

Speaking at Manchester this afternoon in support of the Aid to China Fund, Mr. Herbert Morrison the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security said:-

The British and the Chinese are discovering under the pressure of national crisis that they have more in common than perhaps citizens of either country had supposed. Their very tendency to live to themselves and remain aloof from the rest of the world becomes a kind of link. If Britain is geographically an island, China has for centuries been one psychologically. It is not many years since, to the British Europe was just an island lying off the mouth of the Thames; while to the Chinese, I am told, all the rest of the world was merely an unknown hinterland inhabited by 'foreign devils'.

There is an amusing passage on this subject in Eric Linklater's book "The Cornerstones", which many of you may have heard broadcast recently. He says, "In England's conception of the world there are two peoples: English and foreigners. In China's conception there are also two peoples: Chinese and foreigners. Neither the Middle Kingdom nor the United Kingdom has ever thought it worth while to understand foreigners or to learn their languages. It would be a mistake, however, to say that the English and the Chinese dislike foreigners. They tolerate foreigners in the most kindly way, so long as the foreigners stay in their proper place, or come to their assistance when needed".

This attitude, however, has cost both countries dear and I believe that both are now learning better. Both are learning that no nation can live to itself alone either in trade and industry or in its interests and sympathies. If the war has achieved nothing but to educate forty million Britons and four hundred million Chinese in the elements of world citizenship, it will have served some purpose.

One result of this previous remoteness of thought is that both countries entered the war largely unprepared and have had to make their preparations as they went along. Hitler in "Mein Kampf" paid a tribute to the British when he spoke of their determination to achieve victory even in a war begun without weapons, since they could be counted upon to build up the means of victory out of little or nothing. This power of improvisation is traditionally a British trait. I do not think the rest of the world had learned to think of it as a Chinese one, but after the astonishing spectacle of Chinese resistance in this war the world knows better. It knows that the Chinese have shown themselves able within five years to build up, almost literally out of nothing in the material sense, an effective resistance against a neighbour which is one of the most powerfully armed and aggressively minded powers ever seen in the world's history.

The Chinese have lost all their great cities and ports and much the greater part of the wealth of their country. They have found, however, means to maintain, train and arm ever-growing armies. Millions of people - a population, it is said, greater than that of the United Kingdom - trekked before the Japanese aggressor from the coastal belt of China into her impregnable interior, men, women and children together, not merely with their household goods and food on their backs, but with much of the machinery and the tools of small industry which have since been put to work as the basis of the new war-time China.

And this reminds me of another feature of the Chinese war which should commend her people to our understanding and respect. Like us in the crucial months after Dunkirk, they have had to fight a war of spirit against material equipment and resources, and like us they have shown that against all material odds an absolute determination to win through is the most powerful factor in victory.

Remember too, that the cities of the two nations and, in particular, their two capital cities, Chungking and London, have had to endure a similar ordeal of heavy air bombardment continued for a very long time. You will remember that in the years when Fascism was winning its bloodless victories throughout the world the threat of ruthless air bombardment of cities was its greatest single weapon of diplomatic aggression. It is interesting to think that, apart from the dreadful ordeal which Russian cities have suffered in connection with actual land operations, Britain and China are the only countries which have suffered the chief weight of this terrorist weapon in actual fact, and have proved it powerless to break the spirit of free peoples. I do not quite know whether even to-day we realise the

extent of the trial which Chungking had to endure in 1940, the same year as London's. In that year there were some forty raids on the city and two thousand tons of bombs were dropped upon it. These figures are not perhaps as great as London's, but Chungking's raids were carried out in broad daylight upon a virtually defenceless city, so that the attackers could not only see their marks clearly but could proceed to bomb them unhindered. We know very well what this must have meant to the inhabitants, and what splendid evidence of courage and will to win is seen in the fact that Chungking not only did not give in but carried on as the active and hard-working capital of a nation bent upon victory.

I am not sure how far in those days China had a Civil Defence Service on the same lines as ours. To-day in Chungking there are bodies of citizens trained to fight fires, put out incendiaries and handle unexploded bombs. These citizens are members of a service called "The Corps of the Righteous and Brave", a very good title for a citizen body of this kind. Here at any rate is one respect in which the British and Chinese are not alike. The Chinese are ready to use good names for good things. In this country it is not so very long since we had to rescue our "righteous and brave corps" from the damping, not to say eclipsing, title "Air Raid Precautions".

One of the most remarkable facts about China's struggle is that she has been able to wage a war for her existence at the same time as she is going through a vital stage in her economic and social development. No doubt it was because Japan knew that China had already begun her march towards national unity and developed power that she attacked when she did. She knew she could not carry out her programme of economic subjection and exploitation once China had begun, as she was just beginning to stand on her feet as a modern community. And perhaps the interesting thing to us to-day is that this attack, coming when it did, forced China to make a choice. She could subordinate all her social developments to war or she could make the war serve the social evolution of her people. She chose the second. Her decision was not merely an example of that enlightened and civilised thinking for which China is remarkable. It was, I believe, a wise military decision also and was justified on those grounds alone. Only a state which is so organised as to evoke and put to work its fullest resources, mentally, morally and physically, can hope to win through in the revolutionary war in which almost the whole world is now engaged.

China was just becoming a modern state when the war broke out. Chinese society had long been democratic in spirit, but lacked the institutions of democracy. In spite of the difficulties of communication and all kinds of hardships, China went on constructing these democratic institutions after the outbreak of war, and made substantial progress even when considerable areas of the country

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were occupied by the enemy. By the end of 1942 all free countries will have their representative assemblies. Above the county assemblies there are the provincial assemblies, and 17 of these have already been appointed. Finally, above the provincial assemblies stands the People's Political Council. This is at present a war-time organisation. Not all the assemblies are composed of elected representatives but it is intended that they shall be as soon as possible, and that the new Government to be elected immediately after the war shall be truly answerable to the people.

Among other achievements in construction during the Chinese war there are miles of new railways and highways built in free China (remember that two-thirds of the railways China had before the war are now in the hands of the Japanese). There are many new roads, sometimes built with the utmost difficulty, workmen having to travel several hundred miles on foot to their work because means of transportation were scarce.

Chinese economic enterprises formerly concentrated in a few coastal provinces have been shifted to the south-west and north-west. A foundation for a national defence industry has been laid, so that China shall become self-sufficient in her war industries as soon as possible. A remarkable development has been the construction throughout China of chains of small industries using local materials to supply the manufactured goods necessary to the life of the people. These industries are the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. They have transformed much of Chinese industry into something so flexible and decentralised that it cannot be destroyed as bigger and more concentrated industries might be. The Chinese Industrial Co-operatives are planned in three zones: the least mobile heavy industries as far as possible from the battle line, the more mobile ones in a middle zone, and the guerilla industries actually in the fighting areas, or even behind Japanese lines. By this means an enormous amount of machinery and tools of production have been rescued and put to use, and employment has been found for thousands of refugees. This movement is not only for war purposes but provides a hopeful foundation for an industrial democracy for China after the war.

Much arable land in China lies in fighting areas or is occupied by the enemy. In spite of this, production has actually increased owing to the application of science to agriculture.

This meeting is being held not only to pay a tribute from the people of Britain to the Allies whom they so profoundly admire and respect but also to enable that tribute to be paid in tangible form. China is in great need of many things which the Western powers can supply, and though the means of communication are difficult they are not impossible. Let us therefore give as generously as we can in China's aid. She was the first great country to resist aggression. Her leaders were the first to see that war against Fascism, wherever it takes place and whenever it begins, was and is one war. To-day she is holding a million Japanese soldiers who would otherwise be at the throats of the United Nations in other theatres of war. She has more than established her claim upon our generosity. It is just eleven years this month since the first Japanese attack on China, the seizure of Manchuria in September, 1931. We did not help China then. Perhaps, as the world then was, we could not. But we have had good cause to regret it since. This is the second time of asking. Now the free world is united, and this time we will not fail.

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MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY