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The Reactionary Trend in China.

(not dated)

This statement describes in general terms the anti-democratic treatment accorded by certain sections of the present Chinese government to Chinese intellectuals. This description has been carefully weighed and built up by a number of persons in Chungking, and represents their considered opinion. They cannot sign their names to it, for the reasons given below.

1. Censorship. The censorship now enforced in China goes far beyond any military necessity and extends to purely literary and cultural work. It is plainly motivated by a desire to suppress freedom of thought in general, (not only in political matters) on the theory that independent thinking in any line will endanger the elements in power. This censorship represents an authoritarian effort to regiment the intelligentsia of the nation, at a time when creative thinking is needed in China as never before. It takes the form of censorship of newspapers; of plays, in which for example, it is no longer allowed to use the word "fascism"; and of literary magazines, from which poetry, historical essays, and even translations from foreign literature may be summarily excised (e.g. translations of C. Bay-Lewis or of R. Burns). Manuscripts censored are confiscated and put on file for evidence against the authors and publishers in future. In addition to the censorship of the Chinese press and of Chinese periodicals, by two separate offices, there is a demoralizing and very effective censorship imposed on every foreign journalist, who cannot try to break through it without becoming persona non grata to the Chinese government. This is why so little real news comes from Chungking. The bitter struggle for democracy which is going on within China, with which this statement is concerned, is kept from the outside world.

2. Politics in education. The Ministry of Education has used its strategic wartime position for political ends. The number of government-supported institutions of higher education has increased, the government being almost the sole means of support since 1937, and the Ministry has taken advantage of this situation to attempt to coerce teachers to join the ranks of the party in power, and in fact to coerce entire universities. The outstanding pre-war universities of the country, now gathered at Kunming, are now facing imminent starvation because their faculties have refused to knuckle under to the politicians. Since the inflation has produced prices in Kunming half again as high as in other centers, the Ministry has been able to effect the starvation of these faculties merely by refusing to accord them differential treatment in proportion to the local price problem. It has even been made difficult for private agencies to come to the aid of the professors in Kunming, although the best-trained of the returned students from abroad are gathered there. Special attention is paid to the Southwestern University, the Chekiang and the Wuhan Universities, because they are considered to be centers of free thinking. The Fuhtan University in Chungking is also a target.

3. Surveillance, intimidation, and stultification of intellectuals. The efforts of the political organization in power to choke off all dissent take many forms. Among university students the Kuomintang Youth Corps is

used to spy upon all critics and keep them in line. Teachers and authors are commonly required to join the Kuomintang before they will be given jobs. There is a conspicuous lack of mobilization of writers and teachers in the war effort, although in some cases outstanding intellectuals are given sinecure positions where they are able to accomplish nothing, in order to keep them also in line. All cultural associations are under careful surveillance and their work is robbed of vitality by the injection of domestic political considerations into cultural work. Eminent professors and university presidents are required to receive political indoctrination in a training camp, which is also a prerequisite for nearly every civilian going abroad on a Chinese passport. Several very extensive networks of secret police are of course used in this program of intellectual regimentation. The movements of persons suspected of opposition to the ruling party are restricted; this applies to persons of the impeccable eminence of Madame Sun Yat-sen, widow of the founder of the republic, who has not left Chungking in years. Similar restrictions apply to the efforts of students to come abroad to study. Newspapermen going abroad are required to go through the Party training and eventually become Party members. Journalists who are seen with foreigners in China are immediately watched.

4. Militarization of education. Since early in 1943, all schools from primary to university level, must have military training for all students. Each school is required to have three officers, the president or school master being nominal commander of military training. Students are taught in the first place to believe in military force as the foundation of a nation. The officers not only are responsible for actual military drill but also are expected to keep strict watch on the behavior, the thinking habits, the talk, the reading interests of the students. Students are not allowed to hold meetings of their own. Instead, numerous meetings are held by the Kuomintang Youth Corps centers in schools and the students are pressed to join just to keep them busy. Every year the school authorities, particularly teachers in middle schools, are required to nominate a list of students for appointment to the ranks of the Youth Corps, regardless of the individual's inclination.

5. The proto-fascist mentality. These anti-democratic activities are directed against all intellectuals who, being intellectuals, dare to have their own critical ideas; (they are of course directed also against the Chinese communists, although only in a few instances, since the communists are almost all in North China beyond the central government blockade line.) Behind these activities may be seen a frame of mind which bodes ill for the future of China, even though the political group who direct this anti-intellectual program are only one part of the national government. This frame of mind is expressed in the dogma that China can become a great modern nation on the basis purely of western science and the ancient Chinese virtues. This we deny, for we believe that the adjustment of the ancient and rich culture of China to the pressing problems of the modern world must be a total adjustment, not a half-way adjustment such as was made by the Japanese last century. If the professors and writers of present-day China are not allowed to contribute their full share to the creative reshaping of Chinese life and thought, China's reconstruction will be unnecessarily longer and more painful.

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