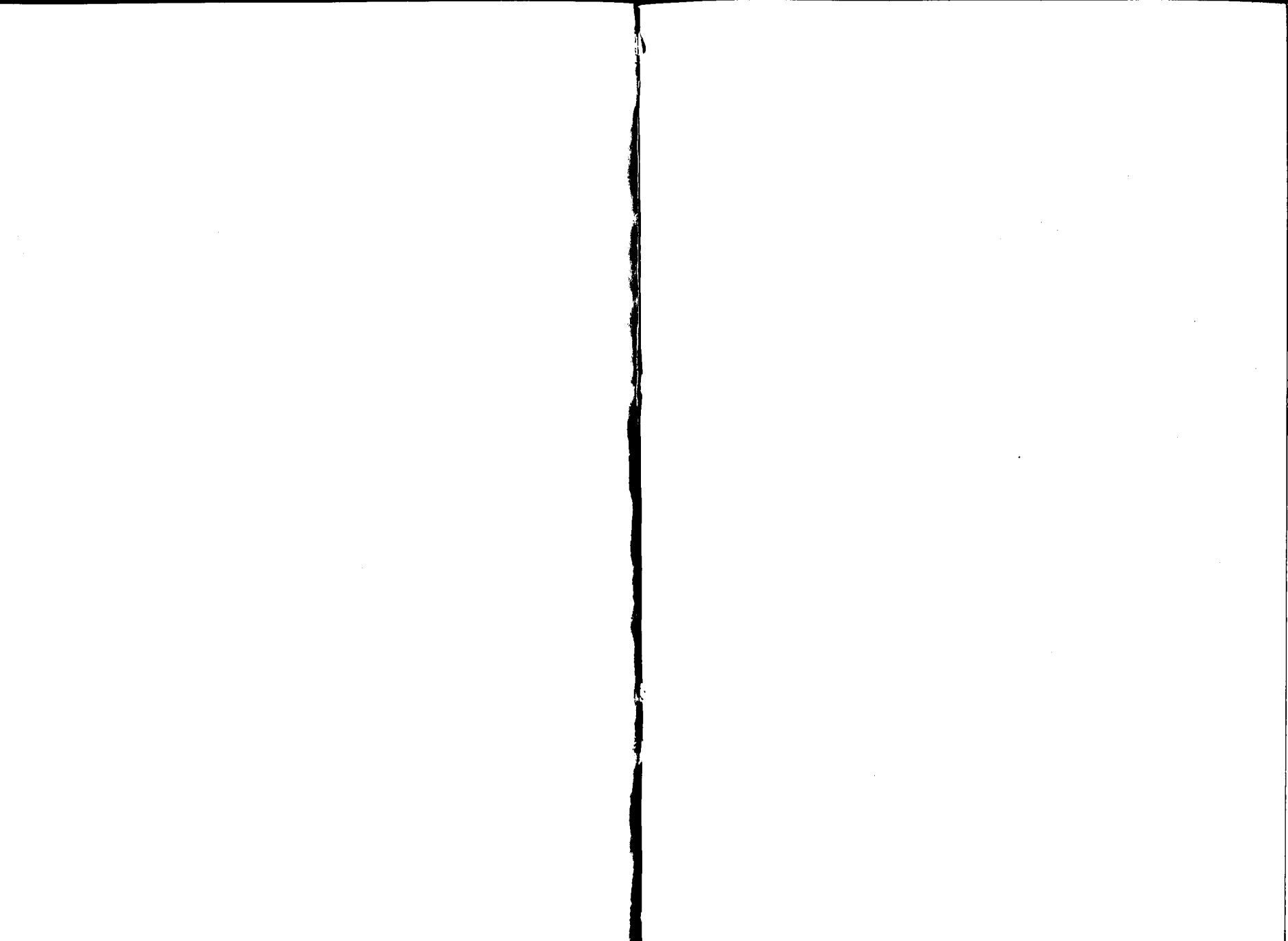


The
Reform Movement
of 1898

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING



The Reform Movement of 1898

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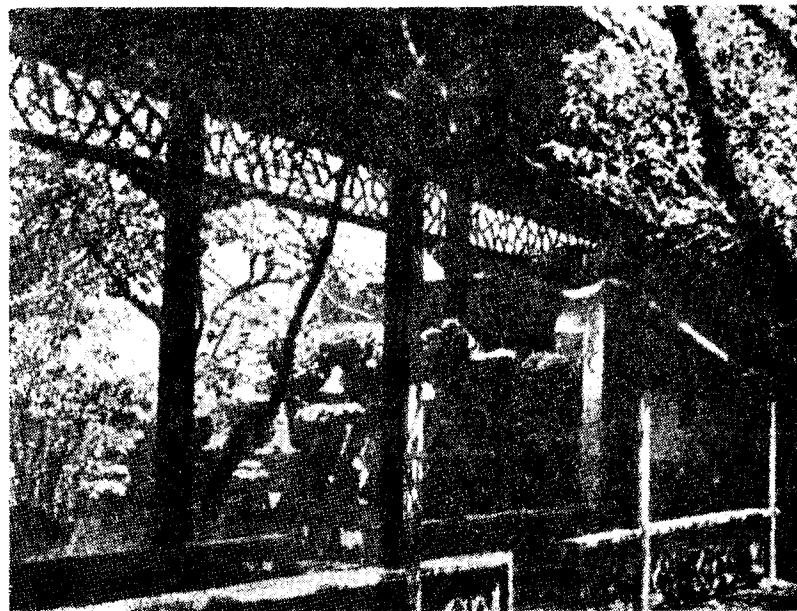
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING 1976

Publisher's Note

The Reform Movement of 1898 is one of several booklets translated from the "History of Modern China" Series, Shanghai People's Publishing House. Others are: *The Opium War (1840-42)*, *The Taiping Revolution (1851-64)*, *The Yi Ho Tuan Movement (1900-01)* and *The Revolution of 1911*. All were compiled by members of the history departments of Fudan University and Shanghai Teachers' University. Some editorial changes have been made in the English version.

First edition 1976

Printed in the People's Republic of China



Sungyun Compound, where the provincial graduates gathered to discuss their joint petition to Emperor Kuang Hsu.

光緒二十二年七月初一日

時務報

第一冊

光緒二十三年五月二十一日第一

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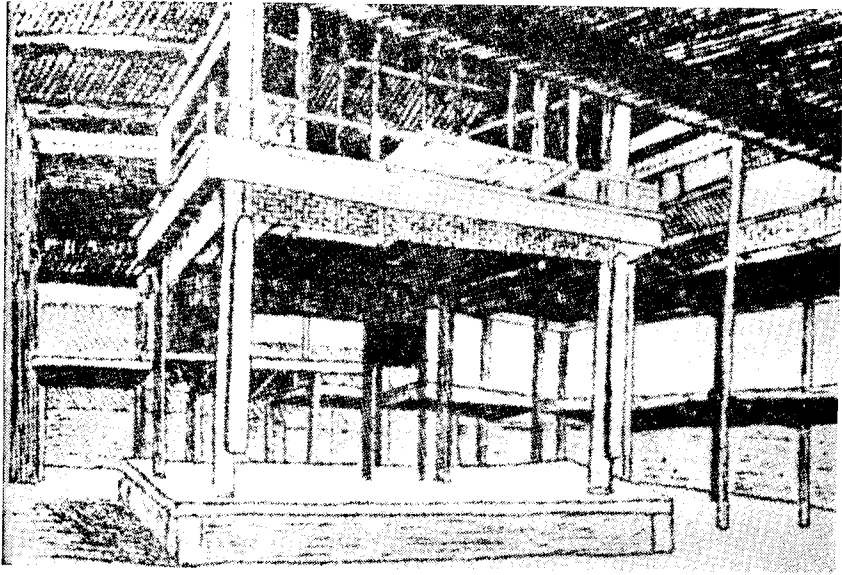
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Page from one of Kang Yu-wei's memorials to the throne.

Some of the journals published around the time of the 1898 Reform Movement.



Site of the inaugural meeting of the Pao Kuo Hui.

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Rise of the Bourgeois Reformist Trend

1

In the year 1898 there occurred in China a major political event known as the "Reform Movement of 1898." A bourgeois reformist effort originating from above, it took place at a time when the contradictions between feudalism and the broad masses of the people, and especially between imperialism and the Chinese nation, were growing ever sharper.

China had at that time been repeatedly defeated by foreign capitalist invaders. There had been the two Opium Wars (1840-42, 1856-60), the Sino-French War (1884-85) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). Every 10 years or so the imperialists had launched a major war of aggression against China. Time and again the Ching government was forced to sign unequal treaties, surrender territory and pay indemnities. The result of this process

was that an independent China became a semi-colony at the mercy of the imperialist invaders.

Among the incursive countries were Britain, France, the United States, tsarist Russia, Germany and the newcomer on the scene, Japan. They forced their way into China one after another and rode roughshod over the country. Making use of the unequal treaties, they launched political, economic and cultural aggression against China, leaving almost no place untouched. They also occupied China's neighbours in order to use them as springboards for thrusting their claws into China's border regions. A threatening arc extending from the northeast to the southwest was thus thrown around China from both land and sea. After the signing in 1895 of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, they took advantage of the principle of "equal opportunity" to vie with each other not only in setting up factories, building railways, opening mines and establishing banks in China, but also in extending loans and exporting enormous amounts of capital to the country. They tried by these means to knock down every barrier protecting China's social economy and blocking further imperialist control of its political and economic lifelines. These predatory countries furthermore scrambled for "leased ter-

ritories" and "spheres of influence" in order to partition China.

The continued imperialist aggression intensified the social contradictions within China, arousing the Chinese people's strong resistance against the domestic feudal ruling class as well as the foreign invaders. Despite the suppression of the surging Taiping Revolution (1851-64) by the Ching government in collusion with the foreign aggressors, the Chinese people never gave up their resistance. In the 1870s-80s secret societies formed among the people for the purpose of opposing the ruling class launched incessant mass struggles throughout the country under the slogans "Hit the rich and help the poor" and "Oppose foreign religions." By the 1890s the struggles of the city poor and the peasants against levies and taxes had spread to more than a dozen provinces, while tremendous waves of attack on foreign religions swept over Kiangsu, Chekiang, Anhwei, Kiangsi, Hupeh, Hunan and Szechuan provinces in the Yangtze River valley. There was the uprising in Szechuan led by Yu Tung-chen denouncing the imperialists' towering crimes and valiantly resisting the Ching army's encirclement. Its repercussions were felt in more than 30 sub-prefectures and counties, indicating the ever-widening scale of popular resistance.

Spurred by the grave national crisis and acute class contradictions, the bourgeois reformist ideas which arose around the time of the Second Opium War had gradually developed into a reformist trend by the 1880s, the decade that witnessed the Sino-French War. This bourgeois reformist trend followed close in the wake of national-capitalist industry in China, its earliest manifestation being some 50 modern enterprises set up in the coastal provinces in the 1870s-80s. A group of intellectuals and officials from the landlord class who gradually joined the new bourgeoisie began to realize that the doctrines of the Confucian school,* the "eight-legged" essays** and other appurtenances of the old learning no longer suited the needs of the changing times. They wanted to break with the old learning, investigate the current political and economic problems and learn from the West. This, they thought, would provide a remedy for China's

* This school was founded by Confucius (551-479 B.C.). Advocating restoration of the old order and all-round social retrogression, he engaged in political activities against reform, tried his utmost to retrieve the moribund slave system and in time founded his own school of thought. Adherents of this school were known as Confucians, as were those who carried on and developed the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius from the Chin (221-207 B.C.) and Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) dynasties onwards.

** The "eight-legged" essay, the literary form prescribed in the system of civil-service examinations under China's feudal

ills, extricate the country from its impasse and ease the existing social contradictions. They wanted to shake off imperialist enslavement and achieve China's self-strengthening. Apprehensive lest the Ching government should go down in the mounting storms of mass resistance, this group of intellectuals urged reforms as a way out, characterizing bourgeois reformism from the very start as designed to lull and mislead the people with pronouncements of loyalty to the nation and of saving it.

In the China of that time an important proposition of the reformist trend was to learn from the West. But only a small number of people — diplomats and students abroad — had direct contact with the bourgeois society, its politics, science and culture. Besides these people, who introduced some Western learning by various means, the intellectual circles at home had chiefly the following other sources of such knowledge:

First, the Tung Wen Kuan (School of Combined Learning). Set up in Peking in 1862 by the Ching government to train interpreters, this school also

dynasties from the 15th to the 19th century, was a game of words, concerned only with form and utterly devoid of content. Every paragraph was written to a rigid pattern with a fixed number of characters, the writer spinning out the essay by ringing the changes on the words in the theme. This stereotype served the feudal rulers as a pernicious ploy to deceive and enslave the intellectuals.

translated some foreign books, most of which dealt with the so-called "public laws" designed to protect the capitalist world order.

Second, the translation department attached to the Kiangnan Machine Building Works set up in Shanghai in 1865 by the "Westernization" group.* This department translated technological data useful for the industrial enterprises run by advocates of "Westernization" and some books on political science and law.

Third, books, newspapers and periodicals already published by foreign missionaries who had sneaked into China to spread "Christian civilization," which poisoned the minds of the Chinese people and so met the needs of foreign aggression. The notorious Kuang Hsueh Hui (Christian Literature Society), established in Shanghai in 1887 by American and British missionaries, was one such organ for cul-

* During the 1860s-90s a number of landlord-bureaucrats in the ranks of the Ching ruling class persisted in upholding the feudal autocracy while advocating collaboration with the capitalist countries, imitating them and developing an armaments industry for the purpose of what they called China's "self-strengthening." They termed this "Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for function." These landlord-bureaucrats were referred to as the "Westernization" group and included such representatives as Li Hung-chang, Tseng Kuo-chuan and Chang Chih-tung.

tural encroachment. Preaching colonialism, it published the *Wan Kuo Kung Pao* (*Review of the Times*) and over 100 books, mostly religious, but including some on political science, law and history.

From these Western sources the bourgeois reformists learned some of the rudiments of physics and chemistry, as well as politics and knowledge of Western society and the international situation.

At this embryonic stage of the reformist thinking, Yung Wing of Kwangtung Province was the first to put forward in specific terms the proposition that China should learn from the West. Being the first student of modern China to study in the United States, he was also among the earliest advocates of Chinese bourgeois reformism. He stated his aim as to "bring in Western knowledge and turn China gradually into a civilized, prosperous and strong country." In other words, he wanted to mould China in the image of capitalist countries. Upon his return to China he visited areas controlled by the Taipings where he made proposals for reform. In the 1860s he repeatedly placed his reform proposals before the "Westernization" mandarins of the Ching government in the hope of winning the support of some political forces. Yung Wing was followed by other noted reformists: Wang Tao, Hsueh Fu-cheng, Ma Chien-chung and Cheng Kuan-ying, who wrote articles and books advocat-

ing reform, shaping a trend for gradual change in China's intellectual circles around the 1880s. Belonging to the middle and lower strata of the ruling class, most of these reformists had close ties with the "Westernization" mandarins and frequent contact with foreign missionaries as well. While advocating learning from Western capitalism as a means of resisting capitalist aggression, they considered the learning from the West of the "Westernization" bureaucrats who concentrated on the establishment of manufacturing industries as only superficial. The attitude they adopted was, therefore, more or less critical of contemporary society and politics, an attitude different from that of the diehard scholar-officials and also of the "Westernization" mandarins and compradors.

A few lines about Cheng Kuan-ying. Cheng began his career in commercial circles as a merchant-official well versed in both Chinese and foreign trading, having run such enterprises as the China Merchants Steamship Navigation Company, a telegraph office and a cotton textile mill on behalf of the "Westernization" mandarins. In 1862 he published a book entitled *Essentials for Curing the Social Maladies*, for, as he said, "Lamenting the present state of affairs, I would like to discuss briefly the pros and cons." First revised in 1871 under the title *Essential Views*, the book came out

in 1893 in an enlarged edition under its third title, *Warnings Served in Times of Peace and Prosperity*. Taking altogether 30 years to complete, Cheng's book was regarded as representative of the bourgeois reformist trend in China. It gave a comprehensive description of this tendency in its process prior to the Sino-Japanese War and summed up the basic ideas and views of contemporary reformists.

The reformists pointed out in their works that times had changed and China could not stand still. They held that "Poverty gives rise to change and change provides a way." But they saw change as something slow and gradual, not radical or violent. So, while believing in the inevitability of change and brushing aside the views of the diehards who regarded the status quo as eternal, they viewed change solely as quantitative and denied its qualitative nature. It was this limitation that later landed the reformists in the quagmire of opposing the revolution.

To sum up, the propositions of these bourgeois reformists were as follows:

Firstly, they advocated that the maintenance of China's independence and sovereignty depended on its learning from the West and carrying out political reform, which, they asserted, would make the country strong and no longer a victim of aggres-

sion. In this respect they pointed to the damage inflicted on China by the unequal treaties. But their idea that China could become strong by these means and that the imperialists would then give up their encroachment and withdraw from the country of their own accord was obviously illusory.

Secondly, they demanded the development of capitalism, envisaging a prospering industry and commerce, and called for the "establishment of non-governmental enterprises." They favoured a type of capitalist exploitation in which "the rich would contribute the capital and the poor the labour." Their watchword was to wage a "trade war," to compete with foreign capitalism.

Thirdly, they stood for the classification of the various countries' political systems into three categories: absolute monarchy, democratic republicanism and a combination of the two, namely, constitutional monarchy. This third form, meaning a joint dictatorship of the landlord class and the bourgeoisie, was the one they considered most suitable for China, their reasoning being that the absolute monarchy gave the ruler too much power, while democratic republicanism went to the other extreme.

The measures described above were those the newly rising bourgeoisie would take to extricate China from national crisis and ease class contradic-

tions. Its aim in the process was to enhance its own political and social status and make itself part of the ruling class. These aspirations of the bourgeois reformists, futile as they were, became the main content of the Reform Movement of 1898.

Early Activities of Kang Yu-wei

2

Kang Yu-wei, who was to appear as the guiding spirit of the 1898 Reform Movement, was already active towards the end of the germinal period of the bourgeois reformist trend.

Born in a landlord-bureaucrat family in Nanhai County, Kwangtung Province, Kang Yu-wei was schooled in the Confucian way. He went as a youth to Hongkong and Shanghai where he absorbed Western ideas and read books introducing Western learning. He was impressed with foreign capitalist countries' having developed what he considered a complete governmental system and felt that they should no longer be viewed as "barbarian nations." Of the foreign countries at that time only the Western capitalist countries were progressive, for they had succeeded in building themselves up as modern bourgeois states. On the other hand, China

under the Ching feudal rule remained archaic and behind closed doors, its position steadily deteriorating due to the repeated acts of aggression by the capitalist countries. All this prompted Kang Yu-wei to think about political reform, regarding it, together with learning from foreign countries, as the only way to national salvation for China.

In 1888 Kang Yu-wei went to Peking to sit for the civil-service examinations* at the provincial level. It was shortly after the Sino-French War when not only had China's neighbours, Viet Nam, Burma and Sikkim, been occupied by France and Britain, but Britain had launched a new aggressive war to invade China's Tibet in the southwest. Tsarist Russia in the meantime, following its encroachment on large tracts of China's territory north of the Heilung River and east of the Wusuli River, as well as in the northwest, plotted to lay claim to more land in northeast China. Japan, too, increased pressure on the country. It was this situation that impelled Kang Yu-wei to write a

* By and large, the examinations for selecting officials in feudal China were held at three levels: county and prefectural, provincial, and metropolitan. Graded title degrees were conferred on scholars who passed the different stages of these competitive examinations, *hsiutsai* for the county and prefectural graduates, *chujen* for the provincial graduates, and *chinshih* for the metropolitan graduates. A successful candidate receiving the degree of *chinshih* was often granted an official post by the emperor himself.

5,000-character memorial (his first) to the Emperor, pointing out the imminent danger of China's hinterland being penetrated by capitalist aggressors following their occupation of China's neighbours and their infiltration of Chinese borders. He also warned of such revolutions as that of the Taipings breaking out again due to the people's growing dissatisfaction and ubiquitous "riots." He held that only immediate reform could avert these dangers; otherwise there was no telling what might happen.

Such was Kang Yu-wei's first formal proposal after long years of crystallization of his reformist ideas. It was advice from a discontented intellectual to his emperor, chieftain of the landlord class, expressing a desire for bourgeois reform. But certain diehard bureaucrats who considered it outrageous that a mere scholar like Kang Yu-wei should have the audacity to offer advice to the throne refused to forward his memorial. Further, though Kang Yu-wei came out third in the provincial examinations, the chief examiner Hsu Tung, a diehard who was annoyed with Kang for presenting a memorial to Emperor Kuang Hsu, declared him "intolerably arrogant" and struck his name from the list of successful candidates. Despite this, however, Kang Yu-wei in time became known on account of that first memorial.

Nor did Kang give up when his memorial failed to reach the Emperor. He returned to Kwangtung and began lecturing there. Then in 1891, at Changhsingli of Canton, he established a private school which he called the Wanmu Academy. He also wrote *Study Notes at Changhsingli*, expounding his reformist ideas on education. Among those who attended lectures at Kang's school were Liang Chi-chao, Mai Meng-hua and Hsu Chin. Liang Chi-chao, of landlord extraction, had become a successful provincial graduate while still quite young and willingly took Kang Yu-wei as teacher though the latter had not yet attained that degree. Gradually Liang, instead of studying merely those subjects included in the civil-service examinations, broadened the scope of his study to embrace the Confucian classics,* Neo-Confucianism,** history and

* These refer to what the feudal rulers termed the "Five Classics": *Book of Songs*, *Book of Historical Documents*, *Book of Rites*, *Book of Change* and *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

** Neo-Confucianism was the idealist philosophy founded by the two brothers Cheng Hao (1032-85) and Cheng Yi (1033-1107) and developed by Chu Hsi (1130-1200). It was the official philosophy reflecting the interests of the feudal ruling class in the later period of Chinese feudal society. It described *li*, or reason, as the eternal constitution of the universe and the origin of all things in the world. This *li* was a continuation of the theory of the "mandate of heaven."

Western learning. Later, in the 1898 Reform Movement, he became Kang Yu-wei's right-hand man, the two often being referred to as Kang-Liang.

The Wanmu Academy, which started out with 20-some students, by 1894 had an enrolment of more than 100. In due course it became a place where Kang Yu-wei trained assistants and formulated and spread his theories for political reform in China.

While lecturing in Canton, Kang Yu-wei devoted part of his time to writing works designed to gain the sympathy of the landlord-class intellectuals and gentry for his reform proposition. He produced a number of books expanding on and making far-fetched interpretations of the doctrines of Confucius* so as to back his reform thesis with theory. Of these works, two created a special stir in contemporary ideological circles and exerted important

* Confucius, a native of the State of Lu (present-day Shantung), was born in the last years of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), the second son in his family. A thinker of the declining slave-owning aristocracy, he was the founder of the Confucian school of thought. Living in a period of great social upheaval during the collapse of the slave system and the rise of feudalism, Confucius dedicated his life to retrieving the former. He concocted a whole system of reactionary ideology with "jen" (benevolence) as its core, and advocated "restraining oneself and returning to the rites" — a programme for restoring the old order. He taught the idea

influence on the 1898 Reform Movement. One he wrote in 1891 under the title *A Study of the Forged Classics*. The other, titled *An Inquiry into Confucius' Reform*, was begun in 1892 and completed some years later. The first, in which he attempted to give his ideas for reform a basis in the traditional Confucian thinking, Kang Yu-wei led the intellectuals to doubt the ancient classics by declaring that some versions of the Confucian canons which for centuries had been held sacred were in fact false. This shook the traditional feudal ideology at its foundations and objectively was a blow to the diehards who clung to the "ancestors' way." It was not without reason that the Ching government time and again banned the book.

In his *An Inquiry into Confucius' Reform*, Kang Yu-wei expounded Confucius' idea of "calling on ancient personages in making reforms" so as to

of the "mandate of heaven" and preached apriorism through such fallacies as "life and death are predestined, and riches and honours come from heaven," and that some people are "born with knowledge." In his reactionary educational ideas he demonstrated a deep contempt for productive labour, declaring that "he who excels in learning can be an official." For some 2,000 years from the Han Dynasty on, in China's feudal and semi-feudal, semi-colonial society, Confucius' reactionary ideology, embellished and developed by the rulers of the various regimes, was used to shield reactionary rule and shackle the working people's minds.

gain public sympathy. He made Confucius out as a pioneering reformer who took as the basis of reform the authority of the ancients. Kang tried on this premise to prove that his ideas of reform were justified, being a continuation and extension of Confucius' ideas on the subject. But even this approach was feared by the diehards, who opposed this book of Kang's no less strongly than they did his first.

Still another major work by Kang Yu-wei was *Ta Tung Shu (Book of Great Harmony)* in which he conceived of the world as a vast sea of bitterness where the poor, the rich and the kings and emperors all had their own particular sorrow. This bitter sea, said Kang, must be changed into a paradise where there would be "no state boundaries, no kings, no emperors, where people would be friendly and equal." He expressed alarm at the "bitterness of iron and blood" wrought by the bourgeois revolution; he was still more frightened by the "bitterness of iron and blood" of the proletarian revolution which had already begun in the world. He appealed to "human nature" and the "spirit of compassion" as a means of inducing people to join hands and negate the revolutionary "iron and blood." Thus they would attain a world of "great harmony" where the oppressed should be brought into "harmony" with the landlord and bourgeois

classes. As Chairman Mao Tsetung pointed out, "**Kang Yu-wei wrote *Ta Tung Shu*, or the *Book of Great Harmony*, but he did not and could not find the way to achieve Great Harmony.**"* The only way to achieve Great Harmony is through proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Kang Yu-wei's *A Study of the Forged Classics* and *An Inquiry into Confucius' Reform* did strike at the superstructure of China's feudal society, but the fact remains that he took Confucius as authority in his preachings, attempting to adapt Confucius to the needs of bourgeois reformism and using this ancient "sage" as a stepping-stone for the bourgeois reformists to mount the political stage.

It is clear that from the moment Kang Yu-wei began his reform activities he clung to the two most deeply entrenched "authorities"—the theoretical dictates of Confucius and the political power of the emperor. The bourgeoisie revealed its nature at its first appearance, showed itself to be weak and unthorough in making revolution, and tied in a hundred and one ways to the feudal class. Confucius and the emperor too were already in fact political corpses towards the close of the 19th

* "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," *Selected Works*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1969, Vol. IV, p. 414.

century, but Kang Yu-wei still attempted to treat them with bourgeois reformism and then use them to enact a new play on the stage of history. But Kang's attempt failed, and he became a monarchist standing for restoration, himself deteriorating into a political corpse. This process was not fortuitous and, as Lu Hsun said, Kang Yu-wei came to be duly described by people as "a protagonist of restoration."

Towards Political Reform

Again miserably defeated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, the Ching government capitulated shamelessly and signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki. This humiliating pact brought the greatest injury to China since the two Opium Wars, shocking the nation as never before. It exposed still further the corruption of the Ching government and China's utter frailty. The Treaty of Shimonoseki stipulated that China surrender its Taiwan Province and other large tracts of territory to Japan, pay an indemnity of 200 million taels of silver and allow Japanese capitalists to set up factories on Chinese soil at will. With this unequal treaty, China not only sank deeper into the semi-colonial abyss but faced the danger of partition by tsarist Russia, Germany, Britain, France, the United States and other imperialist powers which, making use of the

“most-favoured-nation clause” of earlier treaties, intensified their scramble for privileges and expanded their aggressive forces in China. The imperialists raved that the days of China as a nation were numbered.

It was in this situation that bourgeois reformism began to develop, after many years' brewing, into a political reform movement of practical significance.

In the spring of 1895 provincial graduates from different parts of the country gathered at Peking to sit for the metropolitan examinations held regularly by the Ching government. Kang Yu-wei, who had passed the provincial candidature examinations the year before, had arrived together with his students Liang Chi-chao and Mai Meng-hua. On April 17 the news of the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki and its stipulations greatly shocked Kang and he immediately asked Liang Chi-chao to get the provincial graduates from Kwangtung to submit a joint petition to stay the hand of the Ching government from ratifying the traitorous treaty. Their effort also won prompt response from the provincial graduates of Hunan and, on the 22nd, scholars from the two provinces went to present their petition to the Censorate, the highest organ for supervision and impeachment, and for counselling and making suggestions. They

were followed by their counterparts from Fukien, Szechuan, Kiangsi and Kweichow, after whom came scholars from Kiangsu, Hupeh, Shensi, Kansu, Kwangsi, Chihli (today's Hopei), Shantung, Shansi, Honan, Yunnan and Taiwan provinces. Especially outraged were the provincial graduates of Taiwan, who submitted their memorial decrying the surrender of their native province to Japan. Within a few days horses and carts crowded before the Censorate office as people gathered in heated discussion, a gigantic wave of indignation building up against the signing of the treaty.

Realizing that he could use the stirring patriotic feelings of the metropolitan candidates to reinforce his reform activities, Kang Yu-wei decided to bring them together while they were in Peking and send another, grander, petition to the throne. So he hurried to draft a 14,000-character memorial, his second. In it he pointed out the serious consequences of surrendering territory and paying indemnity to Japan as stipulated in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, adding that ceding Taiwan would forfeit the trust of the whole people. Strongly opposing this treaty of peace, he called for counter-measures and suggested the following:

- 1) The Emperor should immediately issue a self-critical rescript. He should strictly reward the good and punish the bad, promoting those officers

who were capable and efficient in military operations while punishing the capitulationist ministers who had brought on national humiliation as well as local officials who had failed to prepare against war.

2) The capital should be moved from Peking to Sian in the northwest so as to avert immediate threat from the enemy and afford a better defence against future hostile actions.

3) Military training should be stepped up, and the 200 million taels of war indemnity demanded by Japan should be diverted for China's military expenditure.

4) Reforms should be energetically carried out to enrich the country and to educate and benefit the people. This meant improving the industrial, agricultural, commercial, monetary and educational policies. In political life, it should be made possible for the higher authorities to be apprised of conditions at the lower levels, with councillors selected by the literati from among learned and capable intellectuals, with or without official posts. (One councillor was to be selected for each 100,000 households, with the prefecture or county as unit.) These councillors would not only advise the emperor on state affairs but would express differing opinions regarding the imperial edicts and meet to discuss all important decrees by the central and

local administrations. The rising bourgeoisie was demanding of the feudal Ching rulers that it be given a share of political power, that its reformist gentlemen be assigned to official posts.

The first three of these four proposals were expedient measures. It was the fourth that Kang Yu-wei considered crucial to making China independent and strong. But even this "crucial" proposal contained only some capitalist measures and did not touch the vitals of the feudal system.

Kang Yu-wei's second memorial to the Emperor was signed by more than 1,200 provincial graduates who had first gathered at the Sungyun Compound near Tachih Bridge to discuss it. They decided to submit it to the Censorate on May 2 for forwarding to the throne. But the capitulationists learned of the plan and, fearing the memorial might prevent ratification of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, carried out various acts of sabotage. They urged Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi to force Emperor Kuang Hsu to ratify the treaty ahead of schedule so as to make it a *fait accompli*. At the same time they resorted to blackmail. Grand Councillor Sun Yu-wen, for example, dispatched his lackeys to the lodgings of the provincial graduates to warn them to look out for their careers. Some of the petitioners got cold feet and requested that their names be removed. Still, the voices opposing capitulation and

national betrayal prevailed and the memorial was submitted, only to be shelved by the Censorate on the pretext that it was submitted too late, that the Emperor had already affixed his seal to the treaty.

Together with the earlier memorials, this was a major action agitating the stagnant pool of Ching Dynasty politics. It is known in China's modern history as the "presentation of memorials by riders of public carts." (The allusion originates from Han Dynasty scholars who had been enlisted into imperial service and used public conveyances for their journey to the capital. The term was later used in reference to provincial graduates travelling to Peking for the metropolitan examinations.) To popularize the event, a book was published in Shanghai at that time under the title *Story of Provincial Graduates Memorializing the Emperor*.

The petitioners mentioned in the previous paragraphs were all landlord-class intellectuals of some repute who had already made their way into the ranks of scholar-officials, though sitting for the imperial examinations did not yet mean they were in power. Many were young intellectuals who had absorbed Western bourgeois learning and become progressive-minded. In a sense, therefore, their presentation of memorials to the throne may be regarded as a patriotic mass action of the modern Chinese intelligentsia upon its appearance as a

social and political force. Although it was a narrow social stratum it had wide contacts and its action could not but have considerable impact on society.

The examination results were announced the day after the second petition was presented. Kang Yu-wei passed as a metropolitan graduate and was appointed Under-Secretary in the Board of Works, a post he did not take up immediately. On May 29 Kang wrote his third memorial to the Emperor, a 13,000-character document essentially the same as his second, with the deletion of the suggestions to reject the peace treaty and move the capital inland. In this third memorial Kang laid greater emphasis on the reform aspect, explaining from different angles the immediate necessity for reform measures to be taken. This third memorial went first, according to court rule, to the Censorate which, forced by the prevailing opinion, transmitted it to Emperor Kuang Hsu. The Emperor felt that Kang Yu-wei's demand for reform as expressed in the memorial was just what was needed to consolidate the Ching rule and bolster his imperial power. So he promptly ordered four copies made: one to be submitted to Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi; one to go to the Grand Council and on to the provincial viceroys, governors and Tartar-generals for discussion; one to be filed in the imperial archives

of the Chien Ching Kung (Palace of Heavenly Purity); the fourth to be placed in the Chin Cheng Tien (Throne Hall of Diligent Government) for perusal by the Emperor when deemed necessary.

Kang Yu-wei wrote his fourth memorial to the Emperor in June 1895, expounding the urgency of establishing a parliament. He proposed that the following measures be given first priority: 1) the issuing of a decree encouraging the officials and citizens to state their political views unreservedly; 2) the inviting of learned and far-sighted scholars to discuss state affairs; 3) the setting up of an advisory body to counsel the emperor; 4) the founding of newspapers for exchanging information and views; 5) the establishing of a special organ to enlist people of ability and uprightness for government service.

In actuality, these proposed measures were merely designed to create the requisite atmosphere and conditions for the bourgeoisie to share in political power. The Censorate, however, refused to relay Kang Yu-wei's fourth memorial to the throne on the pretext that it should go through the Board of Works, of which Kang was Under-Secretary. Thereupon Kang went to the Board of Works President, Sun Chia-nai, who agreed to transmit the memorial. The Board's Vice-President, Li Wentien, however, disagreed. Kang Yu-wei then

sought the help of the Board of War, but its President, Junglu, a faithful henchman of Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, was even more set against its transmission.

Finally Kang Yu-wei hit on another tack. This was Emperor Kuang Hsu's tutor, Weng Tung-ho, concurrently Grand Councillor and President of the Board of Revenue. A first-rank court official, Weng had never entertained any thought of reform before China's defeat by Japan. But after the Sino-Japanese War he found the Ching rule on the verge of collapse and himself hamstrung by the Empress Dowager and with little prospect. Moved by Kang Yu-wei's memorial, and desirous of getting support for Emperor Kuang Hsu as well as for himself, he condescendingly went to call on Kang, who was no more than a sixth-rank official. The latter happened not to be at home but, overwhelmed by Weng's favour, returned his visit forthwith. The two met and had a long talk during which Kang Yu-wei argued for the reform. Weng Tung-ho nodded his approval and went on to divulge the court secret that Emperor Kuang Hsu was under the thumb of the Empress Dowager. In his book *Memoirs of the Coup d'Etat of 1898*, Liang Chi-chao records that, after his talk with Kang, Weng "changed from his old self and began to advocate reform." This was because Weng realized that

Kang's reform proposals would be very useful in the struggle to seize power from the Empress Dowager.

On his part, Kang Yu-wei followed up with a stream of letters to Weng Tung-ho, outlining the specific steps the reform should take and emphasizing that without such reform "there can be no independence for the country or safety for the person." In July of the same year Weng accepted most of Kang's suggestions.

Incidentally, Weng Tung-ho had a subordinate by the name of Chen Chih, who held the post of Under-Secretary in the Board of Revenue. Known as an old-time bourgeois reformist, Chen had written a book before the Sino-Japanese War, advocating modernization and reform. He was asked by Weng Tung-ho to draft a series of 12 proposals on political reform, which Weng thought of urging Emperor Kuang Hsu to adopt by way of issuing corresponding imperial decrees. Afraid of offending the Empress Dowager, the wily imperial tutor requested Prince Kung to submit the proposals to the Emperor in his stead, calculating that the Prince's high prestige among the imperial clan could be helpful in keeping him out of harm's way. But Prince Kung, who had once been in charge of "Westernization" affairs, flatly refused. As a re-

sult, Weng chose to play safe and gave up the project.

Now let us briefly describe "the Emperor's faction" and "the Empress Dowager's faction" —

Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi started out as a concubine of Emperor Hsien Feng whom she bore a son, later to become Emperor Tung Chih. When the allied Anglo-French forces invaded Peking in 1860, Hsien Feng fled to Jehol Province where he died of illness the next year. After the young Emperor's succession to the throne, his mother, now the empress dowager, assumed the regency. But, in dynastic times an empress or empress dowager attending to state affairs was required by feudal etiquette, which strictly differentiated behaviour for men and women, to do so from behind a curtain. And this was what Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi did.

Early in 1875 the young Emperor Tung Chih died without issue and, according to the law of the imperial household, an heir should have been appointed by adoption to the late emperor and placed on the throne. Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi had refused this, for Emperor Tung Chih's widow would then have become empress dowager and she herself have lost her authority. So she put the four-year-old cousin of Tung Chih on the throne with the reign title of Kuang Hsu, retaining her power as the

empress dowager and continuing to run state affairs "from behind the curtain."

In 1886 Kuang Hsu was 16 and began handling court affairs himself, but the Empress Dowager held the tutelar authority, which meant that everything must first be reported to her for approval or refusal. By 1889 Emperor Kuang Hsu had reached majority and Tzu Hsi's political tutelage seemed no longer justified. Now there was nothing the 55-year-old Empress Dowager could do but hand power over to the Emperor and retire to the Summer Palace, which she had expanded at the cost of tens of millions of taels. Still her heart was in the Forbidden City, for she was not resigned to retirement and clung to the imperial power. So it was that two bureaucratic groups took form in the struggle within the ruling clique, one loyal to Emperor Kuang Hsu and the other to Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi. Most of the diehard court ministers and ranking local officials belonged to "the Empress Dowager's faction" while "the Emperor's faction" had rallied around it only a small number of bureaucrats without real power, like Weng Tung-ho and Wen Ting-shih.

During the Sino-Japanese War the Empress Dowager's faction favoured peace, whereas the Emperor's faction urged resistance. The latter dreamed of winning easy victory by a stroke of

good luck and so deflating the arrogance of the former. Its dream bubble burst, but still it sympathized more or less with the provincial graduates whose memorials demanded refusal of the peace treaty. In his numerous activities for reform under the imperial auspices, therefore, Kang Yu-wei looked to the Emperor's faction for support, while the latter deliberately made use of the reformists, regarding the reform-to-be as a decisive blow at its opponents. And so the relationship between the Emperor's faction and the reformists grew ever closer, each answering the other's needs, while at the same time the contradictions between the two rival cliques sharpened apace.

The provincial graduates' memorials to the throne having created an atmosphere for modernization and reform, the bourgeois reformist trend grew into a political movement. To win the support of the scholar-officials and the landlord-class intellectuals, which would give added weight to the movement, the bourgeois reformists needed badly to open the eyes of these persons by inspiring them with the ideas of modernization and reform. Following his memorials to the Emperor, therefore, Kang Yu-wei set about founding societies and journals, a pursuit which the reformists pushed with might and main.

In August 1895 Kang Yu-wei raised funds and began publishing the *Wan Kuo Kung Pao* in Peking. But the paper met with opposition from church forces because its title happened to be the

same as that of the paper published by their Kuang Hsueh Hui (Christian Literature Society). So in December Kang's paper appeared as the *Chung Wai Chi Wen (World Bulletin)*. The daily, which was edited by Liang Chi-chao and Mai Meng-hua, reprinted memorials to the throne and articles from newspapers and periodicals run by foreigners living in China. It also carried an editorial in each issue. With a circulation of 1,000 copies, it was delivered free of charge to government officials in Peking by distributors of the *Ti Pao (Peking Gazette)*, organ of the Ching government carrying exclusively memorials, imperial edicts and other official documents. A month later its circulation had increased to 3,000, showing an enthusiastic readership.

The *Chung Wai Chi Wen* was the first daily launched by China's bourgeois reformists. Some conservative mandarins, not knowing its origin, made a first guess that the paper came from the Tsungli Yamen, while others thought it issued from one of the foreign legations. They were shocked to learn that the paper came from the Nanhai Guild building in Peking where Kang Yu-wei stayed.

Next came the founding of an academic society, an organizational form under which the political reform activities were carried out. Also in August 1895, thanks to Kang Yu-wei's spade work, Wen

Ting-shih of the Emperor's faction was able, together with Chen Chih and others, to form the Chiang Hsueh Hui (Learn-to-Be-Strong Society) in Peking, with Chen as chairman and Liang Chi-chao as secretary. Yuan Shih-kai, at the time in charge of troop training in Hsiao-chan near Tientsin, wormed his way into this society. Kang wrote a manifesto for the Chiang Hsueh Hui in which he described China's grave situation as a result of foreign aggression and defined the purpose of the society as seeking a way out of the national crisis. Meetings were held by the society every few days and lectures given. It bought dozens of translated books from Shanghai and planned to set up a library. Weng Tung-ho and Sun Chia-nai of the Emperor's faction gave their personal support, and such bigwigs as Chang Chih-tung and Liu Kun-yi contributed money to give the impression that they too wanted to promote new things. Anxious to join the society, Li Hung-chang offered 2,000 taels of silver, but his application was rejected on account of his traitorous record. Li was naturally motivated by his desire to tack with the wind and make political capital for himself, but his eagerness to join indicated the strength and influence of the rising movement.

The Chiang Hsueh Hui society hated Li Hung-chang for his betrayal of the country, yet it failed

to see through the imperialists' scheme to use it for their own ends.

At the time, tsarist Russia's political influence in China kept growing, as the Empress Dowager's faction and Li Hung-chang had placed themselves under its wing. The British and U.S. imperialists displayed keen "interest" in the Chiang Hsueh Hui from its founding, hoping to gain a vantage point to influence the Emperor's faction and the reform group and thus mould the Chiang Hsueh Hui to their need in confronting tsarist Russia. Their legations in China hurried to announce that they were ready to contribute books and other materials to the society. N. R. O'Connor, the British minister, did his best to persuade Weng Tung-ho to help start the reform at the earliest moment. Timothy Richard and Gilbert Reid, British and American missionaries respectively, hurried to Peking, the former from Shanghai and the latter from Shantung, and tried by hook or by crook to get themselves into the Chiang Hsueh Hui. They invited officials of the Emperor's faction and the reformists to a banquet where they delivered "enthusiastic" speeches to win favour by professing support for their reform.

To achieve his aim, Timothy Richard hustled about visiting high-ranking mandarins in Peking. He presented Weng Tung-ho with a lengthy pro-

posal on China's reform in the hope of Weng's forwarding it to Emperor Kuang Hsu and its becoming a policy guideline for the Ching government. Richard acted as another, foreign "Kang Yu-wei," using such high-sounding phrases as educating, benefiting and pacifying the people and modernizing their minds. But sham is sham, and the truth inevitably emerges sooner or later. In a paragraph of his proposal outlining what China ought to do at the time, Richard brazenly stated that the Ching government should engage two "trustworthy" Westerners to jointly formulate China's policy. One of these would of course be himself. Richard also proposed setting up a metropolitan board which, as the future leading organ for implementing the envisaged reforms, should be in the charge of eight persons, four from among the Ching officials and the rest to be British or Americans. The four foreigners Richard had in mind were the British imperialist Robert Hart, Inspector General of the Chinese Imperial Customs; Charles Addis, manager of the British imperialist Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation; J. W. Foster, formerly U.S. Secretary of State and adviser to Li Hung-chang on the negotiation of the Treaty of Shimonoseki; and the U.S. imperialist Edward B. Drew, commissioner of customs in Tientsin. Richard further suggested that a newspaper

be published under the management of the British missionary John Fryer, and Gilbert Reid.

Not to be outdone, Reid dished out an article demanding that the Ching government engage prestigious men from Western countries who were held in high esteem by both Chinese and foreigners. The Western countries he had in mind were obviously Britain and the United States, the two imperialist countries which, according to Timothy Richard, were best suited to help China because neither was greedy or warlike. Armed aggression against China, forcing the country to sign unequal treaties, control of its economic lifelines, interference in its internal affairs and sabotage of its revolution were not, according to this logic, to be considered as greedy or warlike actions but as helping China, for which China should open its door wide to them. And so it was that the imperialist element Timothy Richard and his like, in missionary garb, peddled their bloody colonial policy.

Though the proposals of these imperialist elements were never accepted, they had the effect of inducing the Emperor's faction to depend more and more on the British and U.S. imperialists, and of increasing the reformists' illusions about imperialism. Timothy Richard, for example, was honoured by Weng Tung-ho with a special visit and praised by him as a "hero," while Kang Yu-wei went to

discuss with him the question of "co-operation" and Liang Chi-chao once served as his private secretary.

Baffled by the daily growing influence of the Chiang Hsueh Hui society, the diehard mandarins spread lies and slanders against it on every hand. Things came to such a pass that readers no longer accepted copies of the *Chung Wai Chi Wen*, nor would people distribute it despite the high pay offered for doing so. When these mandarins clamoured that they would petition Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi to punish Kang Yu-wei severely, Kang was forced to take refuge outside Peking, leaving Liang Chi-chao in charge of the work there.

Kang Yu-wei went to Shanghai in November 1895 and, in order to win the support of Chang Chih-tung, then Viceroy of the Liangkiang provinces (Kiangsu, Anhwei and Kiangsi), made a point of going to Nanking to visit this self-styled "man versed in contemporary affairs." Chang approved the idea of founding a Shanghai branch of the Chiang Hsueh Hui and promised to provide funds for it. Returning to Shanghai, Kang drafted the rules of the branch society, its stated aim being to study why different countries were strong or weak so as to draw the necessary conclusions for China's self-strengthening. He outlined four tasks for this organization: 1) to translate and print books; 2) to publish newspapers and periodicals; 3) to establish

libraries; 4) to found museums. Its newspaper, a daily called the *Chiang Hsueh Pao*, was soon to come off the press. Like its Peking counterpart, the *Chung Wai Chi Wen*, it was distributed free of charge.

The Peking Chiang Hsueh Hui and its Shanghai branch had a total of about 50 members who, roughly speaking, fell into four categories: 1) bourgeois reformists; 2) bureaucrats of the Emperor's faction; 3) officials and the so-called noted personages affiliated with the "Westernization" group; 4) big bureaucrats sympathetic to reform, and even certain imperialist elements. In Peking there was in general co-operation between the bourgeois reformists headed by Kang Yu-wei on the one hand and bureaucrats of the Emperor's faction represented by Weng Tung-ho and Wen Ting-shih on the other; in Shanghai there was co-operation mainly between Kang Yu-wei and Huang Tsun-hsien on the one hand and the "Westernization"-minded officials of Chang Chih-tung's clique on the other. In both cases, however, it was Kang Yu-wei and the other bourgeois reformists who played the key role.

With the extension of the Chiang Hsueh Hui from Peking to Shanghai, the demand for reform increased steadily. The diehards felt the threat to them serious and clamoured loudly that they would

“rather see the nation subjugated than have political reforms introduced,” and they resolved to eradicate the Chiang Hsueh Hui. In January 1896 Censor Yang Chung-yi submitted a memorial to the throne in which he attacked the society as a self-seeking clique and its *Chung Wai Chi Wen* as peddling Western learning. Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi seized upon this chance to order Emperor Kuang Hsu to close down the Chiang Hsueh Hui and ban its paper. The crafty Chang Chih-tung now withheld funds earmarked for the society’s Shanghai branch and, in his capacity as Liangkiang Viceroy, ordered it closed and its *Chiang Hsueh Pao* banned. Chang was followed by other time-serving officials who announced their withdrawal from the Chiang Hsueh Hui one after another.

Shortly afterwards, when another censor came out with a memorial to the Emperor urging the setting up of a government publishing institution, Weng Tung-ho took this opportunity to propose restoring the Chiang Hsueh Hui. The society’s confiscated books and other materials were returned and an official publishing house was established in Peking. This institution, which translated from foreign newspapers and magazines, was later incorporated into the Metropolitan College, predecessor of Peking University.

After the closure of the Chiang Hsueh Hui’s Shanghai branch, Huang Tsun-hsien, Wang Kang-nien and others proposed using its remaining funds to found a periodical in Shanghai titled the *Shih Wu Pao* (*Contemporary Affairs*), the journal to be published every 10 days under the editorship of Liang Chi-chao. In August 1896 the first issue of the magazine appeared, carrying essays, imperial decrees, memorials to the throne, domestic and foreign news, and articles translated from the foreign press. It published Liang Chi-chao’s article “General Comments on Reform” and some others propagating reformist ideas. Absorbing the Western bourgeois theory of evolution, these expounded the inevitability of modernization and reform. “The new is strong, the old rotten; the new is bright, the old dark; the new is pure, the old decadent,” the author said, refuting the diehards’ reactionary idea of sticking to the ancestors’ established way. Partly due to his fresh and fluent style of writing, the paper was welcomed by the intellectuals, and in a few months its circulation jumped to more than 10,000, making it the most influential journal in the reform movement.

Liang Chi-chao, however, like his teacher Kang Yu-wei, feared the struggles and uprisings of the broad masses of the people. “Gangsters of religious and secret societies have overrun the country, bid-

ing their time," he warned, calling for an effort to prevent popular uprisings through immediate reform. This attitude of Liang's was determined precisely by the reactionary nature of bourgeois reformism.

When the Chiang Hsueh Hui society was compelled to dissolve, Kang Yu-wei returned to Canton where he continued lecturing at his Wanmu Academy. He went to Hongkong and Macao at intervals to engage in reform activities. In February 1897 Kang and an overseas Chinese businessman founded the *Chih Hsin Pao* (*New Knowledge*) in Macao. Jointly edited by his younger brother Kang Kuang-jen and his student Hsu Chin, the periodical became an important organ disseminating reformist ideas in south China. Soon afterwards Kang Yu-wei went to Kweilin where he lectured and, hoisting the banner of Confucianism which was regarded as the "holy religion," initiated the Sheng Hsueh Hui (Holy Doctrine Society).

When the reform activities reached an upsurge in Peking and Shanghai, Hunan was also stirred and in time became a most active province in the movement. This was inseparable from the unremitting effort of Tan Ssu-tung and his associates.

Tan Ssu-tung, a native of Liuyang County in Hunan, was born into the family of a big landlord-

bureaucrat. For a time he worked in the Sinkiang provincial governor's office and later toured many provinces along the Yangtze and Yellow rivers, establishing wide social contacts. Highly indignant at the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, he remarked that its purport was to place the 400 million Chinese people at the mercy of the enemy. Tan's thinking changed greatly and, in co-operation with his close friend Tang Tsai-chang, he set to work on reforms in his hometown. In the spring of 1896 he went to Peking and made the acquaintance of Liang Chi-chao, the two often visiting each other and finding they had many views in common. Tan had heard of Kang Yu-wei the year before and, through a third person, received from him a letter and also his book *Study Notes at Changhsingli*. Liang's elaboration of Kang's ideas to Tan now made him admire the man all the more. Tan lamented the banning of the Chiang Hsueh Hui society and dreamed of winning support from the British consul in Hankow to open a Hunan branch.

Beginning in July 1896 Tan Ssu-tung held the sinecure post of expectant prefect in Nanking where he could devote himself to Chinese and Western learning, and wrote his philosophical work *A Study of Benevolence*. This work had a sprinkling of materialism, though it was mainly apriorist and mystical. It did, however, excoriate the wrong con-

cept of valuing the past and slighting the present, and bitterly denounced the downright evil of feudal ethics. It pointed out the need to "break all trammels," that is, to smash the feudal fetters. Permeated with such democratic spirit, the book played an active role in the intellectual circles of that period.

Tan Ssu-tung, however, failed to free himself from the feudal "trammels" because his attempts were made while he remained in their toils. He opposed feudal ethics, yet dared not break with Confucianism. He cursed autocratic monarchy but at the same time pressed for reforms which were to bolster the position of Emperor Kuang Hsu. This shows how the bourgeois reformists, however fervent and energetic their left-wing may have been, as exemplified by Tan Ssu-tung, were impotent to extricate themselves from the dragnet of feudal forces.

Of the provincial viceroys and governors, only Chen Pao-chen, Governor of Hunan, was inclined towards reforms while other influential local officials who more or less sympathized with the cause included Huang Tsun-hsien, Hunan's provincial Judge, and Chiang Piao, its provincial Literary Chancellor, and Chiang's successor Hsu Jen-chu. In the autumn of 1897 Tan Ssu-tung returned to his native province of Hunan at the invitation of

Chen Pao-chen, and Liang Chi-chao also went there by appointment. From that time on, schools, societies and journals teaching and propagating bourgeois reformism sprang up in the province.

One of these was the School of Contemporary Affairs established in Changsha in October 1897. Liang Chi-chao was head instructor of Chinese learning, while Tan Ssu-tung and Tang Tsai-chang were his assistants. There was also a faculty of Western learning. Taking as model Kang Yu-wei's teaching principles as applied at his Wanmu Academy in Canton, Liang formulated the regulations of the School of Contemporary Affairs. With a curriculum including Confucian classics, "tzu hsueh,"* history and Western learning, it was a transitional form between the old-type academy and the new-type school, and also a counter to the old civil-service examinations and the stereotyped "eight-legged" essay writing. Through lecturing and correcting the students' homework, Liang expounded the so-called "doctrine of people's rights" which was aimed at seizing power for the newly rising bourgeoisie. This met with attack by Wang Hsien-chien, the diehard president of the

* Referring to works by representatives of the various schools of thought during the Spring and Autumn (770-476 B.C.) and Warring States (475-221 B.C.) periods, e.g., the works *Lao Tzu*, *Chuang Tzu*, *Mo Tzu* and *Hsun Tzu*.

Yuehlu Academy, and Yeh Teh-hui, an influential member of the local evil gentry. They charged that Liang was propagating heretical views challenging the authority of parents and sovereigns, and threatened to evict him from Hunan. Liang gave up, left the province and went to Shanghai.

With the active promotion of Tan Ssu-tung and Tang Tsai-chang, the Nan Hsueh Hui (Southern Society) was set up in Hunan in January 1898. An outgrowth and development of the Chiang Hsueh Hui, this newly formed society required that its president and nine vice-presidents be chosen from among prestigious local gentlemen, and that its members in every sub-prefecture and county be recruited on the basis of the 10 gentlemen's knowledge of them and recommendation by their friends. The Nan Hsueh Hui had its headquarters at Changsha, with branches in every prefecture, sub-prefecture and county. Lectures were its principal activity, four being given in a month by Huang Tsun-hsien and others on academic subjects, politics, culture, education, astronomy, geography, etc. According to a diary entry by Pi Hsi-jui, one of the chief lecturers, large numbers of people applied for admission tickets and often before the lectures began "there was already a full house." The indication is that the intellectuals were anxious to free themselves from the bondage of traditional

feudal ideology and were trying to find a way to national salvation in the midst of sharp national contradictions.

Mortally afraid of this growing tendency, Wang Hsien-chien intervened again, requesting the provincial governor to petition the Emperor for the execution of Kang Yu-wei. He also incited his pawns to shout it about that the lecturers at the Nan Hsueh Hui were spreading "heterodox theories" and "nonsense." Yeh Teh-hui closely followed suit by wilfully distorting and refuting line by line Hsu Jen-chu's book *Commentaries on Current Topics* in which he introduced the new learning to his readers. Having forced Pi Hsi-jui to leave Hunan, the diehards went after Fan Chui, a leading member of the Nan Hsueh Hui's Shaoyang branch, charging him with the so-called crimes of "betraying Confucianism and misleading the people." Then they gathered in a Confucian temple and prayed to their "sage" before finally driving Fan out of Hunan.

As to publications, Hunan's Literary Chancellor Chiang Piao founded in Changsha the reform-oriented *Hsiang Hsueh Pao (Hunan Journal)*, at one time called the *Hsiang Hsueh Hsin Pao (New Hunan Journal)*. In March 1898 Tan Ssu-tung, Tang Tsai-chang and others published the *Hsiang Pao (Hunan Daily)* as organ of the Nan Hsueh Hui.

This paper frequently carried articles on modernization and reform, advocating constitutional monarchy. They maintained that the old system would gradually fall apart of itself and the new gradually come into force, so long as "the people are allowed to support what benefits them and eliminate what harms them." But even such lukewarm comments frightened Chang Chih-tung, who considered them agitational and subversive. He wrote to Chen Pao-chen requesting that he keep the situation under control. Nor did Chang let the matter rest until Chen agreed that the paper should not carry any more front-page commentaries.

Sponsored by Yen Fu and Hsia Tseng-yu, an 8vo daily, the *Kuo Wen Pao* (*National News*) was started in Tientsin in October 1897. It carried domestic and foreign news with frequent editorial comments. Drawing material directly from correspondents both in China and abroad, in addition to translated news items and articles from the foreign press, it was a comparatively well run newspaper in its time. It also edited a periodical, the *Kuo Wen Hui Pien* (*National News Collected*), which appeared every 10 days and contained the paper's important commentaries. With the aim of spreading the idea that China could become strong by learning from Western bourgeois politics, the paper had a considerable influence in acquainting its

readers with the social and political aspects of the West.

Yen Fu of Foochow, Fukien Province, who in his teens had entered a local naval school run by the "Westernization" group and in 1877 was sent to England to study as a naval cadet, paid close attention to the culture and social system of Western countries. After his return to China he served as President of the Tientsin Naval College. Indignant at China's tragic defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, he wrote quite a number of articles for the *Chih Pao* (*Chihli Journal*) including "Radical Changes in the World" and "How to Make China Strong." In them Yen Fu advocated political reforms, abolition of the old stereotyped essay writing and a change in the autocratic system. He also plunged into the translation and annotation of Western philosophical, sociological and political works. In 1895 he translated T. H. Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* to which he added some of his own interpretations. The translation was serialized in the *Kuo Wen Pao* and appeared in book form in 1898. It was the first serious translation into Chinese of a Western bourgeois theoretical work to be introduced to China since the Opium War. With its theory of evolution, this work negated theories of the so-called "historical process of retrogression and repetition."

T. H. Huxley was a British naturalist and friend of the noted evolutionist Charles Darwin whose doctrine Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* propagated. Generally speaking, the first half of the book dealing with natural phenomena is materialistic; the second half, devoted to social phenomena (ethics), is idealistic. The gist of the work is that the living world evolves through "struggle for existence" and by "natural selection." By "struggle for existence" the author meant that all living things exist in mutual competition; those better able to adapt to the environment survive while those less able are eliminated. Such is the law of "natural selection" independent of man's will. He maintained that this was also true of human society, for, among human beings, "as among other animals, multiplication goes on without cessation, and involves severe competition for the means of support. The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence. The strongest, the most self-assertive, tend to tread down the weaker."

Debasing man to the level of all other living creatures and accepting the trampling underfoot by the strong of the weak as fated, this theory is thoroughly reactionary in that it tends to justify the capitalist powers' aggression against weak nations. Innumerable facts prove that a just cause

enjoys abundant support while an unjust cause finds little support. The law of history, that a weak nation can defeat a strong one and a small nation can defeat a big one, has utterly smashed the reactionary view of vulgar evolutionism. Still, in the circumstances of China being threatened with total dismemberment by the sabre-rattling imperialist powers, the introduction to China of the aforesaid theory helped to awaken the Chinese people to the fact that, unless China roused itself to action, it would sink under the jungle law of the capitalist world. In fact, progressive-minded people were steadily coming forth with vocal demands for China's self-strengthening through reform. This was something quite beyond Huxley's expectations.

As Chairman Mao pointed out, "**Mechanical materialism and vulgar evolutionism, which were imported from Europe in the last hundred years, are supported by the bourgeoisie.**"* The bourgeois reformists of the late 19th century used these as weapons though they failed to defeat the diehard feudal forces with them, their weapons proving useless after a few rounds.

Organizing societies and publishing newspapers and magazines were important steps in furthering

* "On Contradiction," *Selected Works*, FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. I, p. 313.

the reform movement in that they helped mobilize mass strength and prepare public opinion. Liang Chi-chao's *Memoirs of the Coup d'Etat of 1898* states that in three years there arose throughout the country 24 societies, 18 schools, 7 newspaper offices and 2 publishing houses. Actually there were many more. Other statistics place the number of the first three at 300, located mainly in Kiangsu, Hunan, Chihli and Kwangtung, showing that the bourgeoisie already had a social base at the time. This social base was as yet a rather flimsy one, for those scholar-officials and intellectuals who joined the various societies, entered the schools and read the newspapers and magazines represented only a minute section of the 400 million Chinese people.

Hanging On to an Emperor

The reformists who saw only the emperor enthroned on high were blind to the people's strength. They were under the illusion that their goals of national salvation and participation in the government could be reached through reforms decreed by the emperor. Such was the basic approach of the bourgeois reformist political movement initiated by Kang Yu-wei and his followers. In November 1897 the Kiaochow Bay was forcibly occupied by Germany, Lushun and Talien soon after by tsarist Russia, the Kwangchow Bay by France, and Weihaiwei and Kowloon by Britain. At this critical juncture when China faced total partition, Kang rushed to Peking from Canton and presented yet another memorial, his fifth, to Emperor Kuang Hsu.

The situation now was quite different from when he submitted his first memorial in 1888 and from the time of his second, written while in Peking for the metropolitan examinations of 1895. Societies, schools and newspaper offices had appeared in many places and, to some extent, both organizationally and ideologically, the scholar-officials and intellectuals were already prepared for change. Moreover, impelled by the situation at home and abroad and motivated by the desire to restore his imperial authority, Emperor Kuang Hsu and his faction became firmer in their resolve to adopt the reform proposal and put it into practice.

Kang Yu-wei's fifth memorial was drafted in December 1897. More forceful in wording than the previous four, this last memorial described the grave situation, stating with alarm that the Japanese Diet was meeting every day to discuss the carving up of China, and that the papers in various countries were clamouring for the same thing. "It was as if mines were laid all around with their fuses connected. It is enough that one fuse be lighted for all the mines to explode." Since the cession of Taiwan to Japan, Kang added, the people unanimously felt that the imperial court was not reliable. "People act indiscreetly, and evil men harbour bad intentions." With the danger of popular revolts appearing everywhere, the situation

was serious enough without the added foreign threat. The dynasty, beset with difficulties at home and abroad, was at the end of its resources. If it did not hasten to start reform and find a way out, Kang reasoned, it would be impossible to rule even half the country, and the Emperor and his ministers could not so much as live the life of commoners. What Kang Yu-wei said in his recent memorial sounded, of course, imperious to the feudal rulers. Still he used such words, even at the risk of losing his head, just in order to move the Emperor and show his infinite loyalty.

Kang put forward the following alternative measures for averting the perilous situation:

- 1) Taking Peter the Great of Russia and Emperor Meiji of Japan as models, Emperor Kuang Hsu should personally formulate a basic state policy and proclaim reforms. Since Japan and China were geographically close to each other and had similar political and cultural traditions, it would be easy and fruitful for China to begin its reform by imitating Japan. This was the best plan, according to Kang.

- 2) Calling together able officials to map out reforms. The Emperor should summon them to audience, one group each day, to discuss specific plans and steps, and put these into effect in the

order of their importance and urgency. This was thought by Kang to be the second best plan.

3) The least favourable plan would be to urge all high provincial officials to carry out the reform in their respective provinces, all viceroys and governors being expected to achieve something along these lines within three years. They were subject to dismissal should they show indifference to their duty.

Kang Yu-wei requested the Emperor to adopt one of these plans, pointing out that the first could make China strong, the second could preserve it as the weak country it was, and the third could at best avert its extinction. In his innermost heart, of course, Kang hoped that the Emperor would accept his first plan and adopt Japan's Meiji Restoration as China's "Kuang Hsu Reform," with the memorialist himself in the role of China's Hirobumi Ito, the renowned Japanese statesman of the Meiji Restoration period.

Kang Yu-wei sent his memorial to the Board of Works with the request that it be transmitted to the Emperor. The Board's President, Sungkuei, a diehard Manchu noble, took exception to the memorial and refused to forward it. Though this daring memorial thus failed to reach the throne, it was copied and passed round among the mandarins and even published in Tientsin and Shanghai pa-

pers. It continued to spread and was appreciated by quite a number of scholar-officials among whom was Kao Hsieh-tseng, a supervising official of the Censorate. Kao, who saw in the matter a chance to curry favour with the newly rising forces and rake in something for himself, immediately presented a memorial of his own recommending Kang Yu-wei, at the same time requesting the Emperor to grant Kang an audience and appoint him to an important post. Weng Tung-ho in turn took advantage of this and praised Kang before Emperor Kuang Hsu, who was ready to grant him an audience but was prevented from doing so by some diehard court officials. Prince Kung, for one, said to the Emperor, "Our court has the rule that officials below the fourth rank should not be accorded audience by the Throne. If Your Majesty has anything to inquire of him, the court ministers can be ordered to transmit the imperial wish." Lacking the courage to break with court etiquette, Kuang Hsu could do nothing but take the prince's advice.

On January 24, 1898 Kang Yu-wei was received at the Tsungli Yamen. Present on the occasion were Li Hung-chang, Weng Tung-ho, Junglu, Liao Shou-heng (President of the Board of Punishments) and Chang Yin-huan (Vice-President of the Board of Revenue). In fact, the reception turned into a de-

bate between Kang as a protagonist of reform and the others, all of whom opposed reform.

Junglu was the first to speak, arguing that the "ancestors' way" brooked no alteration. Kang Yu-wei's rebuttal was that the "ancestors' way" meant to administer the ancestors' territory. Now that their territory was being partitioned, what was the use of talking about their "way"? The Tsungli Yamen was itself not prescribed by the "ancestors' way," either, argued Kang.

When Liao Shou-heng asked where the reform should start, Kang replied that it should start with the reform of the laws and institutions. Growing impatient, Li Hung-chang sharply interrogated Kang whether he meant that the six metropolitan boards and all the institutions should also be abolished. Kang's answer was that they were living in a time of rivalry among the powers, that they could no longer shut themselves behind closed doors. The existing laws and institutions were all outdated, had brought China into crisis and ought to be abolished. Then, fearing he had spoken too openly, Kang backed down a little, saying that even if the laws and institutions were not to be abolished wholesale, they should at least be duly changed so as to facilitate the reform.

At this point, Weng Tung-ho broke in to ask how the necessary funds were to be provided, to

which Kang replied that Japan set up banks to issue notes, France adopted a stamp tax, India levied a land tax and all these measures brought in money. China, he said, had a vast territory and large population; if only it could make some changes in its institutions it could increase its revenue tenfold. Kang then described in detail the essentials of his plan.

The next day Weng Tung-ho reported the interview to Emperor Kuang Hsu and again recommended Kang Yu-wei. The Emperor was ready a second time to receive Kang but Prince Kung once more objected, suggesting as an alternative that Kang be allowed to send in his proposals in written form — it would not be too late to grant him an audience if these were found acceptable. And so Kuang Hsu modified his plan and asked Kang to submit his proposals together with some of his books, among which were *An Inquiry into the Meiji Restoration of Japan* and *An Inquiry into the Political Reform by Peter the Great of Russia*. This brought Kang closer to the Emperor, who ordered that all future memorials and proposals by Kang Yu-wei should be sent to him upon receipt, with no obstruction or delay permitted.

On January 29 Kang presented his "Memorial on Policy Concerning the General Situation." In this memorial, his sixth, which he presented at "His

Majesty's wish" instead of on his own initiative, Kang gave adherence to the old ways as the reason why some countries of that time suffered the tragedy of partition or faced national crises. He drew the following conclusions from the situation in the various countries: "The independence of a nation depends on its readiness to change, while not changing means doom; thorough change means strength, while minor changes still spell doom." China was in danger of extinction due to its adherence to the old ways and resistance to reform, he said. There was now no alternative for China but to imitate Japan's Meiji Restoration and determine to introduce reforms.

The Meiji reform had many aspects, Kang explained, three being essential: 1) The emperor and ministers jointly pledged to carry out the reform. 2) Special organs were established to enlist able and upright men to participate in state affairs. 3) A bureau of institutions was founded to draft new laws and new institutions. Basing himself on these, Kang petitioned Emperor Kuang Hsu to see to it that the following three things were done as soon as possible:

- 1) The calling together of all the ministers to swear to carry out the reform. They should pledge to eradicate the old abuses and exert their efforts

towards modernization, otherwise they should request their own dismissal.

- 2) The establishment of an office at Wu Men (Meridian Gate, at the front entrance to the Forbidden City) to receive petitions from the scholars, who would then be encouraged to express their views freely. Memorials and proposals from officials could be sent directly to the emperor without an intermediary. Anyone considered to be qualified could be appointed to an official post, waiving the normal procedure.

- 3) The creation of a bureau of institutions within the imperial court with several dozen able and experienced men in charge. The emperor should make daily calls at this bureau for consultation as to which laws and institutions should be introduced, which revised, which retained and which abolished, the subsequent decisions all to be promulgated and carried out.

Compared with the Western capitalist countries where the government functions were divided into the legislative, judicial and executive branches, Kang Yu-wei saw the Ching government set-up for the most part as irrational and an obstacle to reform. He considered it imperative, therefore, to establish a bureau of institutions which would serve as the leading organ for preparing and carrying out the reform measures. Under the bureau

there should be 12 departments handling matters concerning law, finance, education, agriculture, industry, commerce, railways, posts, mining, travel and public organizations (including political and academic societies and churches), army, and navy. Every circuit should have a bureau of civil affairs which should select able and experienced men to carry out the reform measures. These persons should have the status of provincial viceroys and governors and enjoy the privilege of presenting memorials to the emperor directly. A sub-bureau should be set up in every county to take charge of the local census, road building, forestry, education, agriculture, industry, commerce, public health and security. Kang Yu-wei also suggested sending students abroad for travel and study, extensive translation of foreign books, changing the civil-service examination system, opening various kinds of schools, setting up banks, training the army, and so on.

This "Memorial on Policy Concerning the General Situation" embodied all the demands of the bourgeois reformists for political changes and constituted the programme for the Reform Movement of 1898.

After Kuang Hsu read the memorial, he sent it to the princes and ministers of the Tsungli Yamen for discussion. Anxious to free him-

self from Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi's clutches, he had apparently made up his mind to give the reform a try.

Together with his memorial Kang Yu-wei submitted to the Emperor, among other books, *An Inquiry into the Meiji Restoration of Japan*. In his preface to this work he said that Europe and America had taken 300 years to shape their system of government, while Japan had modelled itself after the European and American system in only 30. Learning from nearby Japan, China with its vast area and large population could achieve an initial modern structure in three years, steer itself on to the right course in five years, achieve marked success in eight years and become a world power in 10, continued Kang.

Kang Yu-wei followed up several days later with his seventh memorial in which he noted that Peter the Great of Russia, despite his imperial status, had made a trip abroad to study and returned with knowledge useful in launching reforms in his own country. Kang cited this as a brilliant example of boldly learning from other countries, though the precise country he had in mind for Emperor Kuang Hsu's emulation was not Russia but Japan.

Referring to the Chinese situation during this period, Chairman Mao said, "**Only modernization could save China, only learning from foreign coun-**

tries could modernize China. Among the foreign countries, only the Western capitalist countries were then progressive, as they had successfully built modern bourgeois states. The Japanese had been successful in learning from the West, and the Chinese also wished to learn from the Japanese.”*

The bourgeois reformists represented by Kang Yu-wei were precisely these Chinese. They meant to learn from the West via Japan because, first, the Meiji Restoration had succeeded by this means in turning Japan into a capitalist country where the bourgeoisie had a voice in state affairs; second, Japan with its constitutional monarchy had an emperor, and this was what best suited the taste of the Chinese bourgeois reformists. Japan was in their eyes a ready-made model!

In the decade between 1888 and the eve of Emperor Kuang Hsu's proclamation of reform in 1898, Kang Yu-wei had presented in all seven memorials, repeatedly explaining China's need for modernization and reform. It was the fifth and the sixth (i.e., “Memorial on Policy Concerning the General Situation”) which had the greatest influence on the Emperor, changing his ideas to conform with the bourgeois reformists' demands. The Emperor

* “On the People's Democratic Dictatorship,” *Selected Works*, FLP, Peking, 1969, Vol. IV, p. 413.

placed Kang's sixth memorial and his books concerning the Meiji Restoration and other subjects on his desk, reading and re-reading them. Meanwhile he began issuing, if irregularly, decrees for reform, indicating that he had placed the matter on his agenda.

In striving for national salvation through reform by imperial decrees the bourgeois reformists meant to save China from the threat of imperialist partition and, further, to transform semi-colonial China into an independent nation. This was no light task, for it meant opposing the imperialists and their servitor, the feudal forces. But while opposing imperialism's open, armed aggression, they failed to see its hidden, velvet-glove offensive; they were able to see through imperialists who bared their fangs but unable to discern the hypocrisy of others; they considered learning from Japan's experience in learning from the West as a panacea for curing all of China's ills.

When Germany forcibly occupied the Kiaochow Bay, the general staff of the Japanese army sent its spies Mitsuomi Kamio and Taro Utsunomiya to Wuhan. They tried, through the good offices of Chang Chih-tung, to induce the Ching government to come to terms with Japan's ally, Britain, against Germany. There had been the Sino-Japanese War, and the Ching court ministers had little trust in

Japan. Furthermore, Prince Kung, who often had the final say, was of the pro-Russian group, so the Japanese advice went unheeded.

On learning this, Kang Yu-wei, who thought that Britain and Japan could be made use of, called on Weng Tung-ho to persuade him to take Japan's advice. He also wrote two petitions, one on behalf of a censor called Yang Shen-hsiu and one for another censor, proposing alliance with Britain and Japan. He also wrote and distributed an essay on the same subject. Kang even approached the Japanese minister to China, Fumio Yano, requesting that Japan agree to China's postponing payment of the outstanding war indemnity so that the money could be used for internal reforms instead. The Japanese minister feigned willingness to consider the matter, hoping to take the opportunity to extend Japan's influence and incite Kang to campaign for the convening of a "Grand Sino-Japanese Conference."

It so happened that tsarist Russia was then aggressively demanding the "lease" of Lushun and Talien, which it was trying to compel the Ching government to sign. Weng Tung-ho and others of the Emperor's faction strongly objected and called for alliance with Britain to resist Russia, while Prince Kung and Li Hung-chang, bent on keeping themselves in the embrace of Russia, favoured

"leasing" the twin cities. The two official factions, each with its own imperialist backing, fell into endless debate. Emperor Kuang Hsu, acting on the suggestion of Weng Tung-ho and Kang Yu-wei, questioned Prince Kung and Li Hung-chang: "You said that Russia was dependable, and that China would benefit greatly from signing a secret pact with that country [referring to the Sino-Russian secret treaty of 1896]. Now, instead of the treaty guaranteeing against China's partition by other countries, Russia has gone back on its word and is itself demanding our territory before the treaty has half run out. What then is the use of this secret pact?" But the Empress Dowager, long in the service of tsarist Russia, threw all her weight behind Prince Kung and Li Hung-chang, so that the sell-out treaty "leasing" Lushun and Talien to Russia was finally signed.

Not to be outdone, the British and Japanese imperialists tried again and again to influence and use the Emperor's faction, the reformists and the local power groups in competing with Russia for control of the Ching government. The British M. P. Charles Beresford, who came to China "on a tour" in early 1898, went to Peking and tried repeatedly to talk Weng Tung-ho into discussing Sino-British "co-operation." He went also to Wuhan and Nanking where he tried to sell his idea of

alliance with Britain to Chang Chih-tung and Liu Kun-yi. The spies sent by the Japanese army's general staff again showed up in Wuhan where they found Tan Ssu-tung and tried to make him accept alliance with Japan. All these imperialist enticements enhanced the illusions of the reform advocates. Tang Tsai-chang, for instance, published an article in the *Hsiang Hsueh Hsin Pao* entitled "On the Need for China to Ally with Britain and Japan," asserting that China, so allied, could ward off aggression by other countries. Kang Kuang- jen also published an article in the *Chih Hsin Pao* under the title "On the Policy of Alliance with Britain," lauding Britain as a state "ready to come to the rescue of others."

For a time following the Sino-Japanese War, the imperialists were divided into two groupings on the question of aggression against China: Russia and France; Britain and Japan. The Chinese bourgeois reformists' line of allying with Britain and Japan was aimed, externally, at combating tsarist Russia by making use of such alliance and, internally, at weakening the diehard forces represented by Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi so as to pave the way for reform. This internal aspect was the principal one, for the Empress Dowager's faction was backed by Russia. Actually the bourgeois reformists were totally incapable of self-reliance and had no self-

confidence either. They could only cling fast to an emperor who was but a titular sovereign of a semi-colony and had to rely on his overlord imperialism in carrying out the projected reform. This determined that bourgeois reformism was a blind alley. Further, the line of relying on Britain and Japan pursued by Emperor Kuang Hsu and his faction, though opposed to that of relying on tsarist Russia as pursued by Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi and her faction, was, like the latter, essentially a line of national betrayal.

The Struggle Around the Pao Kuo Hui

6

What Kang Yu-wei did in Peking in 1897-98 was a continuation of his activities of 1895 when he and other provincial graduates submitted memorials to the throne. During this period he and his associates sponsored the founding of study societies as well as further memorializing Emperor Kuang Hsu. The Kwangtung provincials then in Peking were the first to respond by setting up the Yueh Hsueh Hui (Kwangtung Society), to be followed by Yang Jui, Lin Hsu and Yang Shen-hsiu and their fellow provincials, who initiated respectively the Szechuan, Fukien and Shensi societies. These activities helped to spread the reform movement from the capital to the various provinces.

In the spring of 1898, when the metropolitan examinations were due to be held in Peking, Kang Yu-wei hoped to interest the candidates in the re-

form movement by inviting them to a meeting together with government officials who advocated or were inclined towards reform. His purpose was to confront the diehards with a strong offensive and push the movement forward. He and a certain censor, Li Sheng-to, who sought popularity by joining the reform movement, jointly organized the Pao Kuo Hui (Protect-the-Country Society), the inaugural meeting being held on April 12 at the Eastern Kwangtung Guild building and attended by 200-300 people. Kang, who drafted the "Manifesto of the Pao Kuo Hui," spoke at the meeting, recounting China's history of repeated defeats from the two Opium Wars on, and analysing their causes. He pointed out, particularly, that within two months of Germany's occupation of the Kiaochow Bay there had been 20 incidents in which China forfeited sovereign rights and surrendered territory. How much longer, he asked, could China exist as a nation if things went on like this?

The name "Protect-the-Country Society" stated its purpose: to protect China, but China under the Ching rule. China must be protected because it was invaded by imperialism and there was the danger of national subjugation. The 30-clause "Constitution of the Pao Kuo Hui," as drafted by Kang Yu-wei and adopted at its first meeting, consisted mainly of the following three points:

1) Those concerned for China's future should meet to discuss and find a way out now that more and more of its territory had been occupied, its sovereignty had been increasingly infringed upon and the people's livelihood had gone from bad to worse. 2) The society had as its purpose the protection of the country, the race and the religion, that is, protection of China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, protection of racial independence and protection of the "holy religion," i.e., Confucianism, which the reformists regarded as symbol of the national spirit. 3) Careful study should be made of political reforms, domestic and foreign affairs, and ways to achieve economic efficiency, so as to contribute to the better running of the government.

The constitution stipulated that head offices should be established in Peking and Shanghai, with branch offices in various provinces, prefectures and counties. For the head and branch offices it laid down rules of organization, terms of reference, leadership, admission procedures and members' rights. It is clear from the above that the Pao Kuo Hui, an outgrowth of the Chiang Hsueh Hui, was an organization containing rudiments of a bourgeois political party. However, its aim was merely to effect certain political and economic reforms so as to "protect the country," all to be done with the kind permission of the feudal Ching rulers.

Lenin said, "**Reformism, in general, means that people confine themselves to agitation for changes which do not require the removal of the main foundations of the old ruling class, changes that are compatible with the preservation of these foundations.**"* As for the reforms sought by the Pao Kuo Hui, they could only be such as were sanctioned by the feudal ruling class.

The Pao Kuo Hui's second meeting was held on April 15 at the Sungyun Compound in Peking. Liang Chi-chao spoke, refuting the pessimistic view current among the scholar-officials that China's situation had reached a point of no return. The third meeting was held on April 19 at the Kwei-chow Guild building with more than 100 attending. By this time the Pao Tien Hui (Protect-Yunnan Society), Pao Cheh Hui (Protect-Chekiang Society) and Pao Chuan Hui (Protect-Szechuan Society) had all sprung up in Peking. Kang Yu-wei addressed all of these societies. As for the meetings of the Pao Kuo Hui society, Liang Chi-chao said that in the face of imminent national subjugation, when "the bandits are breaking in and a conflagration is raging at the gate," these activities were like acts of "the brave who rise in arms and beat the gongs

* "Controversial Questions," *Selected Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1952, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 245.

to arouse all." This might be an exaggerated statement, but it reflected a certain truth in the real situation. Stimulated by the Pao Kuo Hui, the wave of the reform movement mounted among the scholar-officials, some concluding that reform was the only way out for China.

But, though the bourgeois reformists' demands did not touch the foundations of the feudal rule, the diehards could still not tolerate them, and they opposed and sabotaged all reform activities wherever they were carried on. From 1888 onwards the diehards had been trying to restrict and beat back the reform movement by prohibiting the spread of Western learning, burning new books, banning newspapers and magazines, closing down the Chiang Hsueh Hui society, dissolving the Nan Hsueh Hui society and expelling the reformists from all places where they were found active.

The development from the Chiang Hsueh Hui to the Nan Hsueh Hui and then to the Pao Kuo Hui meant that regional societies had grown into a unified, countrywide organization resembling a political party and exerting increasing influence. This in turn aroused the ever greater hostility of the diehards towards the Pao Kuo Hui.

Reflecting the conservative officials' attitude, an Under-Secretary of the Board of Civil Appointments named Hung Chia-yu instigated Sun Hao,

a time-serving scholar in Peking looking for a job, to write an article entitled "In Refutation of the Pao Kuo Hui." The author accused Kang Yu-wei of being in "contempt of the Sovereign" and aspiring to be a "democratic pope." The article was published in pamphlet form and distributed to as many Peking officials as possible. The conservative court ministers and imperial nobles spread it further, creating murmurs that built up into a howl against Kang. Junglu spread the word: "Many ranking officials are still alive, so there is no need for Kang Yu-wei to found any Protect-the-Country Society even if the country were really in danger of subjugation. Kang deserves death for his very audacity, and if any of your friends have joined that society, better tell them to look out for their heads!" Intimidated in this way by a powerful mandarin, many weak-willed members withdrew from the Pao Kuo Hui. And Li Sheng-to, one of its founding members, went so far as to submit a memorial smearing the society in order to save his own skin. Chiao Shu-nan, a Board of Punishments official whose name was clearly on the society's roster, denied in a letter to Liang Chi-chao that he had ever been a member. He now said that "protecting the country" was a task for the imperial nobles and court ministers only, that it would be quite out of place for junior

officials of lowly origin to assume such responsibility. Censor Pan Ching-lan submitted a memorial attacking the Pao Kuo Hui and charging Kang Yu-wei with inciting people to create disturbances and plotting revolt. Basing himself on this memorial to the throne, the diehard Grand Councillor Kangyi was ready to investigate the matter. This was not done, however, as Emperor Kuang Hsu, desirous of keeping some forces which would be useful to him in his contention with Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi and her followers, said, "Wouldn't it be a very good thing if some society could protect the country?" But the Pao Kuo Hui itself bowed before the pressure of the diehards and ceased activity of its own accord.

Besides attacking the Pao Kuo Hui, another censor charged in a memorial that the societies for protecting Chekiang, Yunnan and Szechuan, while in name pledged to safeguard these provinces, were in fact trying to create splits and destroy the country. Though Emperor Kuang Hsu ignored all this, these societies dissolved themselves as the Pao Kuo Hui had done.

But even the demise of all the afore-mentioned societies could not satisfy the diehards. Always ready to drag in the case of the Pao Kuo Hui, they kept up their attack on Kang Yu-wei even after Emperor Kuang Hsu had decreed the start of the

reform. Hsu Ying-kuei, President of the Board of Rites, further accused Kang of scavenging from the foreign press for hackneyed viewpoints to negate the Chinese laws and institutions. He denounced Kang's proposals as impractical, said he harboured malicious motives and should be driven back to his birthplace. But instead of listening to Hsu, the Emperor reprimanded him.

The diehards, however, did not accept their setbacks, knowing they had the full backing of the Empress Dowager. Thus Censor Wenti jumped forth to malign Kang Yu-wei, saying his aim in organizing the Pao Kuo Hui was not to protect, but to disrupt the country. He viciously accused Kang of aiming, if in vain, at "protecting the 400 million Chinese at the expense of the illustrious Ching Dynasty." But Emperor Kuang Hsu knew better, for he was convinced that Kang Yu-wei was loyal to him and the Ching court. Concluding that Wenti had been put up to attacking Kang in his memorial, the Emperor had the censor dismissed from office as unqualified. This was yet another counter-move against the Empress Dowager's faction. But like a nightmare, the accusation against the Pao Kuo Hui of "protecting the Chinese at the expense of the illustrious Ching Dynasty," as the diehards formulated it, spread among the court nobles and eunuchs as well as the diehard mandarins outside the palace

and became the rationale for suppressing the reform movement.

While the Pao Kuo Hui was under attack like this in Peking, Chang Chih-tung in Wuhan, sniffing the political atmosphere, feigned concern and tried to bring about some sort of compromise between the old and the new forces. He wrote a 40,000-character book, *Exhortation to Study*, in which he stated that those who were trying to save the situation were preaching the new learning, while those who were worried about throwing Confucianism overboard were sticking to the old learning. The arguments on both sides were so confusing that it was difficult to distinguish right from wrong. For, as Chang saw it, "The conservatives do not understand what intercourse of nations means, while the liberals are ignorant of what is radical in Chinese affairs." Now this Chang Chih-tung, who supposedly knew both, felt compelled to step forth and speak.

What did Chang Chih-tung mean by "intercourse of nations" and "that which is radical in Chinese affairs"? His meaning becomes clear from a reading of his book, which is divided into two parts, "Moral" and "Practical." Part One deals with the "radical principles" as a means of "rectifying the heart," that is, the feudal ethics, or the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. Part Two deals with

the "intercourse of nations" as a means of "enlightenment," that is, such matters as industry, commerce, schools, the press, all of which might, without discrimination, be established wherever possible and expedient. All this was singing the same old "Westernization" tune — "Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for function."

Starting from the "radical principles" for "rectifying the heart," which were based on feudal ethics, Chang plagiarized the phrase "protection of the country, the race and the religion," interpreting it thus: "In order to protect the race we must first protect the holy religion [Confucianism], and if the holy religion is to be protected we are bound to protect the country [the reigning dynasty]." What was of primary importance, according to Chang Chih-tung, was to stimulate a sense of loyalty, love and respect for the imperial court. In other words, the feudal morality, the whole feudal system and the "ancestors' way" must not be tampered with lest the "radical principles" be undermined — an absolutely impermissible thing.

As it was, the concurrent "doctrine of people's rights" was advanced by the bourgeois reformists so that the emerging bourgeoisie and the non-office-holding intellectuals of the landlord class would get their share of power. But this doctrine conflicted with the concept of the sovereign's

supreme power, with the basic system of the feudal dynasty, and so threatened to undermine the "radical principles." It therefore incurred the burning hatred of the diehards, who directed their fire on it. Chang Chih-tung claimed in his book that once the "doctrine of people's rights" was advocated, "the ignorant" would be delighted and "the unruly" would rise up in rebellion; the laws would not be carried out and great disorder would arise on all sides. This doctrine was dreadfully "heretical and ferocious," asserted Chang. China, he continued, was different from the Western countries which since ancient times had been ruled by a succession of tyrants so that there were demands for "people's rights," liberty and equality. In China, however, he argued, where the Ching emperors were all "benevolent and kindly," there were no grounds whatsoever for the "doctrine of people's rights," a doctrine that would bring disaster on the country.

Chang Chih-tung sent his book, which he had taken great pains to write, to Peking where the Empress Dowager read it and praised the author to the skies. Emperor Kuang Hsu, flattered by Chang's statement about the sanctity of the sovereign's power, pronounced the work capable of "rectifying the mind and improving academic studies" and immediately ordered the Grand Council to distribute copies of the book to all provincial

viceroy, governors and literary chancellors, who were to further popularize it. It was said that, under government sponsorship, the book went into several printings within a mere 10 days, for it expressed views which the diehards could not openly voice and furnished a theoretical basis for their obdurate thinking. The imperialists, who also took a fancy to the book, had it translated into English and published in New York under the title *China's Only Hope*.

But even at that time some readers pointed out that Chang's work inflated the arrogance of the diehards in their attack on the reform movement insofar as it adopted the double-faced tactics of sitting on the fence and in this way confused the new with the old. The book turned out to be an excellent lesson by negative example.

From the Chiang Hsueh Hui to the Pao Kuo Hui, and from Peking through Shanghai to Hunan, all the reform activities of the bourgeois reformists met with the vicious attacks of the feudal diehard forces, resulting in the formation of two opposing camps. The "Westernization" group was at first somewhat different from the diehards, at least in form. But, its cause having gone bankrupt with the Sino-Japanese War, even that formal difference tended to disappear. The "Westernization" group might at times pay lip service to the reform move-

ment, but essentially it sided with the diehards, obstructing and undermining the movement. Chang Chih-tung's action was typical of this force.

During the several years of their confrontation with the diehards the bourgeois reformists carried on heated debates with them, using newspapers, magazines, books, memorials and academic forums. By and large the polemics centred around the following questions: 1) Should the "ancestors' way" be changed? 2) Should the stereotyped essay writing be abolished and Western learning promoted? 3) Should "people's rights" be introduced and constitutional monarchy practised?

The reformists, who posed these questions, answered them all in the affirmative, while the diehards answered them all in the negative. This "yes or no" debate on the three questions, whether in connection with the Chiang Hsueh Hui, the Nan Hsueh Hui or the Pao Kuo Hui, constituted an important round in the ideological struggle of modern China, a bout that left a crack in the diehard traditional concept, "Heaven changeth not, likewise the Way changeth not."

The Hundred-Day Reform

Tension gripped the Ching court in the summer of 1898. Backed by Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, the diehard high officials of her faction, who feared that the reform movement would shake their ruling position and the whole feudal order, were using every possible means to suppress it while waiting for a change of scene. On the other hand, Emperor Kuang Hsu, emboldened by the intense activities of his faction and the reformists, wished to use the reform to shake off Tzu Hsi's control and gain the real power for himself — a wish that waxed increasingly ardent. Two reform supporters, Censor Yang Shen-hsiu and a Reader of the Hanlin Academy named Hsu Chih-ching, twice memorialized Kuang Hsu on the urgency of "formulating a definite state policy," by which they meant imperial decision on the reform plans. In

response, the Emperor summoned to audience the princes and ministers serving in the Grand Council before whom he expressed his resolution to embark on the reform, following up on June 11 by issuing an imperial edict to this effect. He took this chance to reproach a number of diehard bureaucrats for posing as "honest veteran statesmen most concerned for the state" and indulging in endless and empty arguments that all the old established institutions should be upheld and all the new practices got rid of. "Consider the times in which we are living," stated the imperial edict, "and the difficulties under which our country is labouring!" How could things go on in the old way? When times changed, laws and institutions should change accordingly, just as one should wear thin garments in summer and furs in winter, it stated.

The June 11 document was the imperial decree that formally launched the reform. Lasting altogether for 103 days from June 11 to September 21 when the diehards staged their coup, it is known in history as the Hundred-Day Reform.

Two days after the issuing of his first reform edict Emperor Kuang Hsu, pressed by the need to enlist the services of new personalities to facilitate the cause, ordered that Kang Yu-wei be summoned to the Forbidden City for audience on June 16. He also directed that Huang Tsun-hsien and Tan Ssu-

tung be escorted to Peking by the Viceroy of Hupeh and Hunan, and that the Tsungli Yamen make inquiries about Liang Chi-chao and report the results to the throne. The reform had made its first break in the imperial "household law" forbidding the emperor to receive junior officials.

Kang Yu-wei's long cherished dream of being granted an audience by the emperor had at last come true. On the appointed day Emperor Kuang Hsu duly received Kang and talked with him for two hours — an exceptionally long imperial audience. Kang Yu-wei first analysed the situation in which China, due to the encroachment and dismemberment by foreign powers, found itself at the crux of survival or extinction. Unless thorough reforms were carried out, he reasoned, there would be no hope of China's self-strengthening. The Emperor agreed, conceding that reforms were indispensable.

Kang Yu-wei then pointed out that some reform measures had in fact been taken in past years but that these were hit-or-miss and not overall reforms, so that not much had been achieved. Kang maintained that reform meant primarily changing the current laws and institutions, that other measures could at best amount to piecemeal solutions and not reform at all. He urged Kuang Hsu to look into all aspects of the situation and set up a bureau

of institutions. He said that his studies of reforms in many countries had revealed that it had taken Western countries 300 years to become rich and strong while Japan had done this in only three decades. China, he said, could get itself back on its own feet in only three years provided reforms were carried out in earnest. Kuang Hsu told Kang that he considered his memorial (referring to "Memorial on Policy Concerning the General Situation") quite comprehensive.

Kang Yu-wei then posed this question to the Emperor: "Why, since Your Majesty has decided that there must be reforms, has no step been taken in all this time, though the country is headed for its doom?"

At this point Kuang Hsu glanced out the window to make sure there was no eavesdropper, then sighed and said, "I'm bound hand and foot and can't do as I wish."

Kang understood at once and changed his tone. "Your Majesty may first do what lies within Your Majesty's authority. This may not bring a complete, overall change, yet a few major undertakings can also help save China. Most of the ministers, however, being senile, conservative and blind to the course of world events, cannot be relied on to carry out such undertakings." Kang said that while the old yamens might not all be done away with,

new ones should be initiated; that while the incumbent high-ranking mandarins need not all be removed, able officials should be promoted to more important posts. More and more reformists should be received and given official posts with the privilege of submitting memorials directly to the throne, and they should be authorized to carry out the reforms. Kang added that if the old high-ranking mandarins were kept on in lucrative sinecure posts with no fear of losing status, there would be little likelihood of their obstructing the reforms. Emperor Kuang Hsu agreed to every one of Kang's suggestions. The audience presented a vivid picture of a weak-kneed emperor and a reformist gentleman who shied away from struggle!

Kang Yu-wei also told Kuang Hsu his views concerning abolition of the stereotyped essay writing, translation of books, sending persons abroad for study and travel and raising funds for the reform. He made a point of urging the Emperor to issue more imperial edicts prescribing reform, as if these could of themselves guarantee the speedy implementation of the reform measures.

After the audience Emperor Kuang Hsu intended to appoint Kang Yu-wei to a key post where he would be in a better position to promote the reform, but Junglu and Kangyi opposed this. Also, the Emperor himself was afraid of offending Em-

press Dowager Tzu Hsi and therefore merely appointed this chief reformist as a clerk in the Tsungli Yamen, but with the freedom to memorialize the throne direct. Making the best use of this situation, Kang Yu-wei plied Emperor Kuang Hsu with his suggestions. His flair for writing memorials, some under his own name and others for his friends, was given full play and he later compiled a voluminous book entitled *Memorials to the Emperor, 1898*.

In order to further convince the Emperor and better inform him concerning the reforms in general, Kang Yu-wei presented him with one after another of his books: *A History of the Weakening of Turkey, A History of the Partition of Poland, A History of the French Revolution, A Study of the Political Reforms in Germany, A Study of the Political Reforms in England, A Comparative Study of the Nations of the World*, all with prefaces and comments. Kang calculated that the experience of the various capitalist countries would help the Emperor to understand the steps and measures of reform. The books about Turkey and Poland were meant to warn the Emperor of the urgency of the reform lest China suffer the same fate. *A History of the French Revolution*, however, was to enlighten him from a different angle. Though its original manuscript was lost in the ensuing coup d'état, the

preface remained. In this, Kang lamented the "pathetic sights" of the French revolution between 1789 and 1893, baring the inner thoughts of the bourgeois reformists who feared and therefore opposed the revolution. He held that Louis XVI was a "good sovereign" consigned to the guillotine only because he had shelved political reform until the people lost patience and rose against him. The passage discloses the aim of the bourgeois reformists as not simply saving the nation; their reform had a reactionary aspect which was even more striking, and this was to ward off and oppose the revolution, an aspect hostile to the people. And this was true despite the fact that, without the people, all the bourgeois reformists' cries for national salvation would be so much breath wasted.

On July 3 Emperor Kuang Hsu called Liang Chichao to audience and conferred on him the rank of 6th-grade official, placing him in charge of higher education and the Book-Translation Bureau. Liang was so grateful that he described the audience as an imperial favour "unheard of in all the more than 200 years" since the advent of the Ching Dynasty. On August 29 the Emperor ordered Yen Fu, Yang Jui, Liu Kuang-ti and Lin Hsu to prepare for audience and subsequently received them. Bad health prevented Tan Ssu-tung's arrival in Peking until September, when Kuang Hsu received him and said

he might memorialize whenever he deemed any reform measures worthy of introduction. On September 5, by an extraordinary procedure, the Emperor conferred on Tan Ssu-tung, Liu Kuang-ti, Yang Jui and Lin Hsu the rank of 4th-grade officials and appointed them secretaries of the Grand Council with the confidential duty of studying all officials' memorials to the throne and drafting imperial decrees. Of these scholar-officials, known at the time as "the Four Little Councillors," Liu Kuang-ti and Yang Jui were recommended to the throne by Chen Pao-chen, Governor of Hunan, Yang being a disciple and close associate of Chang Chih-tung. Lin Hsu was a student of Kang Yu-wei but for a time worked under Junglu, with whom Kang had instructed Lin to seek connection. Only Tan Ssu-tung was a staunch follower of Kang Yu-wei and consistently loyal to the reform movement.

In fact, in the Ching government dominated by the diehard forces with Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi as their representative, Kang Yu-wei relied solely on Kuang Hsu and a handful of officials belonging to the Emperor's faction. Even among these, some had long since been removed from office by the Empress Dowager, Wen Ting-shih being one. As for the Emperor, he placed his hopes on only a few new personages like Kang Yu-wei, Liang Chi-chao and Tan Ssu-tung, who were ready to fight his bat-

tle. And the only channel through which Kuang Hsu could communicate with his followers on matters concerning the reform was the mass of memorials and written proposals from Kang Yu-wei and his colleagues. These streamed into the Forbidden City, where the Emperor made reform decrees and edicts of them and then sent these flying back out of the palace precincts. More than 110 such imperial documents were issued in the 103 days, the main points of which were:

- 1) Abolition of the stereotyped "eight-legged" essay writing and reform of the civil-service examination system. In all examinations, metropolitan, provincial, prefectural, or county, the stereotyped essays should be replaced with practical forms; examinations at the various levels should consist of practical essays, and articles on subjects of contemporary interest and on the "Four Books"* and "Five Classics." Genuine and practical knowledge, instead of fine calligraphy, should be the criterion for selecting successful candidates. In addition to the required subjects, a special examination in economics of practical everyday use should be instituted so as to recruit capable personnel for the reform.

* Referring to the four Confucian classics, the *Analects* of Confucius, *Mencius*, *Great Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*.

2) Establishment of a modern school system and study of Western learning. This stipulated the founding of the Metropolitan College, which was to incorporate the existing official publishing house and the Book-Translation Bureau. All old-fashioned learning centres should be converted into schools with both Chinese and Western disciplines. Such learning centres at the provincial capital level should become colleges; those at the prefectural city level, middle schools; and those at the sub-prefectural and county town level, primary schools. As for memorial shrines and temples, which were not listed in the official records, these were all to be converted into schools. The decrees also ordered the establishment of specialized schools for railway engineering, mining, agriculture, tea production and medicine.

3) The sending of people abroad for study and travel. Any of the princes or nobles interested in contemporary affairs and wishing to improve themselves intellectually might be sent abroad. Specifically, students should be selected from various provinces and sent to study in colleges, secondary schools and mining institutes in Japan.

4) Encouragement of writing and invention. Writers of new books and inventors of new working methods and new products should be awarded or granted substantive posts commensurate with

their ability, provided their creations were of practical use. Inventors of new products should enjoy patent rights within certain time limits.

5) Encouragement of journalism and expression of opinions through memorials to the throne. Copies of newspapers published in Shanghai and other places carrying accounts of current affairs should be sent in for the emperor's perusal. The object of the newspapers being the spread of general knowledge, they should be allowed to comment freely on all current matters, both domestic and foreign, with no restrictions set. Permission for the publication of newspapers in Peking was granted. Both officials and citizens were allowed to address the emperor, with obstruction from government officials strictly forbidden.

6) Protection and encouragement of agriculture, industry and commerce. A bureau of agriculture, industry and commerce should be set up in the capital, with branch offices in all provinces. Both Chinese and Western farming methods should be employed for the optimum use of the vast tracts of arable land in the provinces which had yet to be fully utilized. The Tsungli Yamen should draw up regulations stipulating awards for successful manufacturing enterprises. Commercial schools, commercial journals and chambers of commerce should be founded, first in big cities such as Shang-

hai and Hankow, and then in other places. Tea and silk being the main export products, specialized factories should be erected to process them by Western methods so as to increase their export.

7) Railway construction and mining. The building of the vital Lukouchiao-Hankow Railway line should be begun without delay. The Canton-Hankow and the Shanghai-Nanking lines should also be speedily built. As a tremendous amount of work was involved in railway construction and in mining, a general administration should be created with headquarters in Peking, with all provinces required to refer the relevant matters to it for unified management.

8) Inauguration of an extensive postal service and abolition of courier stations. Post offices should be set up in Peking and at all trading ports, and also in the various provinces, prefectures, sub-prefectures and counties. The Tsungli Yamen and the Board of War should jointly consider how the courier stations should be dissolved after the inauguration of the post offices.

9) Revision of office regulations, simplification of administrative set-up and abolition of sinecure posts. All metropolitan boards and other government bodies should examine their rules and regulations and replace all ambiguous, complicated and impracticable articles with simple, concise rules

which should then be conscientiously enforced. The Chan Shih Fu (an office serving the imperial family) and the Office of Transmission handling memorials to the emperor should be dissolved and their duties absorbed by other yamens. The governorships of Hupeh, Yunnan and Kwangtung where provincial viceroys and governors had offices in the same city should be abolished, the duties performed by these governors to be taken over by the local viceroys.

10) Reform of the public finance system and compilation of state budgets and financial statements. Readjustments should be made and relevant regulations worked out regarding taxes, *likin* (inland transit tolls), military expenses and revenues and expenditures. Annual budgets and financial statements should be prepared. The Board of Revenue should list the annual revenues and expenditures and submit monthly reports regarding their fulfilment.

11) Intensified training of army and navy, and introduction of new drill methods. Foreign drill should be adopted for the provincial forces and the Eight Banner Corps, and a new military system along Western lines worked out. All arms and munitions manufactured by the provincial machinery plants should be standardized. Irregular forces should be disbanded and only an efficient army of

physically fit men maintained. Training should be energetic. More men should be enrolled in naval institutes in the coastal provinces and the number of training vessels increased so as to train competent naval personnel.

12) Provision for the Bannermen to make their own living. Privileges whereby the Bannermen lived on state allowances should be abolished and arrangements made for them to engage in intellectual, agricultural, handicraft, industrial and trading pursuits.

The reform measures listed above appear extremely broad in scope, covering political, economic, military, cultural and educational matters. Some were aimed at abolishing the old, but more were designed to introduce the new. Still, all were but piecemeal reforms to embellish the moribund feudal system with a few drooping capitalist garlands.

The constitutional monarchy with so-called joint rule of sovereign and subjects, which the bourgeois reformists had fervently advocated for so many years in their attempt to share power with the emperor — chieftain of the landlord class — was a pervasive part of their programme. During the reform period Kang Yu-wei wrote a memorial for Grand Secretary Kuoputungwu, urging the introduction of constitutional monarchy as soon as pos-

sible by adopting a constitution and convening a national assembly. This was submitted to Emperor Kuang Hsu, who did not, however, issue a reform decree on the matter. Nor was there any response to the subsequent memorials presented by Kang Yu-wei and Kuoputungwu individually, again requesting the Emperor to emulate the West and convoke a national assembly where able people might gather to discuss state affairs. Emperor Kuang Hsu now demonstrated that he had in fact his own criterion in deciding what to accept and what not to, and this criterion was whether the proposal tended to strengthen or weaken the power of the throne. His profession that he was willing even to give up imperial power if only this served the national interests was just so much window-dressing. He let the cat out of the bag when he said that he “would rather abdicate” than be “deprived of the sovereign power.”

It is evident that even the unsystematic reforms decreed by the Emperor were mostly paper work. But Kang Yu-wei and his like attached prime importance to imperial decrees, imagining that with the given word of the emperor — the highest feudal authority — what was on paper would be translated forthwith into reality. The diehard forces represented by the Empress Dowager, however, never took Emperor Kuang Hsu very seriously,

though he had been on the throne for many years. As for the viceroys and governors, only Chen Pao-chen, Governor of Hunan, lifted a finger to carry out the reform measures. The others who took a wait-and-see attitude feigned compliance while actually opposing the reforms. It is true that Emperor Kuang Hsu commended Chen Pao-chen while reprimanding Liu Kun-yi, Viceroy of the Liang-kiang provinces, and Tan Chung-lin, Viceroy of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, who viewed the reform with indifference. But none of this cut any ice with the cunning, feudal bureaucrats.

The Diehards' Coup

With the start of the reform as decreed by the imperial edict of June 11, 1898, the scramble for power further intensified between Emperor Kuang Hsu and his faction on the one hand and Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi and hers on the other. While making use of his imperial authority to issue a stream of reform decrees bearing his vermilion seal, Kuang Hsu enlisted the services of a number of new personalities and brushed aside several conservative high-ranking mandarins who opposed the reform. Tzu Hsi and her faction felt extremely menaced by this move. She had been thinking for several years of deposing Kuang Hsu, since this hand-picked boy emperor of hers, now fledged, had become increasingly recalcitrant. At the end of her tether now, she began hand in glove with the die-

hard Junglu and his ilk to contemplate taking specific steps towards staging a coup d'état.

Three days after the first reform edict Emperor Kuang Hsu, whose hand was forced by Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, chieftain of the diehards, issued three decrees in his own name, decrees that marked the beginning of the end of the reform movement. One of these dismissed Weng Tung-ho as Associate Grand Secretary and President of the Board of Revenue and had him sent back to his native Kiangsu where he was to retire into private life. Another directed that all officials and officers of and above the second rank should, upon receiving their new appointments, return thanks to Tzu Hsi in person. The third recalled the Viceroy of Chihli Province, Wang Wen-shao, to the capital and ordered Grand Secretary Junglu transferred to succeed him.

These three decrees cleared the way for the coup d'état by the diehard forces. Weng Tung-ho, now Emperor Kuang Hsu's only trusted minister and a leading member of the Emperor's faction, acted as liaison between him and the reformists. For this he was accused of "worming his way into the favour of His Majesty," "grasping power and acting presumptuously." His expulsion isolated Emperor Kuang Hsu. Also, etiquette forbade Tzu Hsi from receiving high officials, since she had stepped down

from regency. Now, however, throwing the imperial "household law" to the winds, she ordered the newly appointed ranking officials and officers to offer thanks for her imperial favours. She meant to keep the power of official appointments in her hands in preparation for resuming the regency. Instead of keeping her right-hand man and greatest confidant Junglu at her side as Grand Secretary, Tzu Hsi had transferred him to Tientsin to serve as Viceroy of Chihli. The reason for this was that in his new capacity Junglu could command the three corps of the Peiyang (Northern) army—the Kansu Corps under Tung Fu-hsiang, the Wuyi Corps under Nieh Shih-cheng and the modern trained corps under Yuan Shih-kai. With such substantial military power, Junglu was able to control the political scene in Peking.

Before Junglu left Peking, Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi had the understanding with him that Emperor Kuang Hsu should accompany her to Tientsin that autumn, ostensibly to review the troops. There she would compel Kuang Hsu to abdicate by armed force, after which she would place on the throne a new emperor completely under her thumb. Not content with controlling the three corps of the Peiyang army, she went a step further and took over the guards of Peking city and the Summer Palace. She appointed Chungli, President of the

Board of Punishments as concurrent Acting Commandant of the Peking Garrison, Huaitapu commandant of the Summer Palace guards, and Kangyi Commander of the Chienjui Regiment, all of whom were her devoted lackeys. The Peking Garrison whose chief, also called the Nine-Gate Commandant, was feared even by officials of the first and second rank, had the duty of guarding the capital's nine city gates, including Chengyang, Chungwen and Hsuanwu. As part of the Imperial Guards, the Chienjui Regiment acted like a gendarmerie in direct control of Peking.

At that time, while Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi was in retirement at the Summer Palace, Emperor Kuang Hsu stayed in the Forbidden City. He made a point of going, as though obediently, to the Summer Palace to pay his respects to Tzu Hsi, taking these occasions to spy on her. During the 103 days of reform he paid her no less than a dozen such visits. Tzu Hsi, on her part, posted her trusted eunuchs about the precincts of the Forbidden City to keep a watchful eye on the actions of Emperor Kuang Hsu. Everyone leaving or entering the grounds was searched, including even imperial princes and court ministers. In addition, the Commandant of Tzu Hsi's Peking Garrison dispatched men of the Eight Banner Corps to guard the Forbidden City, and any person or movement consid-

ered suspicious was immediately reported to her. Thus the Empress Dowager kept herself fully informed of all that took place at Emperor Kuang Hsu's palace.

The reform was a definite threat to the interests of certain persons. Abolishing the stereotyped essay writing, for instance, maddened a bevy of scholars who had staked their careers on it, regarding the stereotype as the open sesame to official life. Feeling its abolition as a thorn in their flesh, they could not agree and made common cause to attack the reform measures. Tseng Lien, a Hunan provincial graduate, went so far as to memorialize the Emperor, demanding the death penalty for Kang Yu-wei and Liang Chi-chao. In the wake of the order closing down the unregistered shrines and temples and also the old-fashioned learning centres, many among the local despots and bad gentry and priests, deprived now of a means to deceive and blackmail people, agitated against the reform cause. With some redundant yamens closed, quite a number of officials who had lost their lucrative posts felt like strays and hated the reform intensely. And so it was that all the evil and declining forces rallied round Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi for a joint counter-attack, aiming to kill the reform movement.

Early September 1898 saw a further heating up in the power struggle between Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi and Emperor Kuang Hsu. Kuang Hsu was determined to assert his authority as a sovereign by breaking the diehards' resistance to the reform. On September 4, in a fit of anger, he ordered the dismissal of six high-ranking mandarins, including the two Presidents of the Board of Rites, Huaitapu and Hsu Ying-kuei.

This act was precipitated by Under-Secretary of the Board of Rites Wang Chao writing a memorial to Emperor Kuang Hsu denouncing the conservatives and suggesting that the Emperor visit Japan to learn its experience in political reform. Huaitapu, Hsu Ying-kuei and others refused to transmit the memorial. Refusing to give up, Wang protested that this was a violation of the Emperor's granting of freedom to memorialize. Wang said that if they really meant to withhold his memorial he would deliver it direct to the Censorate for transmission. Hsu Ying-kuei replied by making a false countercharge against Wang Chao, claiming that by suggesting that Kuang Hsu visit Japan Wang was putting the Emperor in danger, as that country was infested with assassins. He accused Wang of plotting to stir up trouble in the yamen and making a mountain out of a molehill. Emperor Kuang Hsu considered that Huaitapu, Hsu Ying-kuei and their

colleagues were abusing their power in regard to a subordinate's memorial. He consequently removed the six offending mandarins from office and, praising Wang Chao for his "laudable courage," promoted him. Huaitapu's wife, a lady-in-waiting to Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi at the Summer Palace who had become a favourite of hers, pleaded with the Empress Dowager, but the latter only bade the couple to be patient for the time being.

On September 7, 1898 Emperor Kuang Hsu dismissed Li Hung-chang and Chinghsin from further attendance at the Tsungli Yamen for obstructing the reform.

Seeing that their opportunity had come, the Empress Dowager's followers plunged into action. Huaitapu and an in-law of Li Hung-chang's named Yang Chung-yi hurried to Tientsin to connive with Junglu. After the issuing on September 14 of the imperial edict stipulating that the Bannermen earn their own living, the Manchu nobles fabricated a pretext for sabotage. Lishan, Comptroller of the Nei Wu Fu (an office charged with imperial palace affairs), led his Manchu subordinates to present their case before Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi at the Summer Palace, accusing Emperor Kuang Hsu of turning against the Manchus and imploring the Empress Dowager to take over the reins of government. The conspiratorial activity between Tzu Hsi

and Junglu, which was reaching an ever higher key, was clearly discerned by this time, with Tzu Hsi's confidants and favourites shuttling between Peking and Tientsin. Junglu took the emergency measure of transferring Nieh Shih-cheng's corps to Tientsin and Tung Fu-hsiang's to Changhsintien, 20 kilometres southwest of Peking. The coup was taking shape.

Sensing the gravity of the situation, Emperor Kuang Hsu on September 14 handed down a secret imperial edict through Yang Jui stating: "The Throne is in danger. You — Kang Yu-wei, Yang Jui, Lin Hsu, Tan Ssu-tung and Liu Kuang-ti — should take secret measures posthaste to save me." On the 17th another secret edict was relayed by Lin Hsu. Under the pretext of sending Kang Yu-wei to Shanghai to superintend matters concerning an official newspaper, it ordered him by all means to "leave without a moment's delay." The Emperor's intention was that Kang should be spared so that he could render his services to the throne at some future time.

Why did Emperor Kuang Hsu, who had pleaded help for himself in his first secret edict, three days later urge his would-be protector to "leave without a moment's delay"? What happened was that, after reading the first edict, Yang Jui was so frightened at the thought of imminent disaster that he simply

put it aside and it was only after the second edict was handed down that he relayed it, together with the first, to Kang Yu-wei through Lin Hsu. Worried and perplexed, Kuang Hsu had been waiting vainly for these people to come up with a miraculous plan to save him. But as the situation intensified, he changed his mind and urgently ordered Kang Yu-wei to take speedy flight.

The two secret edicts so upset Kang Yu-wei, Tan Ssu-tung and their associates that they burst into tears. How, after all, were these gentlemen going to work out "secret measures" "posthaste" to save their "sovereign"? It turned out that they staked the fate not only of their "sovereign" but also of themselves and of their reform movement on the foreign legations in Peking and on such a person as the feudal warlord Yuan Shih-kai, who had under his command the modern trained corps of the Peiyang army.

On the morning of September 19, after packing for his journey, Kang Yu-wei hurried to look up Timothy Richard to seek his help. Richard took Kang to the British minister in Peking, little expecting that the diplomat would still be on summer vacation at the Peitaiho beach resort in north-eastern Hopei Province. Kang next went to see the Japanese politician Hirobumi Ito, lately arrived in China. He begged Ito to use his good offices to

mitigate the Empress Dowager's pressure on Emperor Kuang Hsu. Then, having done everything he could to show his loyalty to Kuang Hsu, Kang Yu-wei fled Peking in disguise.

As to seeking the aid of the British and Japanese imperialists, although Emperor Kuang Hsu did not record this recourse in black and white in his secret edicts, it was tacitly understood. For he once verbally instructed Lin Hsu to look to Britain and Japan for help. Earlier, when Timothy Richard arrived in Peking from Shanghai, Kang Yu-wei suggested to the Emperor that Richard be made an adviser to the throne with ministerial rank. Richard, in return, assured Kang that he would approach the British government to obtain support for the Ching court. Emperor Kuang Hsu was of course informed of all this. Also, Kang Yu-wei had already established contact with the Japanese minister Gonsuke Hayashi and, when in the tense atmosphere of September 14 Hirobumi Ito came with ulterior motives to Peking as a "traveller," Kang and his associates went so far as to request him to give directions for China's reform in the capacity of "guest minister." In receiving Ito, Kuang Hsu openly courted Japan by asking him to tell China unreservedly the concrete measures his country had taken in its Meiji Restoration.

But there was really nothing strange in Emperor Kuang Hsu and Kang Yu-wei looking upon the British and Japanese imperialists as their "saviours." For these imperialists had long been thinking of grooming Kuang Hsu to their needs, and Kang Yu-wei and his colleagues were the very ones they intended to use to this end.

But how did Emperor Kuang Hsu and Kang Yu-wei seek help from another "saviour" of theirs, the feudal warlord Yuan Shih-kai, who was as yet keeping a prudently low profile?

Yuan Shih-kai, onetime member of the Chiang Hsueh Hui society, had at this time under his command a 7,000-strong modern trained military force stationed at HsiaoChan, 35 kilometres southeast of Tientsin and not far from Peking. After Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi's Tientsin military review plot had leaked out, Kang Yu-wei planned to draw Yuan to Emperor Kuang Hsu's side to help deal with Junglu. Kang sent his faithful pupil Hsu Jen-lu to contact Yuan at HsiaoChan, meanwhile submitting a closed memorial to the Emperor through Tan Ssu-tung, recommending Yuan. The Emperor accepted Kang's recommendation and summoned Yuan to the capital where, on September 16, at the critical time following the sending out of his first secret edict calling for help, Kuang Hsu received Yuan in audience, gave him the honorary

rank of vice-president of a metropolitan board and placed him in charge of army training.

Yuan Shih-kai then went to call upon the diehard Grand Councillors Kangyi, Yulu, Wang Wen-shao *et al.* to gain the understanding of the Empress Dowager's faction. He even asked Wang for instructions as to whether it was necessary to submit a memorial begging to be excused from the imperial favour. Wang replied that it was not, that it was a "special favour" which he could not decline without betraying himself. Yuan Shih-kai accordingly memorialized Kuang Hsu, expressing his gratitude for the high honour bestowed upon him and promising to do his best in return.

Taken in by Yuan Shih-kai's professions of loyalty, Kang Yu-wei and his followers decided, upon receipt of Emperor Kuang Hsu's secret edicts, to divide their tasks, and sent Tan Ssu-tung to contact Yuan. It was true that Lin Hsu warned Tan in a short poem that such an "ambitious man" as Yuan Shih-kai should not be trusted too lightly. But circumstances were that there was no one else but Yuan to turn to. So, praying for the best, they pinned all their hopes on him as "the only man who can save His Majesty."

On the evening of the 18th Tan Ssu-tung called on Yuan Shih-kai at his residence. After sounding him out on the plotted military review in Tientsin,

he unreservedly told him the aim of his visit and the details of the mission Yuan was to be entrusted with. It was to kill Junglu in a military encounter and then surround the Summer Palace, residence of the Empress Dowager. This would save Kuang Hsu and win Yuan a great merit. Stroking his neck, Tan added, "If you don't want to save His Majesty but instead inform the Empress Dowager, who would then have my head, you would surely become a big official." Sly crook that he was, Yuan Shih-kai affected great agitation as he replied, "What sort of person do you take me for? His Majesty is the divine lord of us all. I, as well as you, am duty-bound to ensure the safety of His Majesty. . . . As for the troop review, should His Majesty in the moment of danger make his way into my camp in good time, why, killing Junglu would be as easy as killing a dog!" As though to make every preparation for carrying out his mission, Yuan made the excuse to return to Tientsin to see to some personnel matters and stock up on munitions since the situation was so urgent. Tan Ssu-tung, satisfied with the apparent success of his visit, took leave of his new "comrade-in-arms" late that night, adding a few words of advice before his departure.

On the 20th Emperor Kuang Hsu again summoned Yuan Shih-kai to his presence. Replying to

his inquiries, Yuan said in a half-hearted tone, "It is true that many among the new personalities are men of great courage and far-sightedness. But they lack experience in doing things meticulously. In case something went wrong, it might harm Your Majesty and that would become a most serious matter. Therefore I beg Your Majesty to take strict precautions." This was obviously intended to clear Yuan of having a hand in the affair that was to come. That very evening Yuan Shih-kai hurried back to Tientsin, proceeding directly to Junglu's yamen and disclosing to him every detail of Tan Ssu-tung's plan.

As Lenin said, **"The supporters of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realize that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is maintained by the forces of some ruling classes."*** The reformists, and Tan Ssu-tung himself, were betrayed precisely because they did not, and could not, understand the necessity of seeking the support of that mighty force — the masses of the people — capable of smashing the old system. Thus it was that they were fooled by the defenders of the old order.

* "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism," *Selected Works*, FLPH, Moscow, 1952, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 80.

Junglu panicked on learning of Tan Ssu-tung's scheme and rushed to Peking by special train. Hurrying to the Summer Palace, he reported everything to Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi. Yuan Shih-kai had rendered a great service to Tzu Hsi as well as to Junglu. As a result, Yuan, with his "remarkable talent that deserves to be given full scope," gradually established himself firmly in the good graces of the diehard forces headed by the Empress Dowager and was soon promoted to the key posts of Chihli viceroyalty and, concurrently, high commissionership of the Peiyang administration. Having a hand in the reform movement and then selling out the reformists to further his own ends — such was the first ugly act staged by Yuan Shih-kai in the history of modern China.

On the early morning of September 21 Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi hastily left the Summer Palace and proceeded to the Forbidden City. Rushing into the Emperor's apartments, she shouted at him, "I've kept you on the throne for all these twenty years and more, but still you listen to artful minions and want to murder me!" Emperor Kuang Hsu sputtered that he indeed had no such idea, but the Empress Dowager cursed him roundly. "You silly ass! Without me would you have had your day!" With that she snatched away all the imperial documents and had the Emperor conveyed

to an island called Ocean Terrace in Chungnanhai Lake, where he was placed under house arrest. Then she forged an edict in the Emperor's name imploring the Empress Dowager's tutelage. And so Tzu Hsi took back into her own hands the reins of the Ching government.

When the coup struck, Liang Chi-chao, Tan Ssu-tung and others were still gathered in the house of Timothy Richard, consulting with this imperialist element on how to turn the tide. It was decided that Richard should look up the British minister in Peking, Yung Wing should find the American minister, and Liang Chi-chao should seek out the Japanese minister. But the British minister was not yet back from Peitaiho, while the American diplomat was on vacation in the Western Hills outside Peking. Liang Chi-chao was lucky enough to find the Japanese minister Gonsuke Hayashi, but all he got from him was some diplomatic mouthing of "sympathy." For, with an eye on the turn of events, the imperialists tried to keep a foot in each camp and have their hands free to pull the strings from behind the scenes.

Meanwhile the diehards staging the coup tried to round up the reformists at one swoop. On the very day of their action Chungli called out his troops to surround the Nanhai Guild building in Peking and arrested Kang Kuang-jen. Kang Yu-

wei had already escaped from the capital and, under British protection, managed to shake off his pursuers and reach Hongkong. Liang Chi-chao, shielded by the Japanese, fled Peking in disguise and made his way to Japan. On September 22 Junglu mustered 3,000 soldiers, who blocked all the city gates and halted traffic in an effort to hunt down the reformists and Emperor Kuang Hsu's followers. Quite a few were arrested and thrown into prison. On the 28th Kang Kuang-jen, Yang Shen-hsiu, Yang Jui, Lin Hsu, Tan Ssu-tung and Liu Kuang-ti were executed. In face of death, these reformists, known in history as the "Six Martyrs of the 1898 Reform Movement," acquitted themselves as differently as they did in their respective careers. A large number of officials who had taken part in or merely gravitated towards the reform were either cashiered or exiled. Thus the diehards' coup d'état strangled the political reform movement initiated by the bourgeois reformists.

As Chairman Mao said, **"In old China it was a crime to talk about reforms, and offenders would be beheaded or imprisoned."*** Devoted to the reform movement, Tan Ssu-tung met the same fate, and he was one of those who faced death bravely.

* "Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work," *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, FLP, Peking, 1971, p. 488.

Before his arrest people advised him to seek refuge in Japan, but he refused. Handing his manuscripts over to Liang Chi-chao, who had decided to go to that country, he said, "If none escape with their lives, there will be none to plan the future. If no one is ready to lay down his life, how can the sacred, illustrious Sovereign's kindness be repaid?" Awaiting arrest, he wrote in a poem breathing a death-defying spirit, "Holding my sword I smile up at the sky." But the question remained: For whom, for what, was he "holding" his "sword"? The answer could only be: For bourgeois reformism, for his "sacred, illustrious Sovereign" whose "kindness" he was ready to repay with his own blood. This was dictated by his class nature. The shedding of his blood symbolized not the commencement but the abortion of the political reform movement, revealing the reformist road as a blind alley.

With the diehards back in the saddle, all the reform measures were repealed except for the Metropolitan College, which was the sole survivor.

Reformism, a Blind Alley

The failure of the Reform Movement of 1898 demonstrated that the reformist path can lead only to failure, that it is a blind alley.

This reform movement, the first ever attempted by the Chinese bourgeoisie at its debut in the political arena, developed on the basis of the burgeoning of capitalism in China after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. Chinese capitalism arose and grew largely out of two social forces: 1) a number of landlords and bureaucrats who became capitalists or concurrently capitalists with the development of civilian industries which were run by the "Westernization" group. Such enterprises developed from being "government-supervised, merchant-operated" to "government and merchant-operated," and then to "merchant-operated"; 2) a small number of handicraft workshop owners or

small and middle merchants who became capitalists through running factories. In the second half of the 19th century the former occupied a predominant position, while the latter were mainly overseas Chinese. The bourgeois political reform movement launched by Kang Yu-wei, Liang Chi-chao and others precisely represented the demands of the former, and these reformists appeared on the scene as the political representatives of this social force. Intellectuals and scholar-officials of the landlord class, they were themselves in the process of transformation into the bourgeoisie. Their economic status, political demands and cultural background determined their inability ever to go beyond bourgeois reformism.

A reformist movement is at the outset reactionary by nature, for it always opposes the revolution and attempts to ameliorate social contradictions. While preaching reform the reformists fear the mass movements, and this is their incurable disease. They fear the revolutionary mass movements more than they fear the diehard reactionary forces. While promoting reform, Kang Yu-wei and Liang Chi-chao time and again referred to the peasant uprising at Chintien which sparked the Taiping Revolution as a lesson, and regarded the recurring "popular riots" as warning signs. Taking a dim view of revolutionary struggles, they tried to pre-

vent such "dreadful" outbreaks with reformist tactics. This alienated them from the masses of the people, so much so that they could not obtain an ally truly capable of defeating the old forces; all they could do was to seek support from the reform-inclined intellectuals and scholar-officials of the landlord class and push their reform under the authority of their sovereign. To perform the arduous task of social and political reforms by relying on such people as those mentioned above, on the efforts of a handful, can be no more than a gentleman's pipe-dream.

In the minds of the bourgeois reformists of that time the future of the nation suffering from stepped up imperialist aggression was a matter of paramount concern. Kang Yu-wei's seven memorials to the throne were written and presented in the tumultuous storms of three national crises — in the wake of the Sino-French War, at the time of the Treaty of Shimonoseki and in face of imminent partition of the country by the imperialist powers. This shows the close link between Kang's activities and the ever-worsening national disaster. It was under the stunning impact of the Sino-Japanese War that Liang Chi-chao, Tan Ssu-tung, Yen Fu and others began to turn their attention to the current situation, concern themselves with the future of the nation, advocate reform and actually take

part in the reform movement. After a long period of groping, and at a bitter cost, they came to the common understanding that China could be saved only by introducing reform, and that the only way to do this was to learn from foreign countries. While it is true that they might learn something from foreign countries, the questions arise: how, what, and what for — for the purpose of really coping with imperialist aggression, or just seizing upon something to fall back on slavishly? The bourgeois reformists imagined that they needed only to transplant foreign things on to Chinese soil and remould the domestic administration accordingly to make the country independent and strong, and that this would naturally stave off foreign invasion. They even attempted to seek the help of some imperialist countries to oppose others, never realizing that without opposing imperialism as such China could not introduce any internal reform on its own. Unable to see through the two-faced imperialist game of splitting and exploiting China while making use of it, they mistook the imperialist Britain, Japan and United States for “friendly countries” ready to help China in its reform. All this determined the reformists’ diplomatic line as one running counter to their demand for saving China, a line which, needless to say,

could never lead China out of the blind alley of semi-colonialism.

We say that reformism is reactionary in nature, not only because it opposes the revolution, but because it employs palliative tactics to preserve the old order and postpone its doom. Though somewhat different from diehard conservatism which desperately clings to the old order, reformism is highly deceptive. This aspect remains true despite the bourgeois reformists’ fearlessness of imprisonment or death in their struggle against the diehards.

However, in the specific historical conditions of China at the end of the 19th century, the bourgeois revolutionaries represented by Sun Yat-sen had just come to the fore, popular struggles were still on a perceptual and spontaneous level, and the proletariat had not yet stepped on to the stage of history. China was faced at the time with the grim reality of imperialism attempting to subjugate it, while the feudal Ching government was utterly obdurate, rotten and backward. In trying to change this state of affairs and campaigning for the abolition of the stereotyped essay writing, the development of industry and commerce and the introduction of a certain amount of constitutionalism, the bourgeois reformists did strike at the fetters of feudal rule and ideology. They let a breath of fresh air and a ray of light into the secluded, oppressive

Chinese society. Taken in the historical context, this can be said to be somewhat progressive in character. As Lenin says, **“Every reform is a reform (and not a reactionary and not a conservative measure) only insofar as it constitutes a certain step, a ‘stage,’ for the better.”** But every reform is introduced *“in order to stem, weaken, or extinguish the revolutionary struggle, in order to fragment the strength and energy of the revolutionary classes, to befog their consciousness, etc.”** The Reform Movement of 1898 launched by China’s bourgeois reformists, though reactionary by its very nature, was precisely such a “step” and “stage.”

Hanging on to an emperor and alienating themselves from the masses determined the utter weakness of the bourgeois reformists. At the first brush with the joint counter-attack of the diehard feudal forces they found themselves fighting a losing battle and had to beat a hasty retreat. The so-called new learning picked up from the arsenal of the Western bourgeoisie was also shattered and lost its spirit under the blows of the enslaving ideology of imperialism and the “back to the ancients” ideology of the feudal class. However, **“at the time, the ideology of the new learning played a revolutionary role in fighting the Chinese feudal ideology, and it served**

* “How Not to Write Resolutions,” 1907.

the bourgeois-democratic revolution of the old period.”* During the Reform Movement of 1898 the new learning appeared as a counter to the old order, and in this struggle it caused quite a stir in the political life of the whole country. Though the struggle was a rather limited one, it could not but make its influence felt in the ideological sphere. This meant that after the 1898 Reform Movement there was a growing demand for democracy, and increasing numbers of people, now dubious about the old learning, turned to embrace the new. The diehard forces represented by Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi might abolish the various reform measures, but they could not liquidate the ideological influence of the struggle between the old and the new. Soon afterwards the bourgeois-democratic revolution led by Sun Yat-sen began to develop apace.

After the failure of the 1898 Reform Movement some among the intellectuals who had joined in the political and social activities of the time began to see the light and, abandoning reformism, joined the bourgeois-democratic revolution for the overthrow of the Ching government. Even after their escape, however, Kang Yu-wei and Liang Chi-chao, repre-

* Mao Tsetung, “On New Democracy,” *Selected Works*, FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. II, p. 371.

representatives of the bourgeois reformists, drew no lessons from the failure of their movement. Refusing to come to their senses and change their old ways, they clung for dear life to bourgeois reformism even after it was already bankrupt. They persisted in their monarchist stand, madly opposed the revolution and eventually degenerated into downright counter-revolutionaries.

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