

The Terrible City

By T. K. Chuan (孫增嘏)

Those who have seen Massenet's opera *Thais* will remember Athanael, the Cenobite monk, who left his desert hermitage avowedly to save the soul of a gilded and wanton dancer in Alexandria. For seven days and nights, he travelled along the left bank of Nilus, and when he finally saw from the summit of a hill the mighty City of Serapis, glittering in the rosy-fingered dawn, he could no longer contain himself, and raising his lusty tenor voice, he sang that famous aria beginning; "*Voilà donc la terrible cité!*"

To call Shanghai the terrible city, to compare her with Ptolemaic Alexandria may seem to some to be an odious task, yet if one should adopt the Spenglerian standpoint, no inquiry could be more fruitful and fascinating. A word or two about Spengler would not be amiss here. According to the author of "*Der Untergang des Abendland,*" every civilization has its spring of hope and its winter of despair. The Classical civilization, for instance, which was abloom in Periclean Greece, died ever since Alexander made his conquests. It died and was no more. So with the Magian or Arabian, the Faustian or Germanic civilizations—they arose, flourished and passed away. The Western civilization too, so it seems, is on the verge of decline and may soon be supplanted by a new or yet unborn culture. Civilizations therefore follow the cycle of eternal recurrence, and none may escape from the grim necessity of alternate rise and fall. It follows also that history does repeat itself and it is meaningless to divide it into the Ancient, the Mediaeval and the Modern. There cannot be an arbitrarily chosen time axis. Chronologically speaking, Pythagoras antedated Cromwell, the Battle of Plataea happened centuries before the Battle of Tours, Socrates taught in Athens long before Goethe held his literary court in Weimar, Savonarola preached and pillaged in Renaissance Florence while Mussolini rules with his fasces in twentieth century Rome—yet considered morphologically, they are all contemporaneous characters or events. Such, in brief, is Spengler's thesis.

To take up once more our original discussion, Shanghai of today and Alexandria of the Hellenistic times have really many points in common that one cannot help from noticing. To begin with, both are cosmopolitan or to use Spengler's word, Megalopolitan cities. Strabo, the Greek geographer who lived in the first century A. D., told us that on the streets of Alexandria, one would encounter "Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Persians, Medians, Hebrews, Arabs, Syrians, Parthians," not mentioning of course Greeks, the native Egyptians and the half-breeds. For the division of Shanghai into the International Settlement, the French Concession and the Chinese city, we have the corresponding quarters in Alexandria: the Jewry, the Brucheum where the Greeks dwelled and the Rhacotis or the Egyptian city. The dominating people in Alexandria were naturally the

Greeks, and for a Jew or an Egyptian not to speak the Greek language at all was considered a shame; just as one would in Shanghai today hear bespectacled youths from missionary colleges and returned students from England or America proudly holding forth, sometimes rather lamentably, in the King's English. Most probably, they would address each other as Toms and Dicks, just as the Egyptians in Alexandria sometimes would answer to the names of Phillipos or Agathon. Human nature has indeed been always the same.

Furthermore, both Alexandria and Shanghai are commercial and industrial cities. To quote Gibbon who wrote in "*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*": "The lucrative trade of Arabia and India flowed through the port of Alexandria to the capital and provinces of the empire. Idleness was unknown. Some were employed in blowing of glass, others in weaving of linen, others again manufacturing the papyrus. Either sex, and every age, was engaged in the pursuit of industry, nor did even the blind or the lame want occupations suited to their conditions." It is needless to point out that Shanghai too has its foreign trade, its child and woman laborers and its blind, or pseudo-blind, fortune tellers.

Speaking of amusements, Alexandria boasted of 400 theaters, (cf. Eutyichius Annal. ii 716) and although Shanghai has not more than a hundred, no other Chinese city can nearly come up to the same mark. The cry of "*Panem et circenses*" has its echo in the modern version: "Rice-bowls and grey-hound races!" The sing-song girls are the counterpart of the *hetaira*. True, the former are not as cultivated as their ancient sisters of joy who could recite glibly from Sophocles and Euripides, yet no one can say that they are any less voluptuous and pulchritudinous. Like prostitutes, like poets and philosophers. The "failure of nerves" which characterized the literary and philosophic products of the Hellenistic Alexandria is truly descriptive of the state of letters in contemporary China, with Shanghai as its center. One finds everywhere advocates and preachers of mysticism, sensualism, skepticism, estheticism. Proletarianism, etc., etc., which are all variant forms of the search for certainty in an age of doubt and disturbance. Tons of books are being turned out annually by third rate men, which are imitated by the fourth rate and read by the fifth rate. A friend of ours who is an expert statistician told us that if we piled up the books published in Shanghai last year in the London Museum, they would crowd out all the other books that had already been there. He made one mistake. The London Museum would be too good a place for them!

The comparison between the two cities however cannot be carried too far; and Spengler notwithstanding, we are convinced that it has to stop somewhere. For instance, culturally Shanghai is nil, while Alexan-

dria, with her famous Museum and Library, was the center of learning and research. Euclid, Archimedes, Ptolemy, Hipparchus—these are names to conjure with, and who, who indeed, of the scientists in Shanghai today can we mention in the same breath as they? Again, Alexandrians were noted for their gentleness of manner, but in Shanghai one meets daily bores and bullies by the dozens. Civilities nowadays are considered superfluous and the cultivation of life's amenities has become a lost art, what with your imported gospels of efficiency, excitement and strenuous living. Indeed like another

Athanael, we too wish to sing a hymn of hate and condemnation with however this difference: Athanael hated Alexandria for her science, her gentleness and her beauty; but we hate Shanghai for her ignorance, her unmanneredness and her lack of beauty. Alexandria was only morally decadent but Shanghai is intellectually and culturally decadent as well. The conclusion is obvious. Civilizations rise and fall, Empires wax and wane, perhaps only in voluminous treatises written by learned doctors and paranoiac prophets, but this much we are sure: Shanghai is a terrible city!

Birth Control and Desirable Children

By Rose Leibbrand

There has been much written regarding the economic and social necessity for birth control, clinics have been established for the dissemination of methods of non-productive sexual intercourse, but little has been said in regard to the need for families among the financially and physically able. It will be sometime before China faces the danger of racial suicide, but once birth control knowledge is known generally this problem will have to be faced.

France for years has had this problem before its statesmen and the government has taken action granting the mother of each child born of poor parents a small sum to reimburse her for her time lost during the months of pregnancy from a lucrative position, and to help in paying the expenses of delivery. At that, each year finds the death rate in France exceeding the birth rate and the majority of children come from poor families or those who have small incomes. The educated and professional class still have very few children.

In America, even with her tide of immigration, now somewhat restricted, the birth rate is decreasing so rapidly that before many years the death rate will be the greater. Not only is the topic of racial suicide mentioned in America by thinking persons, but there is a grave danger in the fact that the majority of children now born in that country are descended from poor families of ignorant, Southern Mediterranean, immigrant parentage. The educated classes of America, the mentally trained, the physically fit, the economically well situated are not producing. The college graduate class have only one and one third child for the average. Most college graduates have only one, a few two or three and many of them none. Those having none are often those families where the wife, herself a college graduate, is also a salaried person. In order to maintain a married life accoutered with all the refinements and privileges of a country club, such as they both enjoyed at college, a dual salary is necessary.

There should be propaganda for children among the upper classes, compensation awarded those physically capable and desirous of children among the working

classes with adequate birth control knowledge. Among the upper classes not only should duty be mentioned in relation to the need for children born into surroundings of culture, but the economic advantage to a country as a whole should be stressed. This need not worry thinking people much as the educated classes do wish children and though they have them in limited numbers it is not as pressing a matter as that of the larger class of people who are mentally, physically and economically incapable of having children.

In the large class of salaried people who find that they cannot afford children we have our greatest problem. They are mentally and physically capable and desirable parents and only the necessity for a dual salary keeps them childless. Some plan such as this might be formed: that is, that every expectant mother be given six months leave of absence before the birth of the child and one month after, with her salary paid in full during the seven month interim by the state. Also, that free clinics be established for delivery in up-to-date fully equipped hospitals where the mother will have the advantages enjoyed at present only by those able to afford the "luxury." When the mother returns to her work, her job having been kept for her during her child-bearing period, the child will be taken care of during the day at a nursery, in charge of competent, specially trained nurses at government expense. Where the mother is too weary to take care of the child at night it can be left at the nursery. Some radicals say the children should only be brought home on Sundays and holidays, but it seems more natural to allow the mother and father the privilege of having the child at night if they wish to do so. When the child is old enough for kindergarten work he will attend school at the nursery and as he grows older, he will attend the public schools, returning to the nursery playgrounds the hours he does not spend in school.

This care by the state of children born of desirable but poor parentage would breed up the race to a higher mental standard than that of fourteen years as shown by the recent war statistics, and our ranks of future citizens would not be largely recruited from the lowest