.

The Whole Country is tending towards a republican form of government. It is the Will of Heaven, and it is certain that we could not reject the people's desire for the sake of one family's honor and glory.

We and His Majesty the Emperor hand over the sovereignty to the people. We decide the form of government to be a constitutional republic.

In this time of transition, in order to unite the South and the North, We appoint Yuan Shikai to organize a provisional government, consulting the people's army regarding the union of the five peoples, Manchus, Chinese, Mongolians, Mohammedans¹, and Tibetans with their territories. These peoples jointly constitute the one great Republic of China.

We and His Majesty the Emperor will retire to a peaceful life and will enjoy the respectful treatment of the nation.

This was signed by the emperor, by Yuan Shikai as prime minister, and also by the other ministers.

Source: Tappan, Eva March, ed. *China, Japan, and the Islands of the Pacific. The World's Story: A History of the World in Story, Song, and Art*, vol. I. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914. 261. Text modernized by J. S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, California State University, Fullerton. Available online at Modern History Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>

¹ Muslims