

FOR OR AGAINST CHINA'S NATIONAL CONSTITUTION?

(Reprinted from The China Press, Shanghai, of June 1, 1927) THE long period of suffering undergone by the people of China under the despotic rule of the Manchus culminated in 1911 in a Revolution which was received with acclamation all over this vast land and was envisaged as a veritable triumph for the forces of civilisation. The world, rejoicing in the passing of an effete dynasty, exclaimed: "Ah, China is moving!" The principle of the autocratic reign of the Manchu Dynasty was swept into the dust-bin and sovereignty

over China was vested in the people.

The colossal effort for the emancipation of China was crowned by the establishment of the Chinese Constitution, which firmly laid down the system of administration in China and defined the fundamental rights of her citizens. Aside from the greatest achievement as laid down in Art. 2 of the Constitution, whereby the sovereignty of the Republic was vested in the whole body of the people, the citizens of China have established well-defined principles of rights and liberties for every citizen of the Republic without racial, class or relgious distinctions. Art. 6 lays down the following rights of the citizens:

(1) No citizens shall be arrested, imprisoned, tried or punished except in accordance with law.

(2) The habitation of any citizen shall not be entered or searched except in accordance with law.

(3) Citizens shall enjoy the right of the security of their property and the freedom of trade.

(4) Citizens shall have the freedom of speech, of publication, of association.

- (5) Citizens shall have the right of the secrecy of their letters.
- (6) Citizens shall have the liberty of residence and removal.

(7) Citizens shall have the freedom of religion.

Now, more than ever, when all over China the personal rights and liberties of Chinese citizens are • ruthlessly tampered with, can the Chinese appreciate the significance of the rights which they had won for themeslves after vanquishing the despotism of the Manchus? Unfortunately, however, these achievements nowadays exist only on paper. Except within the

boundaries of foreign concessions, Chinese citizens all over the country, be it north or south, are deprived not only of those high guarantees of their liberty and dignity but even the most elementary protection of their very existence.

The Chinese population is despoiled without mercy by troops and organised squads of bandits and is made the victim of robberies, kidnappings, murder and rape. Legitimate trade, development of industries, commerce. finance, communications-all of which is most essentially needed for the very existence of China-have become impossible by reason of extortion, taxation and illegal levies under which every healthy effort of the population towards economic development is doomed to abject failure. There is no personal liberty, no immunity from illegal arrest; people are not only thrown into prison and left there to languish without trial but are simply executed at the pleasure of those who happen to have usurped authority. Administration in different parts of the country has become synonymous with an unlimited and despotic reign of brute force over the citizens of China.

And today, as sixteen years ago, the Chinese nation finds itself again in a terrific turmoil and conflagration as a result of the sixteen unhappy years of ill administration and cynical neglect of national affairs because the officials have been too engrossed in the pursuit of their own aggrandizement. With demagogical impertinence, typical of the oratory of the Red Internationale, the suffering population of China, driven to the very brink of despair and fury under the lash and sword of its executioners, is now taught that for all its sufferings and wrongs, the foreigners alone are to be blamed.

Foreigners are to blame for having erected in China her only few really civilised modern and beautiful cities, her only happy and aesthetic spots in China where Chinese trade and industry are flourishing.

Foreigners are to blame for providing money without stint and building for China all her railroads which have furnished the country with a network of communications forming one of the greatest factors for the future political unification of the country.

With the vast territories of China and her enormous population, without railroads, uniting, as they do,

economically and administratively, the scattered parts of China, political reunification would become absolutely impossible. And the foreigners, who have given their money and who have actually built with their own hands this mightiest foundation of China's future political unification and national greatness, are blamed and insulted!

Foreigners have to be blamed, for they provided the means of education not only by unlimited hospitality and unrestricted patronage of Chinese youth in their own countries but have poured into China millions in treasure and endless spiritual forces and goodwill by sending missions for education and religious purposes

Foreigners are to blame for having created fleets of steamers providing cheap and healthy transport for the Chinese masses and other economic requirements.

Foreigners are to blame for establishing in China customs, postal and telegraph services, for creating schools and hospitals to fight, irrespective of the cost in terms of human life and treasure, darkness and disease which, by their insidious and destructive work, have been driving China to degradation and ruin.

And today, when the suffering nation has raised its head and is feverishly looking for salvation, the people are not offered any explanation except to be told of the "injustice" and "oppression" met with at the hands of foreigners. No serious attempt is made to offer to the awakening consciousness of the nation anything more than this unseemly pack of lies and malicious and intoxicatingly poisonous propaganda, intended to divert the mind of the nation from the real sources of its indescribable sufferings.

The main evil of China is the lack of one worthy and trusted government. The one and greatest evil of China is the impossibility of building up an administration which would answer the pressing needs of the nation. This failure to produce a united government in China is the source of all of China's ills and sufferings, and this is the only thing which is rendering impossible at the present moment the revision of Sinoforeign relations. And it is natural that the main task before China is to devise a formula on which the Chinese nation will be able to erect the future government of the country.

The elaboration of this principle on which the edifice of the future government of China has to be erected is the greatest and immediate task of the nation. It cannot be postponed without causing grievous hurt to the nation. It must now be made clear to the nation, for the entire destiny of China hinges on the method and principle on which the future government of the nation is to be built.

The supreme liberty of a nation consists in the right of the people to devise a method of self-administration and to elect a government which would follow the people's will since it owes its existence to the will of the nation. This system of self-rule, through accredited deputies of the mass of the population, is one of the safest guarantees against misrule and usurpation of the rights of the nation. Compared with this gigantic task as to how to establish in China one great, effective and trusted government, the foreign question is of comparatively minor importance.

The government must be the brain and soul of a nation, and without a brain and a soul, a nation is inevitably plunged into the dismay of insanity and paralysis. The Chinese must hear and know, realise and see which way it is being pushed and directed to go

in solving this vital problem.

Vague promises and hints by the Chang Tso-lins, Chiang Kai-sheks, Sun Chuan-fangs, Wu Pei-fus and Feng Yu-hsiangs of China and their silver-tongued assurances of striving for the good of the nation are not sufficient. The political and military leaders of China have not only to appeal for the support of the nation but to announce in precise terms to the population of the country on what lines they intend to build up the government of China.

Until now, the Provisional Constitution of China has been the only supreme mandate and command in which the people's will has culminated in respect of the form of the People's Government. The National Constitution of China is the only unaffected ideal of the Chinese nation, and it is imperative that the contesting political groups of China should definitely announce to the people which of them are for and which of them against the National Constitution of China.

(Distributed by the American Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai, China.)