Happy New Year

The new year of 1929, the eighteenth year of the Republic of China, should be a most happy one. Not only is the New Year officially celebrated by the National Government, but it is the first New Year that is celebrated by a united China. The occasion is all the happier because the National Flag now flies over the Three Eastern Provinces. When one thinks of New Year, one dreams of peace and prosperity. The dream may never come true unless, we believe, three essentials are fulfilled. First, a unified system of taxation should be introduced and enforced at the earliest possible date. The nation, war-weary and impoverished, is still groaning under petty taxes everywhere. Such taxes popping up from time to time are a hindrance to business because the irregular ways of collection are but sources of official graft that benefits little the communities in which they are levied. The people are willing to contribute by way of taxes toward the national or local treasury for the advancement of our national welfare, but it seems only equitable that representation must go hand in hand with taxation. In other words, the people must be given a voice both in the collection of taxes and in their administration. Secondly, means of communication and transportation must be freed from military interference. The retention of locomotives, for instance, by the military authorities must no longer be tolerated by the National Government. Transportation is the first requisite for the development of trade, and our national railways which are far from being adequate have long been rendered useless as far as commerce and trade is concerned. The system of favoritism so profitably practiced by various station masters must be abolished, and the culprits punished so that business interests may be served on a fair and just basis. Thirdly, conflict between capital and labor must be prevented as far as possible. Industrial disputes in some instances may be taken as signs of progress, but as Mr. Thomas of the League of Nations recently pointed out, China has not reached a stage so that such disputes are almost unavoidable. Labor unrest in our country has seldom benefited labor, and whatever temporary advantages it has obtained by way of strikes have handicapped industry to such an extent as to affect indirectly the interests of labor through business depression. The Government should conduct an intelligent educational campaign among the working class and should not stop at the suppression of communitistic propaganda alone. When we see throughout the country a unified system of taxation, improved means of transportation and harmony between capital and labor, then we may look forward to an era of peace and prosperity for which the suffering millions have been longing. The New Year is here. Shall we not make a new start?

The National Flag in Manchuria

On the first day of this year the National flag was hoisted in the Three Eastern Provinces commonly known as Manchuria. The White Sun in the Blue Sky shall henceforth outshine the Red Sun in a white space that has been trying to appear on Chinese
horizon. General Chang Hsueh-liang may be justly commended on taking this bold step in deference to popular wishes and in defiance of the imperialist dictates of our island neighbor. Any cynic who has believed in the impossibility of a united China has only his own face to slap. We do not for a moment think that once the National Flag flies in Manchuria all our troubles are ended. Differences of opinion there are among our national leaders, but such differences are healthy so long as they are not of a personal nature. The fact that they have joined in a united front is of great significance which should not ignored by the Powers. If Japan, for instance, is alive to the national consciousness of our people, she should no longer harbor any malicious designs but should enter upon a new policy of sincere friendship for the Chinese. She should read the signs on the wall and overcome her obstinacy. All the major Powers have concluded treaties with China on a basis of equity and reciprocity, and it is therefore a most astonishing revelation that Japan, the loudest in profession of good wishes toward New China, remains the only one that still insists on antiquated privileges. The decision of General Chang to hoist the National Flag is an added rebuff to Japan that no nonsense will be tolerated. She must trade with China on a fair basis or she will be forced out of China in due time. With the New Year we earnestly hope that she will turn a new leaf for her own good more than for any one else.

The Abolition of Branch Political Councils

The decision of the Standing Committee at Nanking to abolish all the divisional political councils before March 15, 1929, should receive the hearty support of the nation. The resolution reads:—“That with reference to the various divisional councils of the Central Political Council, the various divisional councils should be abolished at the end of the year in accordance with a decision of the 5th Plenary Session; however, inasmuch as convocation of the 3rd National Congress of the Kuomintang has been postponed, and in the midst of the preparations for the National Military Reorganization and Disbandment Conference, in order to facilitate the winding up of various affairs of the provinces, the various divisional councils shall definitely be abolished before March 15, 1929, and that they be severally instructed to observe carefully the provisional regulations governing their functions and not exceed their authority.” The necessity for such an action has long been felt throughout the country. As long as the National Government has no centralised authority, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to carry out the reconstruction program. With the centralisation of authority there should follow immediately the unification of the national finances, without which all talk of reconstruction would be idle. Then the appointment of responsible officials to administer the provincial affairs may be more easily made on the basis of merit, and we hope that once appointed they will obey the orders of the National Government in all respects. Unless there is the closest co-ordination of efforts between Nanking and the provinces, the former will remain only a fictitious capital, capable of accomplishing little for the good of the country. Consequently the Standing Committee should be highly commended for its decision, and let us pray that nothing in the meantime would arise to prevent the execution of this decision.

The Disbandment Conference

The National Military Reorganization and Disbandment Conference which convened in Nanking on January 1 is easily the happiest event that marked the New Year. The maintenance of some 1,600,000 soldiers requires a monthly expenditure of $32,000,000 or $380,000,000 annually, according to General Ho Ying-ching. “Our entire annual revenue is but $450,000,000,” he said, “which amount shrinks to $320,000,000, after meeting foreign loan obligations. In other words, if we continue to maintain our present army we will have to spend more than our entire national revenue as compared with 14 percent by Great Britain, 32 percent by Soviet Russia, 20 percent by France, 19 percent by Italy, 20 percent by America, and 43 percent by Japan. For this reason, we are planning to reduce our army to 500,000 men as authorized at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang and to limit our total annual military, naval and aviation expenditure to $180,000,000. We will also attempt to formulate a military budget, to determine the division of the country into a number of garrison areas, to draft the regulations governing the promotion and dismissal of military officers and to work out a detailed scheme for the gradual disbandment and repatriation of our surplus troops without undue burden on the people.” The immediate problem is to raise the necessary funds to disband the soldiers so as to reduce the army to some 500,000 men. The estimated cost is in the neighborhood of $36,000,000, a staggering sum in the face of our financial stringency. It has been proposed to employ these soldiers to colonise the Northwestern territory, and though this is quite sound theoretically, there may yet be other plans. The people, therefore, await with growing interest the result of the deliberations of our military leaders. Whatever they may be, the fact that the leaders have come to Nanking from all parts of the country at the call of the National Government is most significant. It bears out the claim we have frequently made that, despite all the shortcomings of Nanking, those at its helm are representative of the nation and sensitive to its wishes. This conference undoubtedly marks another step forward toward the real unification of the country, and on that score alone, even if not for what it may accomplish, the conference should be hailed throughout the land.