

Popular Views on National Renaissance

BY YANG HSIN (楊信)

IN *The Eastern Miscellany* some time ago, three writers express their opinions on the question of national renaissance. Mr. Quentin Pan (潘光旦) speaks of the hereditary characteristics as the prerequisite of national renaissance, Mr. Chou Cheng-ping (趙正平) discusses the possibility of national renaissance within a short period, and Mr. Charles C. Wu (吳澤霖) treats of the conditions of the renaissance. Both Mr. Pan and Mr. Wu agree that the three factors involved in the question are biological, geographical and cultural. Mr. Pan confines himself to the first factor only and discusses only the qualitative side of the question, while Mr. Wu discusses all of the three factors.

Mr. Pan points out the common fallacy of treating the question of national renaissance as a cultural problem, economists think everything will be well once their economic panacea was applied, educators believe in the all-powerfulness of educational reforms, etc. Years of reforms have proved the untenability of such contentions. These reformers then fall back on their second line of defence, that it is a matter of will, and there are endless number of exhortations. Such mistakes are due, according to Mr. Pan, to any of these four reasons; ignorance of the importance of the hereditary characteristics; the belief that these characteristics may be overcome by environment and education; the misconception that the hereditary characteristics once formed remain the same, and so they cannot be interfered with from outside, and there cannot be much difference between the different races; and the impossibility of rejuvenation of the individual, much less the race. Mr. Pan then refutes the last two fallacies, the first two he regards too elementary and can be easily settled by a reference to school text books on the subject.

That biologic stock of a people or the people of one locality did change Mr. Pan proves not only by a reference to Rome at the close of ancient history and Spain after her glorious expansion, but also by pointedly asking for an explanation in the difference of the creative power of the people in Kansu, Honan, Shantung and Shansi at present and 1,000 years ago, of Kiangsi from the time of North Sung to the early Ming dynasties and at present, of Soochow before and after the Taiping rebellion, etc. Mr. Pan believes that it is the dormant forces, brought to the surface and given a free play, that are responsible for the national renaissance of Italy, Japan, Turkey, and Germany.

Mr. Pan accepts Griffith Taylor's anthropological classification and so believes that the Chinese people, being formed from a number of biological strains, is as young at least as the Slavs and certainly younger than the Teutons, and even the Japanese. However, the Japanese have not lost their precious biological stock, while we, in our historical development, did suffer such losses, through the process of geographic and cultural selection. On the other hand, he points out, not all the vitality of the people has

been sapped out. The achievements of the Hakkas in Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and the South Seas, the development of Hunan by the Kiangsi people, the development of Manchuria by the Shantung people, the cultural achievement of the Huichow people in Kiangsu and Chekiang—all point to the remarkable vitality of certain strains of the Chinese people. There is no cause to be pessimistic.

Mr. Wu calls his readers' attention to the fact that China is not richly endowed with natural resources, and whatever achievement she has made was made in the brief spells between natural calamities, which are inevitable because of the location of her land and the distribution of the rainfall. Raw materials necessary for the key industries such as iron, coal and petrol she has not much save the second item. Science and technology may be pressed into service to help make up for what we lack, but it must be done after a complete survey of the situation and step by step according to a well thought out plan.

China suffers from over-population and imports every year big quantities of foodstuffs to feed her hungry population. If in time of war her sea coast should be blockaded by enemy ships, at once there will be scarcity of food supply. We have therefore to openly advocate birth control so that the population will decrease, and the masses may have a chance to live above the poverty line.

There is no question that old Chinese culture will not suffice us today in face of the encroachment of the western culture. Our clan and kinship system has its place in a society of *laissez faire* political philosophy and slow communications, but in an industrial society it proves to be a stumbling block. The government by man instead of by law, is another cardinal principle of the traditional Chinese political philosophy, but today in a more complex government, it has proved a leaven of complications. And so we are in need of a revaluation of our old culture.

Mr. Chao believes that national renaissance is not a problem of racial characteristics of the nation. He believes there are three prerequisites, which, when all present, will bring about the desired national renaissance in a short time. First, there must be the earnest desire to have the national renaissance; secondly, there must be the political engineer to put the plan through; and thirdly, there must be a sound policy and statecraft.

What sound policy the government should pursue, forms the subject of a series of articles by Mr. Chao, "A Historical Study of China's National Renaissance," which he publishes in his own magazine, *The National Renaissance Monthly*. After a careful study of the policies of four periods of national renaissance—the Han Wuti period, the Han Kwangwu period, the T'ang Tai-chung period and the Sung Tai-chu period—he comes to the conclusion that widely separated as these emperors were in point of time, their policies dealing with widely different situations have three points in common: firstly, the financial retrenchment policy to lighten the people's taxation burdens; secondly the pacifica-

tion of internal situation and domination over foreign countries by force; and thirdly, the gathering together of all the talents of the country to carry out the huge program set before them.

Coming to the more recent slogan of "rebirth by our own vitality" (自力更生) we will take a few examples quite at random, from articles, speeches, etc., which appear in *The China Times*, a local morning paper.

Mr. Chang Yuan-jo (章淵若), writing on "Sino-Japanese Problem and the Doctrine of Our Own Vitality or Strength" (中日問題與自力主義), says that we must rely on our own strength in dealing with the pending Sino-Japanese issues, and that the foreign policies of Russia, America and Britain may only be "auxiliary forces." The policy of dividing foreign Powers in order to gain at their expense is, according to Mr. Chang, childishly dangerous. The only policy that remains for us to adopt is the policy of relying on our own "blood" (i.e., a willingness to shed it) and "strength or vitality." We must conserve our own strength and working in unison prepare for the worst.

Mr. Tu Kuang-po (杜綱百) in an essay on "Resistance to the Suiyuan Invaders and Rebirth by Our Own Vitality," concludes by exhorting the people to follow President Lin Sen's advice. "Don't be discouraged, but seek rebirth by our own vitality." He sees resistance to invaders as the only royal road to rebirth by our own vitality. The resistance to the invaders of Suiyuan is but the beginning of the whole process and is a sure sign that the travail is at hand. Mr. Tu preaches not only resistance to the invaders but also the recovery of all the territory temporarily lost to us.

Mr. Chang Li-sheng (章力生), in a speech before the representatives of the citizens of Greater Shanghai on the New Year day, outlines a program for "National Reconstruction and Rebirth by Our Own Vitality," thus: firstly, obedience to the laws and orders of the state, and in everything put the welfare of the state first; secondly, protection of our national rights by refusing to become the tools of another people and by using native goods; thirdly, the individual's self-discipline and self-reform as the basis of a new nation; and fourthly, the fulfilment of our duties to the state.

All of these examples have been taken at random, but they certainly show which way the wind is blowing. Incidentally they give the lie to such assertions as made by the authors of "Can China Survive?" that the Chinese were relying on foreign aid to save China.

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