

The Rebirth of a Nation

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A MIDST an atmosphere melancholic and lackadaisical, with pessimists humming funereal notes like "mourning doves," China, the proverbial "Sick Man of the Far East," has been calmly fighting a *guerre a outrance* for survival—fighting with an indomitable will which is comparable only to the "will to live" of a sinking patient who has much to live for. Cancers of disintegration within and germs of aggression from without notwithstanding, she has been bending every effort not only to outblot extinction but to nourish a national rebirth. Her age-old policy of defeatism and fatalism banished, she has feverishly been exerting herself in the task of creating order out of chaos, pinning unswerving faith in internal regeneration "by her own hands" as the one and only course to steer the ship of state through the most tempestuous storm in the nation's history.

Four years ago when the League of Nations, in one of the most farcical trials in international politics the world had ever witnessed, lacked the moral courage to enforce the sentence it had pronounced on Japan for her seizure of China's Northeastern Provinces, China helplessly swallowed her disappointment. In the meantime, however, she had not lost all hope in the New Order, founded on the ideal of right over might, entertaining the belief that the signatories of the Briand-Kellogg Anti-War Pact would step forward to censure the wrongdoing of a nation mad with the passion for expansion. She was relying on intervention: but again she was disappointed. China had never felt more despondent; the nation slept in the cave of despair.

A year later the rattling of Japanese sabers came within the earshot of Peiping. For a time public voice of indignation rose in unison to a crescendo for armed resistance. The world, too, expected it to come, for if not, the Nipponese Samurai warriors would be riding rough-shod over Nanking and the Yangtse Valley within a couple of years. Still no resistance of an organized scale was in sight. Worse, China was at war with herself, the hearts of the leaders not yet beating as one. Foreign public opinion pronounced China a hopeless case in history.

Outwardly, the dominant note in words and voice in China was lethargy. But inwardly, forces more potent than noise were at work. As if suddenly from sleep, the nation's eyes were opened to the utter futility of relying on others for salvation. She must save herself, or perish. With brickbats hurled at his face by his political foes within, and with the world without ridiculing him as a political opportunist seeking selfish ends, General Chiang Kai-shek thundered forth the government policy of "Internal Consolidation Before Resistance."

"While we must strive for equality and independence among nations as our Leader, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, enjoined," the generalissimo said, "we must also learn to be strong and self-reliant, to regain our national strength through self-development. Mencius once said: 'A man must first

despise himself and then others will despise him: a kingdom must first smite itself and then others will smite it.'"

In a nutshell, General Chiang's national policy, derived from sagacious understanding of the world situation in its stark reality, was that national salvation must come from its own strength, that there should be no resistance so long as resistance would spell certain doom to the nation, and that a united people was the first prerequisite to effective resistance against foreign aggression.

Wrongly, as later events had proved, has this policy of "non-resistance when time is not ripe" been variously criticized as supine, weak-kneed, submissive, cowardly. Hot-headed critics, who at times even derided the generalissimo as a traitor, forgot that the fortitude, with which he had borne humiliation after humiliation to the nation, transcended in strength the ordinary courage to slap back, when slapped, irrespective of consequences. For it took more than courage to admit that a divided China would be no match for a highly co-ordinated aggressor nation. It was true that front page banner-heads for a few months lionized the heroism of Haile Selassie who mounted on a stately white steed, as movie news-reels showed, led his backward subjects in a battle royal against the invasion of Il Duce's superior army. But what has become of Abyssinia, and where is he now, this King without an throne? His Majesty was even denied an audience with responsible heads of the European Powers, the same Powers which not so long ago had fought the Italian envoys in verbal battles on his behalf at League sessions.

In adopting the national program of relegating momentarily to the background the menace of foreign imperialism while devoting her entire energy in setting her own house in order, China has not, as self-appointed apologists tried to make out the case, been banking on the fallacious theory that her invincible power of absorption feared no conquest by an alien people. She clung tenaciously only to the tested conviction that she needed a breathing spell to enable her to stand on her own feet in preparedness for the ultimate struggle for equality and independence in the comity of nations.

The passage of five years brings us naturally face to face with the questions: What has been the net result of China's battle for national rejuvenation? Can China survive? To those who have closely followed events during the last half-decade the answer, happily, is a virtual universal "yes!" And what are the concrete signs pointing to the belief that she can survive?

Broadly speaking, the main indications that China is well on the road to national rejuvenation may be summarized as four, one correlated to the other. Firstly, after two decades of internal dissension and turmoil under the republican era, during which factional strifes followed one after another like a recurring decimal, the nation has now found real unification in a sense it has never

found before. The present is a unification more by the will of the 450 million people than by the resort to military force, a people drawn together by a common destiny.

The skeptic will ask: Can it last? For it may be argued that China during the past quarter of a century had prided herself as being unified, such as at the conclusion of the Nationalist Northern Expedition in 1928. But shortly afterwards came the cleavage within the Kuomintang, a recrudescence of factional wars, and much dissipation of national strength. Will the present unification go the same way of deterioration? The answer is: previous unification was built on fear of weaker cliques for those which were stronger without any common ground to stand on. More, the central government had not acquitted itself in manner any better than the previous regimes in the rôle of servants to the people, thereby failing to command the whole-hearted confidence of the people. Whereas the unification today is sustained by commendable reconstruction, by the growing confidence of the people in the government, by the will of the people for unity, and by the awakening of army commanders to the realization that a soldier owes a greater allegiance to the state than to an individual overlord.

It was this manifest will for unity that spelled the downfall of the bogus Fukien regime in 1933, of the Liang-Kwang revolt last summer, and of the Chang Hsueh-liang coup last December. Confidence is contagious and this will for unity will ultimately put to nought the present Sian impasse under the banner of Yang Hu-cheng. It would, however, be a gross injustice to say that the Chinese people had never before felt the urge for national unity. Their desire for peace and order within the country had always been as strong, only with one difference. Whereas they were heart and soul opposed to civil war, yet unmindful of which faction was to rule the country with the feeling that one would be as good or as bad as another, the people today are against civil war by rallying to the banner of the central government, because the Nanking regime has proved itself by dint of conscientious work all that an efficient and strong government ought to be.

Secondly, China has progressed by leaps and bounds in reconstruction, which serves as the physical basis for national unity. Even the bitterest critic of a static old China cannot deny today that greater material progress has been achieved in the last five years than in previous decades put together. Of more easily discernible signs of progress must be mentioned the phenomenal development in communications. The rapid expansion of a coordinated network of railroads, highways, commercial airlines, long-distance telephones, telegraph, wireless and radio services on a nation-wide scale has not only knitted the various parts of the country closer together geographically, but also brought to closer harmony the mental outlook of the north and the south, the east and the west. Provincial barriers as understood in 1930, for example, are today non-existent; the big country is being welded into one single unit by a growing system of transportation.

Take railroad construction as an illustration. The completion of the intervening 456-kilometer Chuchow-Shaokwan section of the Canton-Hankow Railway last May, the extension of the Lunghai Railway to Tungkwan, then Sian, and then Paochi last month, the completion of the 74-kilometer Soochow-Kashing line to link up the Shanghai-Nanking and Shanghai-Hangchow-Ningpo Railways last July, and the completion of the Chekiang-Kiangsi Railway have made possible through rail traffic from Kalgan to Canton, from Shanghai to Sian. In 1936 alone, according to Mr. R. S. Norman, adviser to the Ministry of Railways, the extension of old railways in China reached a total mileage of 1,890 kilometers. From 1881 to 1935 a total of 8,110 kilometers of railroads were completed, averaging 150 kilometers a year, whereas the Five Year Plan from 1936 called for the construction of 8,139 kilometers of new railroads, averaging 1,628 kilometers a year.

By plane one may today negotiate the 1,200 miles from Shanghai to Chengtu in 7 hours, or complete a return trip between Peiping and Canton within 48 hours. The mileage of inter-provincial highways has grown from 46,666 kilometers in 1930 to over 128,000 kilometers by the end of 1936, and from Nanking one may now travel by motor to Yunnan in the southwest, to Kwangsi in the south, to Peiping in the north and to Chengtu in the west. Correspondingly rapid strides have also been made in the development of long-distance telephone, radio-telephone, telegraph and radio services during the past five years.

This nation-wide network of transportation facilities, needless to say, was beyond the reach of the public in 1930, and culturally, commercially, industrially and militarily, it serves as physical links in the building-up of a modern national state. Its commercial and cultural advantages are obvious, while its unifying influence from the military standpoint has been amply demonstrated when movements of central troops were facilitated in the suppression of regional uprisings and communist bandits.

Grouped under the heading of reconstruction may also be mentioned, among other things, the financial reform measures including the abolition of over 5,000 kinds of exorbitant levies and miscellaneous taxes and the institution of the new national currency, enforcement of compulsory and free education since August, 1935, rural rehabilitation in the form of cooperatives and farm credit, flood control, improvement in administrative efficiency, public health, and governmental assistance to industries.

Thirdly, with the rapid progress in reconstruction, the emergence of a strong central government, and growing internal political stability, have come a psychological rejuvenation in national outlook and revitalized confidence in the future of the country. In the hearts of the people, where there was despair and pessimism, there is now hope and optimism. A true nationalism has manifested itself in a vigor unparalleled in Chinese history. As they had never before done in a spirit of spontaneity, the Chinese of all classes today, at home and abroad, from coolie to capitalist, have in the last

two years demonstrated as one man their support of any patriotic cause, morally and financially, such as in the defense of Suiyuan, the presentation of 100 aeroplanes to the National Government, the "Give One Day's Earnings For National Defense Movement," etc. Well has it been said that no nation can be destroyed while its spirit lives.

The last sign, but not the least, is that the nation has found a leader, who having proved his mettle commands the loyalty and allegiance of his people as no leader before had commanded. In the hands of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek the people have placed the destiny of the nation. And the most significant aspect of it is that this solid support of General Chiang has been pledged willingly and with confidence as it has been deserved on the part of the recipient. The nation-wide concern over his personal safety while he was being detained in Sian last December and the subsequent spontaneous outburst of jubilation over his release testified to the high esteem, almost religious, in which the people from one end of the country to the other regard him, and representative of a nation-wide vote of confidence in his ability as the savior of the nation.

As Dr. Hu Shih said: "General Chiang's leadership at present has no contemporary parallel and stands no contemporary parallel and stands no challenge. In a country where the people have never indulged in hero worship the way in which General Chiang has won the support and admiration of the people cannot be attributed to propaganda or any other influence. It must have come from the firm belief of the people that the government, with General Chiang as its executive and real head, has a definite policy and program which will eventually lead to national salvation and regeneration."

The fact that many of General Chiang's former antagonists and critics are his ardent supporters today is eloquent testimony of the nation's acknowledgment of his inspiring leadership and of his undoubted patriotism. His critics no longer deny that to successfully translate the dream of national unity into reality within the short

span of a few years in face of internal obstacles and external pressure could not have been the work of a leader of the ordinary caliber. And as the editor of one foreign newspaper in China aptly remarked, it is as the embodiment of the unifying spirit that General Chiang primarily holds the loyalty of the great mass of his countrymen.

It does not require the sagacity of a seasoned political observer to notice that there have been, during the past few years particularly the last year, great changes in the temper of the nation. From the depths of despair and disillusionment so noticeable two years ago China has emerged a united people with self-confidence, with unflinching faith in their leader and in the ability of the National Government to bring about national salvation.

China today, "sensationally revitalized and unified" as Roy Howard, the well-known editor of *The New York World-Telegram*, put it, while demanding the chance to work out her own salvation, stands ready to defend herself against further encroachments on her sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The world, I am sure, still remembers General Chiang's message on the eve of China's Silver Jubilee, in which he said:

"China is capable of doing great deeds by her own efforts, capable of wiping out destructive forces of militarism, capable of undertaking constructive measures for the welfare of her people, in short, capable of setting her own house in order—provided that she's given the chance to work out her destiny uninterrupted and unembarrassed. This chance we want and this chance we must have."

Judging by her stiffened diplomatic attitude in the negotiations with Japan during the past six months and by the nation-wide support to the defense of Suiyuan against invasion, the people and the government of China are one today in demanding that chance to work out her own destiny—a sign of the beginning of the rebirth of China.

Government Leaders on National Renaissance

(Compiled)

IN the January 1, 1937, number of *The Eastern Miscellany*, four government leaders express their opinions on the problem of national renaissance. As space does not permit a translation of all the four articles, only a résumé of them is given below.

Marshal Feng Yu-hsiang, vice-president of the Military Affairs Commission, writing on the "Fundamental Policy of National Renaissance," says that this multi-phase question centers on the problem of national salvation, and all discussions will surely lead to the question of putting the policy into practice. The answer to the problem of putting national salvation into practice is, in plain language, to wage a war of resistance in order to settle the accounts of foreign aggressions since September 18, 1931, and to achieve equality and independence in the family of nations.

Peace is the highest ideal of mankind and the cherished goal of all nations. But a nation desires peace only when it is not aggressed upon. A war of resistance against the aggressors who are the disturbers of peace is not only a war for national independence but also one for the realization of peace. To wage such a war is the holy and pressing duty of the 450,000,000 Chinese.

Our enemy has occupied one-eighth of our territory and reduced one-ninth of our compatriots to the status of subdued people, and still greater drama of aggression is unfolding itself. Our whole nation has sustained unprecedented damage, economically, politically, and culturally. For our national existence and development, we must wage a war of resistance against the enemy who threatens our national existence and encroaches upon the integrity of our state in the past five years.