

was called for at his apartment and treated to endless trials; in short, everything was done to put him into good humor. That has long since ceased. Since the automobile manufacturers have ten customers to every car (the result of the shortage in materials), they are interested only in customers who decide quickly and who pay in cash. Whoever does not pay in cash has no chance at all. Not so long ago anyone paying cash for a car was an exception. Today, the man who believes he will get one on the installment plan is the phenomenon.

The increasing shortage in goods and raw materials, the increased demand for workers, which has grown with the expansion of German economy in general and, finally, the large

profits made by the armament industries have created a complete change in business procedure. The law of supply and demand is completely amended since there are more customers than goods. Today it is the salesman who dictates his terms, and not the buyer, and today it is the customer who has to defer. In order to have an elevator repaired, one has to make twenty telephone calls. When a repairman finally appears and deigns to make the repairs, he makes it clear that he is performing an inestimable favor.

That may sound ludicrous but in practice it is not. It is not so simple to become accustomed to the complete change in values which has taken place.

### III. ARE CHINESE INCOHERENT?

By ERWIN REIFLER

- From the *People's Tribune*, Chungking Nationalist Fortnightly

THIS article proposes to attempt to answer a vast body of recent criticism of the Chinese language as clumsy and inadequate. Such criticism has come from such eminent sinologues as Professor Heinrich Hackmann, of Amsterdam, and Professor Wilhelm Grube, of Berlin.

Professor Hackmann, in his *Chinese Philosophy*, writes: "There can be no doubt that the systematics of the Chinese are deficient. If one asks whether China has produced important philosophical thinkers, everybody with judgment will immediately answer "Yes." If, however, the question is put like this "Has China produced peculiar, complete systems of thought like those of men like Plato

or Kant?" hardly anybody will confidently affirm this question. . . . Professor Hackmann has found as one of the chief reasons for this phenomenon the peculiar Chinese language and writing.

The first and most immediate expression of the human spirit is, according to Professor Hackmann, the language. The whole future culture, especially the thinking process, is based on this fundament. And then he explains the distinguishing characteristics of the Chinese language; the monosyllability of the words, the simple consonants, the small number of finals, speaks of the monotony of expressions, the extremely small number of words with different pro-

nunciations, and the something more than 400 sound groups in the Mandarin dialect. 'Such a limited and unmalleable material has to serve as a means of expression of a highly developed world of ideas with its wealth of objects and thought-relations and conditions. How is this possible?' After speaking about the many meanings of every Chinese word and the modifications brought about by the Chinese tones, which raises the number of the 400 Chinese words to about 1,400, he says that even then every word still has a great many different basic meanings and there is still much opportunity for misunderstanding.

Professor Grube, in his *History of Chinese Literature*, writes: 'Considering furthermore how powerfully the distinction of the grammatical genders (in German, etc.) alone has stimulated the inclination for the personification of inanimate objects, one will understand how much the absence of this category in the Chinese language must have hindered the free activity of phantasy.' As for the written language, Professor Grube alleges that its complexity and slowness must be responsible for the brevity of early Chinese literature.

In defense of the Chinese language, I must, first, point to the fact that the modern Chinese spoken language is used in all universities, in the courts of law, in all Government and private offices by Chinese officials and businessmen—briefly everywhere where our spoken languages are used—with exactly the same efficiency and clearness. Any foreign thought, however primitive or abstract, any idea old and new, any technical term can be expressed in spoken Chinese with exactly

the same clearness as in any other language of a civilized nation. Whosoever expresses another view, whether foreigner or Chinese, simply does not know enough about it. If there are any misunderstandings in the spoken Chinese language of any dialect or between Chinese of the same or from different dialect centers, they are misunderstandings which happen also in our countries under the same conditions.

## II

Furthermore, there can be no doubt for any real connoisseur of Chinese literature that the Chinese are able to express everything as clearly and precisely in writing as we do, and there is no doubt that they were able to do so also in ancient times. As for the obscurity of classical and even some later literature, everybody knows that there are also in the Bible, in the original text and also in the different translations, passages which are doubtful or admit of different interpretations. Also, Nietzsche's writings leave much for the imagination and even Goethe's and Shakespeare's masterpieces have given ample opportunities for interpretations of increasing depth. On the other hand, many modern Chinese books on philosophy, even when written in classical Chinese, leave nothing to be desired in clarity and precision of expression.

There is no truth in the claim that the Chinese verb does not conjugate and that the Chinese noun is not declined. The different persons are expressed not as in Latin and Greek, etc., by adding original personal pronouns as suffixes to verbs, nor as in many modern languages by doing the same and moreover putting the in-

dependent personal pronouns before the verbs, but rather—as in English—by putting the pronouns before the verbs, only, however, when it is absolutely necessary for clarity. The tenses are expressed by adding certain words before or after the verbs, but again only if it is necessary. The same is true of the voices and of the moods, which are also expressed by words before or after verbs.

The same holds true for nouns and adjectives. It is true that Chinese has no rules of accordance between subject and predicate, but English has not got them either; yet there is never a misunderstanding either in English or in Chinese. There is a quite distinct declension of Chinese nouns in the modern spoken and written language. It is therefore not true that Chinese only knows simple ideas which are not further transformed by grammar.

And as for the argument which not only Professor Hackmann but also many English advance, that the Chinese were unable to produce a philosopher such as Kant because of the deficiency of the Chinese language and writing, may I here be again permitted to quote from the *History of Chinese Literature* of Professor Grube, who says in the preface of his book: 'Quite recently a well-known English author, who has mastered German with great facility, has declared that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* would have been a thing of impossibility in the English language. It is not difficult to find the reason for it; it lies less in the more or less rich vocabulary (though also this circumstance plays a rôle in it) than in the formal shape of the languages, in their different abilities for expression.'

The whole problem is best charac-

terized in the introduction to the book *Proverbs and Common Sayings from the Chinese* by the Reverend Arthur H. Smith, in which he says: 'The Chinese language may itself be likened to a serpent. Suppose one of these reptiles is for the first time brought to light. Imagine the bewilderment of its discoverers as to its means of locomotion. Feet, wings and fins it has visibly none. All theory and antecedent probability would seem to be against its power of any successful motion, except perhaps rotation on its axis like a log. Yet while his critics are deciding that nature in this case has produced a complete failure, the serpent, disregarding theory and by the mere power of vermicular impulses and peristaltic contractions, has glided into a crevice with a swiftness which to the beholder is confounding. Chinese exhibits a copiousness and flexibility which challenges comparison with any other language.'

### III

An amusing example of the bewilderment of the Chinese, faced with learning English, appeared in the *North China Daily News*, in a poem entitled: '*Sounds and Letters*,' which runs like this:—

*When the English tongue we speak  
Why is 'break' not rhymed with 'freak?'  
Will you tell me why it's true  
We say 'sew' but likewise 'few?'  
And the maker of verse  
Cannot rhyme his 'horse' with 'worse?'  
'Beard' sounds not the same as 'beard'  
'Cord' is different from 'word,'  
'Cow' is cow, but 'low' is low,  
'Shoe' is never rhymed with 'foe.'  
Think of 'hose' or 'nose,' then 'does'  
and 'lose.'*

*And think of 'goose' and yet of 'choose.'  
 Think of 'comb' and 'tomb' and 'bomb'  
 'Toll' and 'rôle' and 'bome' and 'some,'  
 And since 'pay' is rhymed with 'say'  
 Why not 'paid' and 'said,' I pray?  
 Think of 'blood' and 'food' and 'good,'  
 'Mould' is not pronounced like 'could,'  
 Wherefore 'done,' but 'gone' and 'tone,'  
 Is there any reason known?  
 To sum up all, it seems to me  
 Sounds and Letters don't agree.*

Similar conditions prevail also in other European languages, though hardly so complicated as in English. Thus there must be something wrong with our alphabets; they do not conform any more with what they pretend to; they are no longer practical. And, furthermore, the Chinese observer may conclude that this, together with the unnecessarily complicated and illogical grammar, might account for the enormous nervousness of foreigners, their inability to organize continents and world economics; might also account for unemployment, for rearmament and for their periodical wars, and last, but not least, for the astonishing fact that Europe has never produced a Confucius.

Europeans have themselves recognized that their illogical grammars mean an enormous waste of time, and that they have therefore invented all kinds of shorthands in which not only all that ordeal of ancient orthography and grammar is sacrificed in the highest degree, but in which there is an increasing tendency to use ideological symbols which bear a much slighter resemblance to the sound of the words represented by them than most of the Chinese pictographs.

Thus, the Westerners have, after about four thousand years, come back to the wisdom of the ideographs. That the Chinese, on the other hand, have a shorthand which is much quicker than any foreign shorthand, is very well known. Coupled with the telegraphic style preferred in writing, the Chinese written language is the most economical writing imaginable. Quite recently the Chinese have started to contract several characters into one, which, when carried out on a large scale, will make writing still much shorter, and far more logical and coherent than Occidental prose.

### THE OBLIGING ARABS

The Arabs have frequently cut the pipe lines between the oil wells and Haifa. Each time a couple of experts have been compelled to go out into the desert and mend them. Recently they found themselves surrounded by Arabs who wished to know what they were doing. It was an ugly moment, but they explained their mission quite frankly. The Arabs were most interested, admitting freely that they were the people who had been cutting the pipes.

'But why do you do it?' they were asked.

'Oh, we are paid five English pounds each time we do it,' was the reply.

'Does it really matter where you cut them?' asked the Englishmen.

'Not a bit.'

'Well,' said the Englishmen, "if it's all the same to you, couldn't you cut them a bit nearer Haifa so that we do not have to go such a long way to mend them?"

'By all means,' said the Arab leader, proving again the chivalry of the desert.

What's more, he has kept to his word.

—Charles Graves in the *Daily Mail*, London

# THE AMERICAN SCENE

THE horrible mess unearthed in the state and Federal judiciary in New York brings to public attention one of the most shameful aspects in American government, namely, that judges seldom reach the bench *via* sheer merit. In those states where they are elected by the people, they generally receive their nomination from the party in power, which binds them to strict 'loyalty' and extracts from them an initial donation—running, in New York, from \$20,000 to \$100,000. Obviously, lawyers who agree to this procedure do not often possess the highest judicial qualifications, so that when the system yields a Cardozo or a Crane or even a Proskauer, one can only look upon them as sheer lucky breaks. But appointed judges, especially in the state courts, are on the whole of not much better quality than elected ones, for the ascendant party generally sees to it that the Governor appoints people to the bench who incline to be lenient to defendants who have been generous in their contributions.

The problem of the judiciary, having worried public-spirited men and women for years, of late has narrowed down to three or four suggestions for improvement, of which perhaps the most intelligent is the following: Let there be in each of the forty-eight states and in the Federal government a body of men selected to represent various classes in society—the bar, the clergy, labor unions, industrialists, writers, engineers, and so on. When a vacancy occurs on the bench, let this body, chosen for a long period,

present to the Executive—whether he be Governor or President—a slate of, say, seven worthy candidates, and then let the Executive choose one from among them. The Executive's nomination is to be final, thereby saving the public from the disgrace that recently greeted Mr. Roosevelt's nomination of a judge to the Virginia Federal bench. To make the eventual choice triply sound, perhaps the Executive's final selection should be approved by the full bench to which the new judge is to be elevated.

A phase of the Federal judiciary which has proven an avenue of political corruption has been the matter of receiverships, which Federal judges sometimes hand out to political allies, whose sole aim often is to milk the creditors rather than help them. Attorney-General Murphy has suggested a law whereby Federal receivers are to be selected from a list of qualified, salaried men, and in no way to be influenced by a judge's friendships or political obligations. One cannot imagine any sensible man objecting to some such plan.

BOSS Pendergast of Missouri has gone to jail, the invincible Jimmy Hines of New York has been sentenced to a long term in prison, Penrose and Vare of Philadelphia lie in their graves with no successors, 'Doc' Ames no more frightens people in Minneapolis, Abe Ruef is only a name in San Francisco, Martin Lomasney and Charlie Innes of Boston have become angels, and the soul of William Flinn still wanders about homeless in Pitts-