

Wu Zhihui (1865–1953)

Daniel Cairns

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Contents

References and Suggested Readings	3
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Wu Zhihui was a leading Chinese anarchist, educator, and Guomindang (GMD) member. While in his most radical phase Wu Zhihui advocated on behalf of labor and the poor, he ardently opposed the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949 and the coming to power of the Chinese Communist Party.

Born into a poverty-stricken family in Jiangsu, China, Wu Zhihui was a bright and gifted student, passing the highly demanding *Juren* examination in 1891. He rose in the ranks of the Chinese imperial education system, which enabled him to travel widely and live in Scotland and France. His turn toward political engagement began in 1903, before which his political outlook was fairly conservative and rooted in Confucianism, in the manner of his education. Continuing his radicalization, he joined the Tongmenghui, the precursor to the GMD, in 1905, declaring himself an anarchist the next year.

He later founded influential revolutionary organizations like the Society to Advance Morality and supervised radical journals like *New Era* and *Labor*, China's first syndicalist magazine. He promoted science, rationalism, language reform, and the abolition of marriage. His ideas were revolutionary, but he estimated that it would take 3,000 years to achieve his vision of a utopian society. Wu was instrumental in the Work-Study Movement in France. Among his students were a large group of anarchists – and future communist leaders like Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. In the GMD in the early 1920s, he was not opposed to cooperation with the recently founded Chinese Communist Party.

By 1927, Wu Zhihui sought to distance himself from the two competing parties. He became an advisor to Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) and, in the wake of the Chinese Revolution of 1949, fled to Taiwan, where he stayed until his death four years later.

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