

FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS SERIES NO. 9.

# THE CROWNING UNITY

Twelve Years' Steady Consolidation

Nanking: Heart of National Life

By PROFESSOR B. IFOR EVANS

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Chinese League of Nations Union

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**FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS SERIES**

T. H. Chen, *Editor*

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# THE CROWN

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Nanking: Heart of National Life

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By PROFESSOR B. IFOR EVANS

*In The Western Mail.*

I always hesitate to write about the condition of China, for before the article is printed the whole situation may have changed. No one in China would have believed that Chiang Kai-shek could be captured by one of his generals. Few believed that he would be released. Actually, that incredible episode leaves him in a stronger position than he possessed before.

Here I have tried to select a few of the fundamentals of the situation, the elements which seem to me to have at least a semblance of permanence and those of which we in Great Britain ought, I think, to be aware. When I was in China last, in 1925, two factors were outstanding. First, there was a very general hostility towards Great Britain; secondly, China itself had

nothing corresponding to government as we understand it in Western Europe. The country was then divided between local war lords, who did not fight each other unless it was unavoidable, but they all flourished by reducing the peasantry to the border of starvation.

To-day that hostility against Great Britain no longer exists. It has been replaced by a desire for co-öperation and friendship which has every appearance of being genuine. Further, China, for the first time since the institution of the Republic, is developing a genuine Central Government. That task has been in the main the accomplishment of the Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek. This sparely-built soldier of 50, ruthless and indefatigable, is fast becoming the nearest approach to a national leader which China has had for a quarter of a century. His recent capture may set doubts on this conception of his position. But the powers which gathered round him during the last few months show that he is the strongest man that China has known in this generation.

### The Unify<sup>see the</sup> plane

Unlike many of <sup>Centr</sup> his compatriots, Chiang Kai-shek is a man of few words. He seems to know what he wants to do and he does it. He is not only a military commander of ability, but a ruler with a gift almost approaching genius for the intricacies of Chinese politics. In the last few crucial years he has not made a single false move. I think that an increasing number of people are coming to believe that Chiang Kai-shek is a world figure of first importance.

Without the modern developments which have come to China in this last 10 years, the rise of Chiang Kai-shek would have been impossible. In a vast and undeveloped country the aeroplane has changed all conceptions of communication. Journeys which a few years ago had to be made on foot, or by the help of bearers, who carried the traveller in a "chair," can now be completed in a few hours by air. In 1929 the China National Aviation Company carried only 354 passengers. In 1935 they carried 10,404. The problem of

business and the power of Government have both been changed in China with the coming of the aeroplane.

Wherever Chiang Kai-shek goes he travels by air. One day he may be in the south, in Canton, settling the difficulties in Kwangtung. One's regret from an English standpoint is that almost inevitably it is an American aeroplane, or, failing that, a German aeroplane, which is employed.

### City Growth

A few weeks ago I was in Chiang Kai-shek's capital, in Nanking, a city which can now be reached in 50 minutes by air from Shanghai. Nanking is in itself a sufficient evidence that a new China exists. I remember the desolate feeling which Nanking aroused when I was there in 1925—an immense encircling wall, and within it, where one might expect a town, open fields and cultivated land, with a Chinese city tucked negligibly into one corner of its immensities. To-day Nanking has a population of over 1,000,000. You can sweep in a car down its broad, well-kept thoroughfares.

Everywhere you will see the new Government buildings of the Central Government, tall bank buildings in streamlined designs like those of a modern American city, and the new Metropolitan Hotel, controlled throughout by Chinese and equipped with all the niceties of European convenience. The city is still like most things in China, only half-built, but even thus it is impressive.

Nanking is so large that if you have any business to negotiate there you will spend a quarter of the day in a motor-car. Nanking is as full of motor-cars as a Chinese bazaar is of mosquitoes. They are almost without exception American cars. It is not possible that our own well-equipped motor industry could compete in this Chinese market which must develop in the next few years.

### **New Worlds by Old**

One is forced to remember in Nanking that most of China is still very unlike this capital city. It is easier to build a new town than to make 500,000,000 people into a new nation. But only those who have been in

China recently can credit the advances which have been made. True, in many districts the peasants are still harassed by gangs of ex-soldiers romantically called "bandits." But this evil is less than it was even a year ago. Equally it cannot be denied that some parts of China seem entirely unchanged.

Even the evils of corruption in official quarters, which have been the curse of China, are thought by some optimists to be on the decline. Chiang Kai-shek and his followers have, of course, often managed national finances in a way of which Mr. Neville Chamberlain would not approve, and the Chinese official has an age-old difficulty in distinguishing between public and private funds. But most foreigners agree that the Central Government is less open to criticism than any of its predecessors. Some of its members are often accused of grave financial offences, and a country which never produces an adequate budget is not in a financial position to inspire confidence. With all the improvements in China's currency some of the best-qualified observers

have grave misgivings about the present situation, but even they acknowledge an improvement.

It is the fear of Japan that has stirred China into her approach towards national unity. She shows a more solid front to-day than at any period in her history. The efficiency of her military machine cannot compare as yet with that of Japan, and she has no navy. But given her present rate of progress she might develop, even within two years, into a formidable enemy.

The issue of the Sino-Japanese conflict is too problematical even for prophesy. But I think it is well to remember that Japan whilst she has increased her military and naval power has also in the last few years increased her commitments enormously. Economically and domestically she is faced with serious possibilities of crisis. Our problem in Great Britain should, I think, be to see how we can best make use of China's friendly attitude towards us, and with that question I deal in my last article.

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