

"THE NEW CULTURE"

Rapid Spread Of Revolutionary Ideas In China

THE CHINESE BRAND

Commenting upon the recent intercollegiate meeting of the Peking and Tokyo university people in the Y. M. C. A. building here, writes Masujiro Honda, L.H.D., in the "Japan Advertiser," two of the leading papers of the capital wrote noteworthy editorials on the same day, May 20. One of them connects the Bolshevization of China with the disunion of the North and the South on the one hand, and with the lack of harmony and co-operation among the outside Powers on the other. The other paper says, we can not deny the fact that there are students in Japan who are actuated by the same principles and aims as Chinese students and who try to oppose the military and capitalist classes by international combination. As the first-mentioned editorial refers to French, American, and English interference or warning in regard to the rising tendencies of Chinese students, we can safely infer that their new movement is directed against militarism in any country including their own. The writer, wishing to ascertain how far this spirit of opposition and destruction obtains in young China, has interviewed a number of Chinese students in Tokyo and gathered the following information from them. Needless to add, however, nobody but the writer is responsible for the contents of this article.

A Sun Yat Sen Movement

Before describing the New Culture movement of the North, with its organ of expression and propaganda called the "New Young Men," a radical movement in the South must be briefly noticed. Yat Sen and Tai Tienchou, who were thrown out of the Kwantung Government by the military leaders, it have been giving vent to their discontent in a magazine entitled "Construction." But their method is more destructive than constructive or reconstructive for they go beyond syndicalism and aim at anarchistic communism. Their means of attaining this goal is naturally Bolshevism and their propaganda is gaining ground on both sides of the Yangtze. The ultimate object of New Culture and Construction movements may be identical, but there is a wide gulf between their respective fields of practical work. The culture movement attaches more importance to social and educational reforms, while the Construction movement proposes to transform China by political reorganization. One is idealistic in tendency, while the other is inclined to be more materialistic. It goes without saying that radical foreign ideas and movements have been at work much longer in the South than in the conservative North.

Inspiration From Europe

Though not a direct result of the Great War, as is Bolshevism, the New Culture movement in China has apparently drawn its inspiration from what its founder had observed in Europe during the war. Tsai Yuanpei, President of Peking University, was a Hanlin scholar from Chekiang Province under the Manchu sway, who traveled in Europe for years, studied politics and philosophy in Germany, returned to China when the Republican revolution broke out, and was appointed Minister of Education in the third year of the Chinese Republic. He went abroad again, but came back three years ago and was made President of Peking University to electrify the conservative atmosphere of that scholastic institution with new men and new ideas.

Young professors under Tsai, such as Hu Shih and Chiang Meng Ling, both of whom were educated in Columbia University, New York, organized the magazine, New Young Men, already mentioned, in 1918. This publication became the nucleus of the New Culture movement, which is erroneously identified with Bolshevism or with the boycotting of Japanese goods by shallow observers. The first article of faith, as it were, of this movement is a literary reformation and the methods employed are the adoption of the spoken language for writing and of a new phonetic alphabet. Before the first year of this movement expired spoken Chinese took the place of the literary style of writing throughout the country.

Propagation Of New Thought

To accomplish social reforms next, the professors and scholars connected with the "New Young Men" started another journal called the "New Life," to which contributions from young students were welcomed. Those contributors, in their turn, have brought out a number of journals and other publications to propagate new thoughts. They are trying to introduce individualism into the traditional family system of China, in which the father had absolute power over children and husband over the wife. They disown Confucius and Mencius as moralists in "government pay" and instead, they will listen to the voice of their free conscience. They also contend for the free marriage of mutual

choice against the one-sided view of chastity, and against the parental rights of interference in marriage matters. Within the last one year or so, in consequence, it is said, of their teaching, the number of divorce cases has markedly increased among the young men and women.

To improve the social conditions of the uneducated and impoverished masses of people, again, the New Culture folks must go a step further and achieve some political reforms. One of their methods employed is to give compulsory work to the idle with the sacrifice demanded of the small class of wealthy individuals. Such a method is perhaps a temporary makeshift, but nothing better can be done in a country without any organized industry. Some of the new men in China would copy the guild socialism of England and make capital common property. Where they insist upon the establishment of hospitals and nurseries with national funds and claim to break down the privileges of the educated and governing classes, their ideas are akin to the constitution of the Lenin Government of Russia. The New Culturists therefore do not recognize both the Peking and Kwantung Government, in so far as neither of them serves the interests of the public or the society.

What attitude do they take on foreign relations, then? The New Culturists of China fraternize with men and women of any nationality or race, if they are of the same views and principles. They can sympathize with the Lenin Government to a certain extent, they have good will toward the awakened masses in Japan; but they oppose militarism and aggression of any people. With regard to religion they simply take a negative position of not interfering in the freedom of conscience, not believing or hoping that every member of a society should or would lead a life of faith. Therefore they claim that missionaries themselves should engage in some productive work, in order to minimize the number of the unproductive consumers.

The "Three Withouts"

The North China Daily News last year characterized this new movement as a movement for "three withouts," without government, without religion, and without family. A reply to this by the "New Young Men" said that they do not recognize a military government, they merely object to a family system of hoary traditions, and that they simply refuse to coerce others to believe in a religion. It is also a mistake, they claim, to suppose that this movement is directed against the Japanese people in general. Only, the overbearing attitude and lawless activities of the "China ronin" from Japan, the military occupation of Kiauchow, the insistence upon "special interests" in Manchuria and Mongolia, the military convention of the Terauchi Ministry at Tokyo, and other happenings of a similar nature have inspired the Chinese with a foreboding of their country being ruined by aggressive Japanese. Here it is the new movement in China seems to come in direct collision with Japan. But the poor and the working masses of both countries have ample room for sympathy and co-operation, for they do not believe in the absolute equality of mankind or think of breaking down class barriers entirely. What an overwhelming majority of the Chinese want is equality of opportunity for honest labour and the nearest approach to equality of the material rewards of different kinds of work.

From such data as described above, the writer ventures to draw the conclusion that the Chinese brand of radicalism or "dangerous thoughts," as some Japanese would call them, is somewhat dissimilar from the European original, although the Japanese contention that Bolshevism will never take root in Chinese soil is contradicted by these data. It is impossible, however, to ascertain what influence has been exerted over the New Culturists by a few Russian leaders between Pientsin and Peking.