

C. W. H. Young's elegiac description of the accomplishments of the New Life movement in Jiangxi suggests how it was perceived by some members of the American missionary community active in China in the mid-1930s.

16.3 *Mme. Chiang on the New Life Movement, 1935*

China, like almost every other nation during the past few years, has felt the tremendously enervating effects of world depression. Each nation, according to its lights, has sought to find a way out of stagnation into normalcy. Italy has its Fascism, Germany its Nazism, the Soviet Union its first and second five-year plans, and America its New Deal. The primary aim of each is to solve the economic problems involved and to bring material prosperity to the people. China, like the rest of the nations, is confronted with a similar problem, added to which is the necessity of rescuing the people from the cumulative miseries of poverty, ignorance, and superstition, combined with the after effects of communistic orgies and natural calamities, and last but not least, the grave consequences of external aggression.

To this end, what is known as the New Life movement has been launched, to strike at the very roots of the several evils. . . .

FOUR ANCIENT VIRTUES

The idea of the New Life movement became crystallized in the mind of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek during the anti-communist campaign. He realized that military occupation of recovered territory was not enough; that it must be followed up by social and economic reconstruction in the divested areas; and that, to be effective, a national consciousness and spirit of mutual co-operation must be aroused. He saw that the immediate need was the development of the vitality of the spirit of the people, which seemed to have been crushed. He contemplated the perspective of history in the light of existing conditions about him; he realized how much depended upon the people's consciousness of their heritage from the past and conviction came to him that the four great virtues of old China, *Li*, *I*, *Lien*, and *Chih* constituted a remedy that could rescue the country from stagnation and ruin, because at the time when those principles were practiced, China was indeed a great nation. He decided then and there to base a New Life movement upon them, to try to recover what had been lost by forgetfulness of this source of China's greatness. For it has become obvious that mere accumulation of wealth is not sufficient to enable China to resume her position as a great nation. There must also be a revival of the spirit, since spiritual values transcend mere material riches.

What significance lies behind these four principles which hold so much good in them for China, if they can be carried out in the spirit intended?

First the *Li*, which in the ordinary and most accepted form of translation means courtesy. And by courtesy is meant that which emanates from the heart—not a formality which merely obeys the law.

The second is *I*, which, roughly translated, means duty or service, toward the individual's fellow men and toward himself.

The third is *Lien*, meaning a clear definition of the rights of the individual and of the degree in which those rights may be enforced without infringing upon those of others. In other words, honesty. A clear demarcation between what is public and what is private, what is yours and what is mine.

The fourth is *Chih*, which denotes high-mindedness and honor.

Some people have criticized the New Life movement on the ground that, since there is not sufficient food for everyone in the land, it is useless to talk about or seek spiritual regeneration. We reject the argument by pointing out the very evident fact that, if everyone from the highest official to the lowest wheel-barrow-man would conscientiously practice these principles in everyday life, there would be food for all. If we have the right conception of *Li*, we recognize not outward pomp but the sterling native qualities in our fellow men. If we practice *I*, we feel an obligation not to hold wealth and enjoy it wastefully while our fellow countrymen may be on the verge of starvation or suffering from sickness or other misfortunes. Again with *Lien*: if officials recognize the rights of the people under them, they do not try to benefit themselves at the expense of the people just because the latter are too powerless and ignorant to fight in their own defense. And, if *Chih* is a reality, no one is shameless or stoops to mean or underhanded deeds.

Being a realist, the Generalissimo recognized that conditions in China are entirely different from what they were centuries ago when China was a great nation. At that time China could well afford to stand aloof, shut herself within the confines of her own boundaries, and keep out all intruders; but today she is part of a worldwide scheme of things, and, in order to maintain and improve her present position, she must keep in step with world progress.

So the New Life movement is based upon the preservation of these four virtues, and it aims to apply them to actual, existing conditions, in order that the moral character of the nation shall attain the highest possible standard. The Generalissimo observed that communism crushed the spirit of the people in addition to robbing them of material things; that it struck at all the fundamental principles of moral character. He found the people bereft of ideas or ideals concerning either humanity in general or their fellow men in particular. Communism was, indeed, the last abrasive in the destruction of a sense of law and order, unselfishness, loyalty, and those other qualities necessary for the development of human kindness and the maintenance of a high national consciousness. It tortured and degraded the status of man and dispossessed human life of value. In the face of this dismal prospect, the Generalissimo decided that the New Life movement

could sow the first seeds of an effort to awaken in the people an urge for a more satisfying life.

THE MOVEMENT SPREADS

Not content with organizations specially delegated to these divested areas to work toward a better community life, the Generalissimo, before the end of the spring school season, called a meeting of all the middle-school students in Nanchang. He spoke at length to them of the conditions in the country at large and particularly in their own districts. He pointed out to them the necessity of recognizing the sacrifices their parents were making to give them educations and the fact that such sacrifices entailed a proportionate responsibility on the part of the students to repay the community for what they were receiving. . . .

As a direct result of this talk the students pledged themselves to return to their homes to take active part in giving a practical impetus to the principles of the New Life movement. Some pledged themselves to open up kindergartens for the village children; others, to teach night classes for the adults; others, to lecture on hygiene and sanitation; and still others, to make fly swatters and to rid their communities of breeding places of insects which carry malarial infections. The reports have just arrived, and these show that the students take their work seriously.

Out of all this is emerging a new citizen, a contented farmer and artisan, on the one hand, and, on the other, a teacher with new ideals, born of the contentment he is producing. The response of the people to the new movement on their behalf has been significant. Finding that those who have come so suddenly to work among them are working for them, they cooperate to the full and have complete confidence in their leaders. Progress is noticeable immediately. The neglect and filth which characterized the villages go quickly. Personal cleanliness is replacing erstwhile indifference to dirt and disease, and the villagers' participation in the many schemes for their good develops a feeling of happiness. Corruption is being fearlessly exposed when detected; soldiers have been shorn of domineering attitudes by strict punishment for proved offenses.

The New Life movement has already come within the reach of the humblest citizen and had much to contribute to the most enlightened. As it operates in Jiangxi, so it is spreading and flourishing all over the country. In the twelve provinces recently toured by the Generalissimo, noticeable advances were seen in the general cleanliness and orderliness of the cities as well as in the recovery of spirit by the people and in a new sense of responsibility in officials. They, in contradistinction to other days, are manifesting lively concern for the well-being of the people and contributing in every way possible to the effective application of the principles of the New Life movement.

In the large centers, the missionary bodies were assembled and were addressed by the Generalissimo and by myself. In every case they signified an immediate wish to work with the leaders of the movement in their respective regions, and

joint committees were at once formed under the chairmanship of the Governor of the Province. While the government is enforcing stringent measures for opium suppression, these committees will do their part in establishing opium-curing clinics and teaching the people its evil effects. They will carry on campaigns against foot-binding, tuberculosis, trachoma, and other more local evils. . . .

In conclusion let me quote from a letter just received from one of the foreign missionaries, now in Jiangxi, on his reaction to the work sponsored there by the New Life movement:

The suppression of the communist-bandits and the work of the New Life Movement are proving to be the first stage of a long battle against ignorance, dirt, carelessness, unsuitable dwellings, and the corruption that has for so long cost so much in human suffering. Like the program of Christ this movement is concerned with the poor, the oppressed, the sick, and the little children who have never been given a chance to enjoy life. Out of it will come a strong and united China, which will command the respect of the world, and that new China, like the very old one, will be based firmly upon the four cardinal virtues, with the addition of those desirable elements which go to make a modern world.

16.4 "New Life" in Brief

RULES FOR BEHAVIOR

- Clothing should be tidy and clean.
- Buttons should be well buttoned.
- Hats should be worn straight.
- Shoes should be worn correctly.
- Food should be eaten in an orderly manner.
- Sit upright.
- Do not throw food on the ground.
- Bowls and chopsticks should be set in order.
- Do not make noise while eating and drinking.
- Rooms should be kept clean.
- Do not write on walls.
- Furniture should be simple.
- The home should be tranquil.
- Walk and sit with erect posture.
- Be punctual for appointments.
- Speak after others have finished speaking.
- Help your neighbor if a fire breaks out.
- Do not laugh when others have funerals.
- Try to mediate the quarrels of others.
- Aid others who have fallen.

Keep silent in meetings or at the theater.
 Do not scold, swear at, or hit others.
 Do not laugh or talk loudly on boats or in buses.
 Do not call out in restaurants or teahouses.
 Be polite in conversation.
 Keep to the left when walking on the street.
 Do not overtake others while walking.
 Stay in line at the station when buying tickets.
 Stay in line when entering a public place.
 Say good morning to others every morning.
 Say goodbye when you leave your friends.
 Do not gamble or visit prostitutes.
 Do not smoke opium.
 If you pick up something on the street, return it to its owner.
 Be careful of public property and try to make use of scrap materials.
 Salute the national flag when it is raised and brought down.
 Stand while singing the Party song or the National anthem.
 Salute your elders.
 Be polite and courteous to women and children.
 Help old people, women, and the weak in getting off boats and buses.
 Be filial to your parents and love your brothers and sisters.
 Take off your hat in meeting places.
 Do not wear your hat indoors.
 Be loyal to your friends.
 Be fair in business transactions.
 Reduce the number of meaningless parties or gatherings.
 Be frugal at weddings, funerals, and on festive occasions.

HYGIENE

Go to bed early and rise early.
 Keep your face clean.
 Keep your hands clean.
 Wash out your mouth and keep your hair clean.
 Breathe fresh air.
 Comb your hair.
 Cut your nails frequently.
 Clothes should be kept clean.
 Holes in clothing should be patched.
 Bedding should frequently be washed and dried outdoors.
 Children should be kept clean.
 Do not eat snacks.
 Do not eat unclean food.
 Do not drink unboiled water.

Do not get drunk.
 Do not smoke.
 Sweep and clean your rooms frequently.
 Drain ditches and gutters frequently.
 Keep windows open as often as possible.
 Keep tables and chairs clean.
 Keep bowls and chopsticks clean.
 Keep bathrooms clean.
 Exterminate flies.
 Exterminate mosquitoes.
 Exterminate rats.
 Do not spit on the ground.
 Do not urinate as you please.
 Dump garbage in garbage cans.
 Do not throw waste paper on the street.
 Do not throw fruit peels on the street.
 Do not hang your clothes and dry them on the street.
 Do not post advertisements everywhere.
 Get vaccinated.
 Keep bus stations and docks clean.
 Keep parks and theaters clean.
 Restaurants, hotels, and tea houses should be clean.
 Bath houses and barber shops should be clean.
 Every household should clean the street in front of its door each day.
 Everyone should keep himself clean all the time.

16.5 *"New Life" for the Reds*

VARIOUS PHASES OF NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

The New Life movement, the aim of which is the social regeneration of China, is within reach of the humblest citizen but it has contributed much towards the most enlightened. It is reconstruction through a widespread social movement that promises rapidly to remold the life of the entire Chinese people. Progress is achieved through discipline and order, rather than through violent revolution.

It is concerned with the materials out of which life is made and it further stresses the use that shall be made of these materials. In doing so, it emphasizes both the material and spiritual in life and desires a happy blending of the two. Respect for personality and a desire to prevent the exploitation of man by man—these are the factors that are at the heart of the movement.

In the province of Jiangxi, the heart of the movement, New Life has penetrated government offices, public utilities, schools, bus lines, wharves, railways, and even