

a process of assimilation; it is the process whereby the students are brought into contact with life itself. If education remains aloof from the rough-and-tumble of actual living; if, in other words, it succeeds only in shutting the students up in an ivory tower, then education has not really functioned as it should. The trouble with most of our educationalists is that they are only adept in copying the western methods without regard to whether these methods are practicable in this country. They imitate but cannot create. The result is that the students under them turn out to be misfits who cannot be of much use to China. Unless the curricula of universities and colleges are reorganized so as to bring the students into closer rela-

tionship to life here and now, there can indeed be very little hope for higher education in China.

Since coming into office as Minister of Education, Dr. Wang Shih-chieh has been doing his best to introduce many reforms into the schools and universities. Educational inspectors have been sent to different parts of the country, and their findings and recommendations have been made public from time to time. It is gratifying to note that Dr. Wang's service has been retained in the new cabinet under the leadership of General Chiang Kai-shek. With such an able man at the head of the ministry, we are confident that all of his proposed reforms will be duly carried out.

An Open Letter To Lin Yutang

DEAR DR. LIN:

YOU have just published a book, an unusual book, about China and in large degree about yourself. I have read your *China Critic* articles for years and I needed no book to tell me that you were quite an extraordinary chap, but perhaps the enthusiastic reception your book has received gives a subconscious impetus to my feeling that either you are the man, or as an editor of Chinese magazines you might find the man, to write a type of fictional satire China seems now to lack—and certainly to need for the good for her soul.

China is a land rich in natural resources, if you want to look long and far enough for them, but two it lacks. These are Ily Ilf and Eugene Petrov, writers who are the undisputed property of a Soviet Russia they have harpooned, lampooned, roasted to a turn and probably improved no end. Why Soviet Russia lets them live, much less write, is quite a problem for many startled folk who have been reading them in translation lately and realizing for the first time that such things can be published in a land for the most part disciplined for conformity and censored for discretion to a degree quite impossible in many other places. I am personally friendly toward the Russian experiment but skeptical toward many aspects of it and instinctively hostile toward others. That Ilf and Petrov flourish in the U.S.S.R. seems to me an impressive recommendation of the country. But that is straying from the point, which is not whether Soviet Russia is tolerant of satirical literature but that Soviet Russia is producing (or perhaps I should say enduring) some which should have its counterpart in China, but has not.

For some time I have been thinking about this matter because it strikes me as a crying shame that a land with more native humor than any other on earth should be so apparently devoid of great satirists; that nobody should be doing for the China of today what such writers as Ilf and Petrov, and such magazines as *Krokodil*, have done for Soviet Russia.

I am no great student of the Chinese press and I do not read Chinese, but tidings of great satire spread fast through all adjacent languages and unless I am greatly mistaken there is very little satirical fiction being done

in Chinese comparable to the skilled, informed and amusing English essays produced by yourself. You are a wise and a witty man; in that English of which you are a master you could, in my opinion, undertake (with a fair chance of escaping the toils of the law) something like what Ilf and Petrov did in their "The Little Golden Calf" as translated by Charles Malamuth. But you don't. To be direct, you can and do write entertainingly about your own lying in bed—to cite a recent example from *The China Critic*—but for the most part you exhibit your wisdom by not writing about other people's lying in Nanking. Probably in the present humorless state of Chinese government you are well advised to avoid such courses, whether writing in English or some little-known Esquimo dialect, but I submit that it is a great pity that you or someone like you does not have at the job of satirical fiction with political and economic angles. It is a salutary thing for any government to undergo a bit of what my fellow-countrymen for some quaint reason call "ribbing". The sharp edge of satirical writing can do more than dynamite to rock unwieldy objects, either blowing them to pieces or knocking them in the right direction. In Soviet Russia there has no doubt been a good deal of suppression of free speech but to those who think the Soviet Union has tolerated nothing against itself I cordially commend a reading (as to myself, I've just been through a re-reading with great profit) of "The Little Golden Calf" just mentioned—a volume procurable in English, as indicated, but which has sold 120,000 copies in Soviet Russia where, of course, it was published in Russian.

Now Ilf and Petrov are visiting the United States. They explained to *The New Yorker* that "it is because life is so tragical that we write funny books", and my point is that it is precisely because life in China is so "tragical" just now that, Japan permitting, a few fiercely funny books on the "Golden Calf" order would be salutary, corrective, and best sellers in any generally used language.

The hero of the "Golden Calf" book and a predecessor called "Diamonds To Sit On" is a highly profit-seeking reactionary (in other words a swindler) called

Ostap Bender. He marches through the Soviet Union like a swarm of locusts, taking advantage of time-seeking factory managers, red-tape bureaucrats and other worthies unfortunately present and often battenning in the Soviet system as elsewhere. His adventures are gaudy, picturesque, side-splitting; incidentally they afford a canvas upon which the authors paint pictures of the weakest points about the U. S. S. R. in a way which must have made thousands squirm. Ilf and Petrov evidently believe that picaresque novels can best be constructed around swindlers and other rogues and in America they are looking for new material along this line. They're sure there are plenty of such characters anywhere and especially in capitalist countries but in the United States, they find, it's a trifle harder than usual to identify them because of the strangeness of the setting. They told *The New Yorker* they had one such individual spotted, however—a Park Avenue druggist who had charged Ilf U.S.\$1.25 for a toothbrush.

We wish either that Ilf and Petrov would come to China or that some one like yourself would put his fighting clothes on. Think of the wealth of material for satire, and try to think of any worth-while work in that field of which you ever heard. Why, some of China's recent history and current happenings can hardly be related with the utmost factuality without raising the suspicion that satire is being written, and the merest touching-up and introduction of a fictional thread to make things hang together should turn out a masterpiece.

Imagine how such details as this from the recent past might be worked in—the incredible life of that roistering bandit the late Chang Chung-chang of Shantung, the epic story of the late "Little Hsu" with his champagne-drinking tour of the world and final demise between Peking and Tientsin, the headlong flight with the presidential seals on the part of a certain Chinese president and the subsequent wresting of said seals from a concubine, the Feng Yu-hsiang *coup d'etat* and subsequent flight of the bicycle-riding Mr. Henry Pu Yi together with the latter's Tientsin stay and rise to glory as "Emperor of Manchoukuo," the Feng Puritan capital of Kalgan, the period when two warlords played leap-frog between capturing Shanghai and alternating in snug exile at Beppu hot springs, the adventures of such foreign characters as One-Armed Sutton and Bert Hall, the Peking Parliaments with their exchanges of pleasantries and ink-slabs, the incredible didos of the Peking Legation Quarter with such incidents as Mr. Karakhan's famed protest note against the riding-past of the American Legation Guard horses on the Russian glaci—but already anyone versed in China is past and ahead of me, cursing me as a dolt unable even to think of the best of the million gaudy bits available and never employed by any practitioner of satire.

Actually I have no idea of recommending any delving into the even recent past, for it is my belief that the contemporary scene is the one for any live satirist in any country. And can it be contended for a moment

that Nationalist China does not afford a chance for precisely the sort of touching-up that Ilf and Petrov give contemporary Russia? I believe that I understate the case. We have all about us the most gaudy mixture of every conceivable complexity; not only a large and growing bureaucracy fully up to the Russian model, but, any number of peculiarly (and highly peculiar, too) Chinese touches and ornaments running all the way from beliefs, such as ancestor worship and New Life, to such folk-ways as the habit of cutting dikes in the other fellow's direction when flood waters run high.

I do not say that satire in China would be a simple matter. The very difficulty lies in the wealth of material. I have no desire to be party to the lynching, legal or otherwise, of any promising literary light, least of all yourself. Obviously much care would have to be exercised in dealing with the affairs of "a certain country", and the foibles and general characteristics of a few "certain individuals", for example. And the temptation to deal with them would be almost overpowering for an artist of the type I have in mind. He must catch himself by the neck with both hands and choke himself at times, lest someone else apply a garotte to the job in more conclusive fashion. But he must do it, realizing that a degree of self-censorship will still leave oceans of available material, and in addition leave the writer to deal with it in full possession of life, limb and a reasonable amount of happiness.

Certainly the writer in question must be a person of gusto, (which you are), one who will hate to leave untouched any material simply for reasons of personal safety. He must have both courage and discrimination, digging for foibles of the politicians just as Ilf and Petrov do in picturing the idiocies of local administrators and such great industrial plants as that of "Hercules" (originally dedicated to something constructive but finally devoting its time exclusively to preventing its quarters from being taken over for a hotel), or the cinema studio where they'd finished making silent pictures and hadn't started making talking ones yet, or the swindlers' fake "Chernomorsk Branch of the Arbatov Office For the Collection of Horns and Hoofs" which first surprised them by actually starting a collection of horns and hoofs and which finally astonished them by getting out of hand and turning into a real government office! On the other hand he must not scorn to use as medium for speedy and amusing narrative such expedients as the "Little Golden Calf" incident of how the band of scoundrels obtained a rattle-trap automobile and thrust it just ahead of a cross-country motorcar race, skimming the cream off the local welcomes, fuel, tires and other little matters by posing as the leading racer.

And there should be no flinching from anything. When one of the "Little Golden Calf" rascals drops dead from hardship, Ilf and Petrov make their chief character Ostap see the matter without sentiment. He writes an epitaph with a piece of chalk—"Here Lies Mikhail

Samuilovich Panivovsky, A Man Without a Passport"—and removing his cap Ostap says:

"I was frequently unjust to the deceased. Was the deceased a moral person? No, he was not a moral person. He was an ex-blindman, usurper and goose-thief. He devoted all his powers to the task of living at the expense of society. But society did not want him to live at its expense. Mikhail Samuilovich could not endure this contradiction in views because his was an excitable character, and therefore he died. That's all."

The other two rascals, Kozlevich and Balaganov, "were dissatisfied with Ostap's funeral oration. They would have considered it more appropriate if the great schemer had said a lot about the good deeds performed by the deceased in the interests of society, about his kindness to the poor, about his sensitive soul, about his love of children, and about all the other virtues that are ascribed to any deceased. Balaganov even went up to the grave to express all this himself, but the commander had already put on his cap and was disappearing at a rapid pace."

If you have read the book I think you will find that Ostap's refusal to deceive himself or his companions, his willingness to fly in the face of custom, courtesy and good taste for the sake of telling the unvarnished truth, even under very painful circumstances, is characteristic of the two writers. I dwell on them at length not to praise them without reserve (they fall down rather badly at the end of the "Golden Calf" book, in my opinion, but that is merely my opinion), but to

use them as an example of what could be done for the gaudy, mostly timidly-dealt-with China scene.

Of course we have had plenty of mud-slinging at China, mostly by foreigners who have made a good thing out of their filthy attentions toward a country which granted them a better living than they could have got elsewhere. We need no more of that from either foreigners or Chinese. The reason I address myself to you is that you could mingle justice with mercy, and that you have that tremendous and in fact completely indispensable asset for the true artist—that thing whose lack has ruined a good share of the things written in and of China—a sense of humor.

I repeat what I said at the beginning, that you could give China, either in English or in Chinese and either by your own pen or through a writer of your selection, a new literary treatment in the field of satirical fiction. Now I hope that you don't go to jail or get shot carrying out my well-meant suggestion, and as to any further notions as to how you are to get into action I fall back on the excuse of the late Will Rogers. Will, you may have heard, told the American Navy precisely how to eliminate the German submarines during the World War. "Boil the Atlantic," he said. "That will exterminate 'em. Don't ask me how to do it—that's your part of the job—I'm just a poor cowboy and I throw out the idea for you to polish up."

Yours fraternally,

RANDALL GOULD.

A Sociological View On Rural Reconstruction

By LEONARD S. HSU (許仕廉)*

RURAL reconstruction in China, as a social movement, may be regarded as one phase of social planning. It represents a correlated attack of the various technical fields, such as agriculture, industry, cooperation, health, public administration, etc., for the realization of a planned society. Its objective is to transform the medieval society of China into a modern society. Its methodology is a correlated application of modern science to the community life of China, which is 80 per cent rural.

There are three factors in social planning: (a) Population—the biological heritage of society—including the quantity and the quality of population; (b) Natural resources—the physical heritage of society—including minerals, land, and water power; and (c) Technical arts—the cultural heritage of society—including invention and economic organization, habits and social organization, and control and political organization.

The characteristic of planned reconstruction, as contrasted with unplanned reconstruction, is that in the former, there is the correlation of all three factors—population, natural resources and technical arts—thus reducing the cost of reconstruction to the very minimum. Rural reconstruction in China, as a phase of the movement for planned reconstruction, aims at organized marketing or systematic application of the technique of sciences to the community in order to secure the greatest amount of good to the largest number of population through the most economic means within our present limited amount of physical resources and technical knowledge.

This being the characteristic of the program, the rural movement in China presupposes three things: First, if China is to survive in the family of nations, she must modernize her social organization and vastly increase its working efficiency; second, the modernization of China means largely the application of scientific knowledge to the community from the village unit up; and, third, this application should be a planned process.

Indeed, social and economic planning, such as the Five-Year Plan of U.S.S.R., the T.V.A. of America, or the Social Plan of Mexico, is national in scope. It

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