Mental Differences Between Chinese and Japanese

By "REFLECTOR"

Inside China proper the sanguine struggle for liberty of a proud, independent and freedom-loving nation rages on. "Somewhere" in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia Chinese guerrillas harass Japanese garrisons. . . . Japanese bombers pour rain of death on to the ground. . . . havoc reigns on the battlefields. . . . deadly combat goes on!

For an average foreign observer the struggle is very well understood. What strikes the eye of the Westerner, however, are the basic differences both physical and mental between the two now opposing sides, which, although they both belong to the yellow race, are more marked than any two variations of the white race, the Englishman and the

Answer: England and Russia robbed China of those places either when she had not become self-conscious or where racial origin and language are quite different. But Manchuria is inhabited ninety-nine per-cent by Chinese who are connected to their brothers within the Great Wall both by blood and culture. Cut a man's hair and he might feel indifferent but if you cut one of his hands off the pain naturally goes deep into the heart.

An Indian journalist: Speaking of historical facts, is not the occupation of Manchuria already an accomplished fact? Why should we murmur over spilt milk? Who possesses Manchuria, does not matter much. We ought to work for humanity and world progress. Is not the world eternal?

Answer: Your idea, sir, is a very lofty one which all of us should work hand to hand to realize. But the Manchurian question is a very practical one, with thirty million people under foreign rule and thousands of people rendered homeless, such as the men of the North-eastern armies. It indeed takes a long time for those people to forget or to forgive.

Dr. Fujizawa: Being an expert on affairs in the Far East and having long experience, I know pretty well the workings of the Powers in China. The Nan'king government is in the hands of European-returneds students over whom foreigners exercise great influence. Instead of coming to Japan, China often turns to the European Powers or America. This makes us feel very badly.

Answer: The Chinese Government used to lean towards Japan and even in the present government there are many men educated in Japan. But Japan has done China so much injustice that now the whole country is turning against her. Death will surely come to the man who dares talk of befriending Japan. Something has to be done on the side of Japan before China will again look on her as her friend.

Several Filipino students also raised their voices, saying Japan has done China great wrong and that it is not without reason that China hates Japan so much.

The questions and answers went on until 9 o'clock when Prof. Ishigawa brought the meeting to an end by saying, "The time will come when we shall talk no more of peace or co-operation and when war shall be the only arbiter. For China will never forget Manchuria, and being of vital interest to Japan, we shall never retreat from it.

In spite of terribly frank utterances on both sides the meeting closed with warm greetings and handshaking.
Spaniard, for example, or the square-headed German or the olive-tinted Italian.

The contradictions are very great indeed. Among these, one had provided the motive power for Japan to meet the white world on its own ground, in everything from industrialization to baseball, whereas the Chinese remained somewhat behind.

This trait is what psychologists had diagnosed to be an inferiority complex. The Chinese, on the contrary, had shown all the symptoms of a superiority complex.

If we carefully compare the two nations we shall immediately observe that the Japanese give the impression of feeling that there is so much to learn and so little time in which to learn it, whereas the Chinese act as if they are satisfied with themselves, while not hesitating to say so.

When one ventures to walk among the working people of Japan, or the leaders of Japanese economic and social life, he immediately observes an acute interest in every movement. Constant questions are poured forth asking explanations on any subject considered to be out of ordinary. Then, if they feel there is something they can use, one is sure to see them do it or hear them say it when the next occasion arises. Pride never seems to interfere with the accumulation of knowledge.

As a distinct contrast, rarely does one meet a Chinese who would submit to what he regards as humiliation of asking for information. He would probably rather do without.

The different caliber of the Chinese and Japanese military machines is due in no small measure to this contrast.

What impresses itself first in to-day’s Sino-Japanese warfare is the Nipponese ability for teamwork and the Chinese instinct for individualism. If it is something that one person can do, but only with initiative and quick thinking, the Chinese are apt to succeed. Man for man the Chinese are quicker on the trigger of thought and more versatile than the Japanese.

In friendly conversation with a Chinese, one often hears that old complaint regarding the national weakness—lack of unity. This fact alone helped to keep China divided at the very moment unity was most needed. Japanese, however, just naturally seem to gather in groups to fulfill their purposes. Anything that has to do with teamwork is sure to meet their favor. Baseball immediately became their most popular sport. The group requirements of army service are keenly enjoyed. The Japanese, however, have never been able to win any marked distinction in aviation. That is because it is quick individual thinking that is required there. The pilot of a plane doing a stunt or a spin hasn’t the time to take out his book of rules or to confer about it. He has to rely on his personal initiative, and this is what the Japanese lack most.

By contrast, if in addition to individual initiative, China possessed a capacity for teamwork and cooperation, it is difficult to see what could prevent her 500,000,000 people from forging to the front as the world’s leading power. China united would automatically make Japan a second rate power in the Orient. Here we have a fundamental principle of Japanese policy on the Asiatic mainland, which is to encourage local movements in China and to oppose the Central government, irrespective of who heads it. This reveals a co-ordinated strategy that otherwise would seem to be merely a policy of spite and envy.

China, that was once the most civilized country in the world, has a continued sorry tale of keen minds put to the service of narrow individualism. It was always for some personal grudge conceived in jealousy or selfishness that the gates of China were opened to the various invaders that overran the country.

That was how the Mongols came in. That was what enabled the Manchus to pour through the Great Wall. That was also how the puppet Manchukuo state was formed. The Japanese themselves could not have gone ahead with this ambitious program, even extending it into N. China and Mongolia without using the natives themselves. The Japanese task was mainly to play off one Chinese against the other.

A Japanese trait closely related to their teamwork is their spirit of regimentation. It is this that makes them admire the Germans most among all the people in the world. It is the French attitude toward life, that the Chinese admire most. They shy from regimentation.

The latter permeates all Japanese life. There is no more curious sight than a gang of Japanese workmen on a railway track. The labourers lift their pick axes at one signal, bang away at the next, advance a step with military precision at the next, then resume all over again methodically and repeatedly. It is labor’s goose-step. A scene like this would be unthinkable in China. The Chinese would break out laughing. The precision would seem senseless to them, cruel and inhuman.

These differences were carried over into their international relations for centuries. Japan and China always got along together just about as well—or as badly as the Germans and French.

Beside these contrasts, we have the Chinese faculty for ingenuity, while the Japanese are fond of imitating. Although keen Chinese minds thought up such world-revolutionary inventions as printing, gunpowder and the compass, something in their makeup prevented them from ever pursuing them beyond their first, self-evident conclusions and uses.

It was in military matters, however, that the Japanese faculty for selecting the best that the world had to offer has been mos energetically pursued, giving the island empire an advantage over the Chinese in warfare right from the start.

A psychological factor however that always entered into every Far-Eastern affair of importance had been that veritable instinct for compromise among the Chinese which
LATEST GOLD RESOURCES TAPPED

Under the full impact of the current Sino-Japanese hostilities, the Chinese Government is leaving no stone unturned to tap the country’s latent gold resources in the northwest and southwest provinces with which to finance her war of national resistance.

According to an unofficial Chinese estimate, if 10,000 ounces of pure gold were made available to the Chinese Government today is replaced by the grim determination to fight to the victorious end.

Compromise is also a Japanese trait, but trimmed so as to conform with Japanese regimentation and their paternalistic form of society. Such paradox as an army coup d'état that was suppressed in Tokyo following by the adoption of the main planks in the insurrectionist program speaks for itself.

The fate of the Chinese in that case was to inflect the death sentence on the officers who participated out simultaneously to agree to hearken demands. What they asked was the subordination of parliament to a military totalitarian government and an iron-fisted policy towards China. The public had just expressed the contrary desire at the ballots by an overwhelming vote.

Flavor of religious sacrifices permeates both Chinese and Japanese heroics. It was but natural that the latter should have the tactical of making a living torpedo out of a sailor or piloting an explosive plane at mad speed against the Chinese warship. The memorable plight of the Chinese “doomed battalion” in the autumn days of 1937 still lives in the memory of the world. Refusing to obey the orders of the higher command to retreat after the last stand in Chapel, over two hundred combatants flying national ensign entrenched themselves in the “Joint Savings” godown and with grim tenacity and dare-devil determination withstood the siege of surrounding enemy.

Save a few episodes during the recently terminated civil war in Spain such as siege of Alcazar and Toledo foreign generals would consider this a criminal waste of lives and would court martial the officers responsible. The incidents would be classified as an atrocity. In China and Japan they will raise monuments to it.

Observers of Far-Eastern affairs are often so misled by the fact that the Chinese and the Japanese belong to the same race as to envisage a Sino-Japanese alliance of the future. The psychological differences between the two make the alliance unlikely...