THE CHINESE CHAOS

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS would be devoted to conditions in China by Europe and America, according to some Far East newspapers, if it were not for the more dangerous problems of the Ruhr and the Near East, which occupy European and American statesmen almost to the exclusion of all other foreign matters. Yet, never, since the establishment of the Chinese Republic, has the situation been graver or the outlook “more hopeless” than today. The Chinese Government at Peking is powerless in the face of its open defiance. Plenty of evidence in confirmation of this statement has lately been afforded American officials in the kidnapping of certain American travelers. However, this Government may feel about such a violation of American rights it is interesting to note that the Peking and Tientsin Times says “it is sheer waste of time for the legations at Peking to enter protests with, and demand satisfaction from, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs which for weeks on end has to carry on without a Minister, and which, even when there is an occupant of the post, can not make a pretence of enforcing national engagements.”

We read then:

“China has been a republic—but a republic in name only—since February, 1912. From the date on which he assumed the presidency—March 10, 1912—until his death, June, 1916, Yuan Shih-kai ruled the country as a dictator. With the aid of his secretaries of state to crush aU serious opposition. From the time of his death the Central Government virtually ceased to exercise any real authority. It has been able from time to time, through combinations of its military supporters—or more properly, satraps—to exercise a shadowy authority over certain groups of provinces. But there has not, since the death of Yuan Shih-kai, been a President or a Government that could issue orders or instructions applicable to all the provinces, with the utmost expectation that they would be obeyed.”

The results of the decline of the authority of the so-called Central Government, says this daily, include the practical independence of the three Eastern Provinces since Chang Tso-Lin’s “abortive expedition” against Peking in April, 1922. Chang Tso-Lin proclaimed his independence after his return to Mukden, we are told, and has defied the President, the Cabinet and the Foreign Legations ever since. It is stated indeed that:

“He has almost paralyzed the Peking-Mukden Railway—the great trunk line connecting the capital with Mukden and via Mukden with the Russian and Japanese railway systems in Siberia and South Manchuria and Korea, respectively—by stopping through traffic on the Chihli-Manchuria border, and carrying off and retaining for his own use twice the number of luxury coaches, and nearly four times the number of freight cars, that are required for normal traffic outside the Great Wall. In addition to this he stole, and still retains, over 200 cars belonging to other Chinese Government lines.

“Outer Mongolia is still in the hands of the Reds. The northern and central portions of China proper are controlled by the Chihli Militarists, General Tsao Kun at Paotingfu, and General Wu Pei-Fu at Loyang. They, for the moment, have the Peking Government at their mercy, and tho they are never tired of professions of loyalty to the President and the Cabinet, their loyalty consists of lip-service only. They or their protégés have publicly humiliated the President by declining to permit his daily appointed nominees to assume their posts as Civil Governors of Hopeh and Kiangsi. They have, more recently, advised and humiliated President and Cabinet by compelling the Government to appoint Military Governors of their own selection to the Provinces of Fukuin and Kwangtung in South China. It was a Paotingfu intrigue which wrecked the last—the Wang Chung-Hui—Cabinet.”

It is pointed out, furthermore, that in western and southwestern and southern China, “extraordinary confusion” prevails. Szechuan, China’s largest and wealthiest province, which has been the scene of almost incessant strife since the death of Yuan Shih-kai, is said to be once more in the throes of civil war in which Wu Pei-Fu is “attempting to interpose in the hope of extending the influence of the Chihli party.”

We read then:

“Yunnan is again under the control of the ambitious Tang Chi-Yao, who is also reported to have designs on Szechuan. Kwangtung has been in a condition of absolute anarchy ever since the ‘conquest’ of the province by a Cantonese army about two years ago. No one can predict what the next day will bring forth in Kwangtung. Sun Yat-Sen’s recent triumphant return to Canton has not, as he expected, resulted in the collapse of the opposition militarists, whose attitudes still remain doubtful. Chen Chiung-Ming, who was unable, chiefly owing to lack of financial resources, to retain his hold on Canton, remains a factor to be reckoned with. The Peking Government has deliberately affronted the Cantonese by appointing Shen Hung-Ying as Tuli, or Military Governor. There are continuous unrest and uncertainty in Fukien and Kiangsi. And Chekiang has just distinguished itself by one of the most flagrant violations, up to date, of China’s engagements in regard to the taxation of foreign goods in the interior.”

“Many provinces, including Honan, where General Wu Pei-Fu has established his headquarters, are infested with bandits. The whole country is seething with unrest, and as if its internal conditions were not serious enough to require that every effort be concentrated on reorganization, the irresponsible elements, such as the students and professional politicians, are now engaged upon a deliberate campaign to renew the anti-Japanese boycott—a campaign which, if it succeeds, will embroil China with a neighboring Power which, during the past twelve months, has given convincing proof of its friendly disposition by the settlement of the Shantung question. Lastly, there is a corrupt and absurd Parliament at Peking whose intermittently sessions...
are confined to obstruction of the administration, and opposition to every reasonable proposal for the adjustment of China's foreign relations."

Confirmation of the above diagnosis of China's condition is found in certain vernacular journals of that country, such as the Shanghai Shuus Pao, which declares that China is 

"dominated by a group of irresponsible warriors," and it relates:

"North and South were nominally united with late President Yuan Shih-kai holding a whip-hand over China. Did Southerners really place their confidence in the Yuan regime? In point of military prowess, the Southern leaders were in eclipse. It was the duty of compromisers to make Southerners submit to the rule of Northern militarists. Could that arrangement bring any satisfactory results?"

"Yuan Shih-kai strained every nerve to dominate China by dint of military force. His policy was to hold the balance of power as shown by the fact that he pitted one faction against another. The Puyang leaders were equally eager to hold the reins of government in their own hands. This selfishness spelled ruin for the nation."

"It will be remembered that Yuan's following talked to him with regard to the proposed restoration of monararchy. His court was then full of reptiles or servitors whose duty was to inveigle Yuan into passion for the throne. If the Kweichow and Yunnan forces had not revolted against Yuan's coup d'état, the people would have been dominated by a tyrant."

"In a word, Yuan Shih-kai perished, but his influences still remain active."

Another vernacular newspaper, Min Kao Jih Pao, confesses that "the Chinese Ship of State will be wrecked if the political crisis in North China remains unabated," and it adds:

"Feng Kuo-Chang, Hsu Shih-Chang, and Li Yuan-Hung were largely responsible for plunging China into chaos politically and financially. Now Marshals Wu Pei-Fu and Tsao Kun have inherited the ability to make trouble from the above-mentioned presidents. It is hoped such monsters will be eventually bundled out of this country so that peace and order may re-establish itself in China. The deplorable thing is that political reptiles have numerically increased rather than decreased by reason of death."

"Premier Chang Shou-Tseng is no doubt a protégé of the Northern duumvirate. If he had not appealed to Northern war-lords for aid, he would not have been offered the Premiership. Legally speaking, Premier Chang's Cabinet is not in existence. Blind to the situation in China, Premier Chang continues flattering Marshals Wu Pei-Fu and Tsao Kun, thereby hoping to make their rice-bowls secure. Unless he is mentally unbalanced, he will not do what is manifestly wrong. The Government has indeed lost its functioning power, so the people must be up and doing. Why should they remain tolerant?"

IRISH UNEMPLOYMENT FEARS

TWO YEARS OF CIVIL STRIFE with consequent industrial dislocation, we are told, leave Ireland in a precarious situation as far as unemployment is concerned and some Irish journals fear acutely that the worst is yet to come when peace actually is established. The Dublin Weekly Irish Times speaks slightlyingly of "a rather superficial discussion of the problem" which was held in the Dail Eireann and declares that in this matter the people of the Free State are "living in a fool's paradise." There is much unemployment throughout the country, according to this weekly, which tells us that in a motion supporting the second reading of the Unemployment Insurance Bill some "very uncomfortable" figures were shown, and it proceeds:

"At the beginning of April 32,000 persons were drawing unemployment benefit in the twenty-six counties. The financial year ended with a deficit of £550,000 in the Central Fund, and the proposals in the new bill which are intended to help these people to 'carry on' until the middle of October, will increase the deficit by £250,000. There exists, therefore, a grave problem of unemployment; but what most of us refuse to realize is the fact that it is likely to become far more grave in the near future. The return of peace, we may believe, will give an impetus to trade and—if it is not accompanied by a decrease of labor troubles—will find work for many people who are now idle; but in this case the slowly approaching goddess, like her cousin Janus, has two heads."

"At the outset peace will create a far larger amount of unemployment than the amount which its direct influence can dispel. The end of war must mean the disbandment of a big part of the National Army, which is believed to number some 50,000 men. On a peace footing, according to the terms of the Treaty, the Army will be some 10,000 or 12,000 strong; and, of course, after war has ended, the war footing can not be maintained at a cost of some £20 million annually to the taxpayer."

"This Dublin weekly goes on to remind the Government of the "distressful story of British demobilization" and hopes it will proceed cautiously to disband its troops. It assumes that in the near future at least 20,000 men now wearing the green uniform of the Free State will return to civil life. There will be a corresponding reduction in the amount of civil employment, based upon the military needs of these 20,000 soldiers; and we are further advised that:

"Peace will set free some twelve or fifteen thousand persons who are detained under suspicion of hostility to the State. . . . "We are faced, therefore, with a problem of unemployment which, tho it may be temporary, will be exceedingly serious. It will arise at a critical moment in the young State's history—perhaps on the eve of a general election—and, if the Government and Parliament are taken unawares, the consequences may be very serious. One of the first of them might be a tidal wave of emigration. The Government promises an inquiry into our fiscal system and there has been some talk about the creation of work by the protection of Irish industries. Protection may come in time, but it will not come soon enough to be of any use. . . . "The whole country stands in urgent need of physical re-generation and repair. Our railways, our roads, our bridges, our harbors and water-ways, our ruined buildings—all these are clamoring for labor which, sooner or later, must be employed upon them. It will be fruitful labor for which the Government need not hesitate to raise a loan; but is the plan ready? Will it be ready when the need arises?"