

May 1937

April has passed into May with more of public attention centered upon Tokyo and London than upon the quietness of internal politics. The Japanese election has been closely watched; and the tendency of the Cabinet to strike an extra-constitutional line in its wish to concentrate the economic and political systems of the nation, is examined suspiciously. On the whole the statements of Foreign Minister Sato and Ambassador Kawagoe regarding China have been improvements, but the War Ministry indicated support of the detestable East Hopei puppet regime, as a warning to Chinese ambitions for cleaning up that mess.

Japanese official and unofficial news media, and certain newspapers in London, have spread reports of a Japanese program to secure an understanding with Britain regarding general policy in East Asia. China fears any move in that direction as weakening one of the restraints upon Japanese aggression (though the line of reasoning may be criticized as assuming that a compromise of interests would give Japan more freedom than the military would be disposed to take in forceful desperation if they remain in envious rivalry with the British). Actually an agreement harmful to the Chinese position is very unlikely, and it is possible that the whole business is an artificial counter-breeze to H. H. Kung's efforts for a loan on the London market. Insiders believe that an advance for railway-building will be secured, particularly for the Canton to Swatow line, but that no large or general loan is possible.

The visits of Kung in western countries, the departure of C. T. Wang as Ambassador to the United States, and the wide publicity given in Christian circles to the ~~Christmas~~ Easter message of Chiang Kai-shek, as well as to Kung's earlier telegram to the Oxford Group Conference and other such communications, prompt a warning of reasonable caution. It is natural to rejoice in the Christian stand taken by such persons; and this writer for one is convinced of their sincerity. Nevertheless, there is danger in missionary enthusiasm over the present governmental group, as well as in the response and expectations aroused among westerners generally. In the first place, Christianity cannot afford in principle or in practice to be linked to a particular political faction, good, medium, or bad. In the second place, no alert and well-informed person should seem to give complete approval to the acts and policies of this Government as a whole or of these individual men in particular. The very real improvement in Chinese national life as compared with former periods is encouraging. But it is only a tiny beginning. Nepotism and corruption, the secret and unchecked spending of vast sums of the peasants' money, narrow bureaucracy protected by a dangerous censorship and a political judiciary, management of railways and of rural reconstruction in ways highly profitable to Shanghai financiers: the responsibility for these evils rests on high shoulders. Human nature is such that men can be touched by good motives and can do real service for the nation, yet maintain large reservations of profit and malpractice. We need a selective and constructively critical support of the new men and new measures; not sectarian blindness. Feng Yu-hsiang's case is not a complete analogy, but it has lessons for today.

H. S. B.

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