

SPEECH AT THE MEMORIAL FOR THE 13TH ANNIVERSARY OF SUN YAT-SEN'S DEATH AND THE COMMEMORATION OF THE FALLEN SOLDIERS IN THE ANTI-JAPANESE WAR (MARCH 12, 1938)



MAO ZEDONG



New China Daily (Xin Zhonghua Bao), 424th issue on March 15, 1938

(National Archive Administration of China, 2015).

1938年3月12日：毛泽东在纪念孙中山先生逝世十三周年及追悼抗战阵亡将士
大会上的演说词 来源：中央档案馆 2015年03月12日

(Clipping retrieved February 4, 2025, from https://www.saac.gov.cn/zt/2015-03/12/content_88361.htm)

HISTORY

The following is a speech delivered by Mao Zedong, the great revolutionary and founding leader of the People's Republic of China, at the commemoration of the 13th anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's death and the soldiers who lost their lives in the war against Japan, held in Yan'an on March 12, 1938. This speech was published in the New China Daily (新中華報) on March 15, 1938. Translated from the Chinese original by BRIQ.

TODAY IS THE 13th ANNIVERSARY OF THE death of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. We are holding such a solemn commemorative rally. Meanwhile, the war against Japan has been going on for eight months. Many brave officers and men have made the ultimate sacrifice. We are holding here such a grave commemorative rally. These are not random or coincidental; they have their reason in the development of our nation's history.

What is the source of Dr. Sun's greatness? It lies in his Three People's Principles, his united front policy, and the spirit of hard struggle. When I met with Dr. Sun in Guangdong, the National Congress of the Kuomintang was in session. The new outline of the Three People's Principles, authored by Dr. Sun, which is the famous "Declaration of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang," had been adopted at the Congress.

At that time, the united front policy based on the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party was also implemented. This united front included uniting with the Communist Party, workers, and peasants domestically and externally uniting with those nations that treated us equally and shared our common struggle. The famous "Three Great Policies" were established at that time. Dr. Sun's Three People's Principles program and the policy of the united front are indeed the greatest contributions of the great revolutionary to the Chinese nation in a semi-colonial status. Moreover, Dr. Sun's greatness lies in his hard struggle, unyielding, unbending, and unfailing revolutionary perseverance and revolutionary spirit. Without this perseverance and spirit, his doctrines and policies could not be realized.

As the first sentence of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Testament, which we just read a moment ago, said, "I have devoted myself to the national revolution for forty years." During these forty years, there have been many difficulties and twists and turns; however, Dr. Sun always became more and more motivated, unyielding, and continued to work hard.

The Declaration of the First National Congress indicated the development of the Three People's Principles. So was his effort for the united front. Dr. Sun had not only insisted on it but also developed the united front from a policy for the overthrow of the Manchus by uniting with all revolutionary parties and underground societies to a policy for the overthrow of imperialism and feudal forces by uniting with the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, the workers, and peasants.

When many followers showed discouragement and even surrendered and betrayed in the face of difficulties and temptations, Dr. Sun was always firm. Dr. Sun adhered to his doctrine. Throughout his life, he had never neglected to develop his Three People's Principles. Never was there a time when he disregarded his doctrines. He always insisted on and developed Three People's Principles. The Declaration of the First National Congress indicated the development of the Three People's Principles. So was his effort for the united front. Dr. Sun had not only insisted on it but

also developed the united front from a policy for the overthrow of the Manchus by uniting with all revolutionary parties and underground societies to a policy for the overthrow of imperialism and feudal forces by uniting with the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, the workers, and peasants. All these, in combination with his fearless, unyielding, unbending, and undaunted revolutionary perseverance and spirit of revolutionary practice, showed Dr. Sun's great revolutionary character.

Today we again have a broader united front than before. The enemies we have to deal with are also more formidable than before. The program that this united front should implement is still basically what was stated in the Declaration of the First National Congress, but the form and content have been developed to a certain extent, and in the future, there will definitely be further development. For attaining the goal of implementing the Three People's Principles, enlarging the united front, and defeating our enemy, Japanese imperialism, we must manifest our hard struggle, unswerving and uncompromising revolutionary spirit through revolutionary practice. If we are to commemorate Dr. Sun Yat-sen not merely as a matter of perfunctory formality, we must pay attention to the following: First, struggle for the thorough implementation of the Three People's Principles. Second, struggle for the consolidation and enlargement of the anti-Japanese national united front. Third, carry forward the revolutionary spirit of hard work, perseverance, and continuous efforts. I think these three points are the most fundamental, most essential, and greatest legacy left to us by Dr. Sun. All members of the Kuomintang, all members of the Communist Party, and all patriotic compatriots should accept this legacy and carry it forward! To judge whet-

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Mao Zedong speaking at a ceremony marking the graduation of the fourth batch of students of Yan'an Anti-Japanese University and the 11th anniversary of the Nanchang Uprising on August 1, 1938 (Photo: Portraits of Mao Zedong [1937-1938], 2025).

her one is a loyal disciple of Dr. Sun, we should see his attitude toward these three precious heritages.

Now, let us talk about the significance of commemorating our fallen officers and men in the war against Japan. Since the Marco Polo Bridge incident, a great war unprecedented in the history of the East has lasted eight months. The enemy has put all its national strength into the fight. Their goal is to destroy China, with the strategy of a rapid triumph. How about us? We have also employed all our available forces to resist. Our purpose is to defend our motherland. Our strategy is protracted warfare. In the last eight months, our land and air forces have given a heroic account of themselves; a great national unity is carried out throughout the country; several million troops and numerous people have joined the fireline; and several hundred thousand of them have heroically given their lives while executing their duties. Among them, many were

Kuomintang members, many were Communist Party members, and many others were nonpartisan. We sincerely mourn for those who are dead, and we shall remember them forever.

From Generals Hao Menglin, Tong Linge, Zhao Dengyu, Rao Guohua, Liu Jiaqi, Jiang Yuzhen, Chen Jinxiu, Li Guidan, Huang Meixing, Yao Zixiang, and Pan Zhankui to every soldier, they have all set all were noble and great models for all Chinese people. The Chinese nation is not a flock of sheep but a great nation with national self-esteem and human righteousness. For national self-respect, human righteousness, and their right to live on their own land, the Chinese people will never permit the Japanese fascists to achieve their lawless purposes without paying a heavy price. Our methods are war and sacrifice. We use war against war. We use a revolutionary war for righteousness against a barbarian war of aggression. This spirit has been proved by the thousands of years of our national history. Now,

we have another great proof. General Hao Menglin and hundreds of thousands of others have sacrificed their lives for this.

Our war on external fronts, coordinated with the war on internal fronts and with efforts from all sides, can make great progress in the important work of the Party, government, army, and people throughout the country. One day, we will be able to coordinate with each other, attack from both inside and outside, and launch a major counterattack. At that time, our efforts must also be coordinated with the support of the world revolutionary forces and the support of the people's revolutionary force in Japan.

We are sure that the Japanese fascists will make further advances. They will attack our Xi'an, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Nanchang, Fuzhou, Changsha, and Guangzhou. They want to devour all of China. But I want to tell those crazy enemies that you will never achieve your goal. Don't think that you have achieved your goal by occupying our territory. You have not achieved, and will never achieve. In the verdict of history, the victory of Japanese fascists can only be temporary, not permanent. There are sufficient reasons to prove that the eventual victory belongs to our side. When the war comes to an end, they can only occupy a part of our territory, it being impossible for them to occupy the whole country. Even if they win a quick victory in a city, they also have to win a protracted

battle for the vast rural areas. For example, they have occupied several main roads and several cities in Shanxi, but the vast countryside that is many times bigger than the occupied areas still belongs to China. We have to tell this truth to our compatriots throughout the country. The Japanese can only achieve a partial occupation of any province. They do not have enough strength for deployment. In addition, their barbaric policy has angered every Chinese. China has a huge army and hundreds of millions of people. It is carrying out an excellent national united front policy. All these predetermined which side will win the protracted war and the final victory.

In the future, as a result of the bloody battle between the two sides, even if Japan occupies most of China, we can use the remaining smaller part as our base to continue the war and win victory. But in that larger portion of China, Japan can only occupy the big cities, highways, and some plains. If we can organize and arm the majority of our people in the countryside and establish many anti-Japanese bases, such as the Wutai Mountain base that has been established now, we will have the Japanese army surrounded.

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Who can say that the final victory will not belong to China? Who can say that the blood of General Hao Menglinglin and others was shed in vain? Who can say that the Japanese bandits will not be driven out of China? Who can say that Dr. Sun Yat-sen's three great ideals—national liberation, freedom of people's

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Mao Zedong giving a speech at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University in 1938
(Photo: Portraits of Mao Zedong [1937-1938], 2025).

political rights, and people's livelihood and happiness—will not be realized in China? We want all Chinese people to have this kind of clear understanding and firm conviction. We want them to understand that the best policy is to wage a protracted war. Under the leadership of the Central Government and Chairman Chiang Kai-shek, we must unite with one heart in this great war and must definitely break the shackles of national slavery or get rid of the threat of national slavery.

At this rally, we wish to salute all the soldiers fighting on the front line because they are all fighting heroically for the final victory. We wish to salute all the family members of our soldiers who are engaged in this war against Japan, especially the families of martyrs, because they have soldiers who fought so valiantly for their country and were not afraid of sacrifice. We also wish to salute all the staff and leaders at all levels who worked hard and devoted themself-

ves to the war against Japan in the rear areas because their work directly or indirectly guided or helped the war. At this rally, let us especially salute our national leader, Chairman Chiang, the commander-in-chief of the anti-Japanese war, because he led the whole country to launch and command the great war against Japan unyieldingly.

Fellow compatriots at this rally! Fellow compatriots across the country! Let us be united forever! Down with Japanese imperialism! Long live China's national liberation. 🌸

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Photographs of Mao Zedong retrieved from <http://www.mzdbl.com.cn/xiangji/3/index.html> on February 7, 2025.