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Current Comment

China's Plight

To the Editor:

As our holidays of good will and human brotherhood approach, we direct your attention to the plight of the cultural workers of China.

The eight years of Sino-Japanese war, with the collapse of Chinese economy, are having disastrous effects on China's cultural workers — writers, artists, musicians, scientists and professors. The growth of internal Chinese reaction, closely approximating Fascism, has deprived large numbers of Chinese men and women of the means of livelihood. Professors and scientific workers who advocated a constitutional democratic government have been discharged and left to sink or swim. Journalists have been discharged or denied employment. Writers could not get their books or articles published, and even translators who did Robert Burns' poems and the novels of Sinclair Lewis into Chinese have been put on the black list and denied employment. Hundreds of Chinese cultural workers are living in the direst poverty, depending upon the charity of friends, while others have left universities and returned to villages to cultivate the land that they might simply have enough to eat. Tuberculosis has been rampant among them.

Large numbers of such cultural workers formerly made their way to Kwangsi province, which still remained a democratic center, with rights of free speech, press, and assembly. But the Japanese have now occupied most of Kwangsi Province and these men and women are again on the highways as homeless refugees.

For instance, on Mar. 1 of this year, Chang Chi-jo, chairman of the political science department of Southwestern Union University at Kuning, was driven from his position because, in first of his ten scheduled lectures on "Modern China and Constitutionalism" he stated:

- a) The rule of law means equality before the law, or the same law governing all the people; and
- b) Democracy means self-government or government of the people.

Prof. Chang stressed the point that "a system of law without democracy is an empty shell."

Universities which refuse to obey government orders to dismiss men of such ideas were refused the rice allowances upon which students and faculty depend.

Another case is typical: Chow Tao-fen, the most noted publicist of China, has just died a long, slow death of hunger and hardship. Mr. Chow, still under 40, formerly toured America. He was one of the founders and chairman of the Life Publishing Co., which, until suppressed in late 1939, published war books and booklets, a newspaper, and the largest monthly magazine in the country, with millions of circulation.

This state of affairs has been due to the policy of the ruling Kuomintang, or nationalist party. Chen Li-fu, known as China's Himmler, and a Fascist, until recently was minister of education and, in addition, controlled the ministries of information and social affairs—the three organs that controlled public opinion and cultural workers. Chinese public opinion and American criticism has led to his dismissal as minister of education, but he remains chairman of the organization department of the Kuomintang—the most powerful party organization—and in control of the secret political police that operates against the intellectual world. It was against Chen Li-fu that groups of Harvard professors, and some other university groups in America, protested early this year. You may recall that Chen drew up the rigid regulations to trol the thought of Chinese students in the United States.

Madame Sun Yat-sen, widow of the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, has just reported to the China Aid Council of United Relief that the Chinese Anti-Japanese Writers Assn. of Chungking has held a benefit and raffle to raise money to aid its members and other cultural workers. The state of Chinese currency is indicated by her statement that admission tickets cost \$300 Chinese currency.

Considering this state of affairs, we wish to appeal to our fellow citizens of Saratoga Springs and neighboring regions to sacrifice some personal pleasure during these holidays and send a sum of money, from \$1 up, to a fund which will be sent to Madame Sun in Chungking to distribute to cultural workers. We wish also to inform the public that some of us have received letters from China thanking Americans for the great historic role they are playing in the defense of Chinese democracy. China, these letters state, will never forget the great role that Americans are playing in this respect.

Any funds, with letters, can be sent to
Miss Agnes Smedley, Yaddo, Saratoga Springs.

Sincerely yours

—Katherine Anne Porter, Elizabeth Ames,
Agnes Smedley, Eleanor Clark, Caroline Slade,
Joseph S. G. Bolton, Carl E. Smith,

Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

Dec. 13, 1944.