



CHINESE BABY: essential raw material

NOT without anxiety, but with a strong conviction that the step is necessary, we reprint the following extract from a report on China by the Chungking correspondent of "Life" (New York). If parts of it make depressing reading, that is largely because we have been kept so long in the dark. However, the picture is not unduly depressing when seen in proper focus. This is how "Life" presents it editorially:

"SUPPOSE you were a Chinese who had a great faith in a country called America. Suppose your information about America was limited to a reading of the Atlantic Charter and Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech. Vague rumours had reached you, but you did not believe them, since they did not accord with these documents. Suddenly a well-informed traveller returns from America and tries to bring you up-to-date on everything that has happened there in the last two years. There has been a series of strikes and race riots. Congressmen are in revolt against what some of them openly call the Roosevelt monarchy. An ambiguous character named Hopkins controls all access to the President. Manpower is a muddle, prices are way up. There is a wave of juvenile delinquency. The Republicans killed off China's friend Willkie, and there is a powerful Press campaign against Britain and Russia.

"If you had to absorb all the bad news at one sitting, you would probably conclude that America is a hopeless, chaotic country, losing the war and falling apart.

"The first-hand report on China by Theodore H. White will shock a great many Americans. It will especially shock those whose ideas of China were formed during Madame Chiang Kai-Shek's visit here over a year ago, and who think of China solely in terms of her charm, eloquence and idealism. She spoke for China's aspirations. White's report presents the actuality. It is not a pretty picture.

"But it is not just a muck-raking job. It is a balanced attempt by an able journalist who loves China, to give a true picture of China and its government to-day. The news in it is not all bad; but the bad things in it are news to most Americans. And the bad news seems worse than it is, because it has been kept too long."

NOW is the time to talk about China.

The popular American conception of China to-day is compounded of three powerful modern myths.

The first is the Treaty Port legend. This legend was born at the bars of Shanghai, Tientsin and Hong Kong, and stems directly from the traders who went to the China coast to make a profit. The legend holds that all Chinese are sly, stealthy characters, untrustworthy, cowardly, dirty. They must be treated as an inferior race, beaten and cowed by gunboats and arms. According to this legend, East is East and West is West and thank God for it.

REPORT ON CHINA:

The second legend is the Madame Chiang Kai-Shek legend. Perhaps nothing attests more eloquently the genius of this brilliant woman than the skill with which she has clothed all China in the radiant glamour of her personality. According to this legend, all Chinese are noble in spirit, governed by courtly statesmen who like herself are inspired by a philosophical blend of Confucianism and Christianity which is altogether beautiful. There is no corruption, no disunity. The Chinese armies, according to this legend, frustrate the Japanese in attack after attack upon the heart of China with nothing but skill, daring and superior moral courage. China bleeds, and there are none to bind her wounds.

The third legend, more difficult to define, is tainted with the folklore of cynicism. It is shared alike by such widely-differing groups as the Communist Party and disillusioned foreign officials. According to this legend, the Government "gang" in Chungking is out-and-out Fascist. Democracy is only a "gag." We are being played for suckers by the administration in power which seeks to accumulate stores and supplies against the day of inevitable civil war. The Nationalists in Chungking are rotten from skin to soul, beyond hope of redemption or reform, unwilling to fight even if they could, while only the Communists in the north keep the wicked Japanese at bay.

The Most Important Fact

None of these legends is true. And by the time a correspondent comes to know China well enough to discard the legends, he realises that whatever he writes will be understood against the background of one or another of these myths.

The most important fact about China is that it is a land of peasants — of hard-palmed, nut-brown men and women who work each day from dawn to dusk in the fields, who hunger for the land and need the land and love the land. What binds all these people together is not only their common language and their cultural tradition, but also their common subjection to a poverty and ignorance that knows no counterpart in the Western world. It is out of this searing crucible of want that comes the desperate struggle of all Chinese to live. And out of this struggle of the miserable to be less miserable come the most pressing of China's problems—for when the miserable struggle against Nature, they usually struggle against each other.

Until 30 years ago, this fabric was bound together by one of the most curious instruments of government ever created by man, the Imperial Civil Service directed from Peking. Before this Civil Service vanished, however, it had produced and standardised a civilisation which, with several significant breaks, had hung together for almost 2000 years. It produced a code of manners and thought that reached from the coolie to the mandarin; a pattern of human decency and tolerance that the West has rarely approached.

If you could take apart the tangled skein of Chinese history in the past 30 years and unwind it, you would find three continuing strands. First, in point of emergence, after the collapse of the Manchus was the rise of the warlords—the brutal, wolfish soldiers who ravaged

the land, trailing pestilence and disaster in their wake. These warlords were queer, mad people, who in themselves personified the entire break with the past. Their weapons were shoddy, their leadership atrocious and their allegiance bought with silver dollars. They morselled China into a crazy patchwork of fiefs and sub-fiefs in each of which the warlord ruled as an absolute despot.

Second in emergence were the Nationalists. The Nationalists were not only a unifying and historical force, but also a product of the general impact of Western culture. As schools grew, railways were laid, factories were built, scholars agitated and mighty cities arose where were bred large groups of men different from any that had appeared in China before. They were workers, clerks, compradores, bankers, intellectuals, teachers, social workers, and middle-class citizens. They not only wished to make



MADAME CHIANG
The creator of a legend

their country whole again, but they realised it had to be done with Western tools.

Though they were Western in their thinking and technique, it would be a mistake to assume they had accepted the West wholeheartedly and without reservation. No one can understand China to-day nor the mentality of Chiang Kai-Shek, who does not understand the hatred and bitterness of the intelligent Chinese for the foreign businessmen who treated him like a coolie in his own land. In some cities this foreigner closed the public parks to Chinese; in some boats Chinese were not allowed to ride first-class.

Much of this foreign sentiment focused in the great metropolises of Shanghai and Hong Kong, where Chinese were wealthiest and most advanced. I have seen my Chinese friends quiver with shame as they recalled foreign brutality toward the Chinese in China 15 or 20 years ago. This emotion is a healthy and normal reaction to an intolerable record of shame and humiliation. And it is this humiliation set against the whole background of disunion, bloodshed, decay and warlordism that explains why, in so many Chinese minds of the first order, unity takes precedence over all else.

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