China Reforms Essay, Research Paper

Section II

1.) There have been numerous attempts to reform China in the late 19th century to build up China’s strength and make it a world power once again. There have been many prestigious intellectuals and organizations that have attempted to do this. One of these intellectuals who had a great influence on other reformers was Yan Fu. Yan presented his ideas many people throughout China through his series of reform essays. Yan spoke of the foreign powers that invaded China and were controlling and changing the traditional Chinese way of life. Yan said that these changes to China were quite unfortunate but to cope with them and possibly overcome them, China must reform and modernize. This meant that China must learn from the westerners and borrow their ideas.

Unfortunately Yan was not much of an activist but Kang Youwei was. Kang and his colleagues, Tan Sitong and Liang Qichao spread their ideas of reform through study groups and journalism. These reformers wanted to make China modern without losing Chinese traditional culture. This meant as Yan said borrowing from abroad not only technology but from institutions and ideas as well. They wanted to change China from a monarchy to a republic.

During the “Hundred Days of Reform,” Kang and his followers, with the support of Emperor Guangxu, preached their ideas of reforming the examination system, remodeling the bureaucracy, and the modernization of China. Many of these reforms were implemented throughout Hunan. Just as Kang’s efforts were beginning to pay off, reports of Kang influencing the emperor in an extremist manner were presented to the people of China. This only fueled the fire for the already present opposition to the emperor. This also paved the way for Empress Dowager to take over the throne. The emperor was put on house arrest for the remainder of his reign for conspiring with extremists. Empress Dowager sent all of the reform intellectuals into exile and Kang fled to Japan where he continued his writings. Under Empress Dowager’s reign many reforms were made including modernization of the military, which was implemented by Yuan Shikai. Education, monetary, and fiscal improvements were also made.

The Boxers or The Righteous and Harmonious Fists also attempted to reform China. This organization arose because of poor economic conditions and also because the government was laying railroads through cemeteries and people’s land. On June 13, 1900, the Boxers (with the support of the Qing government) invaded Beijing in attempts to rid themselves of the foreign powers and promote the need for change. But because the Boxers were not very well prepared and were poorly organized, they failed. Although he boxers were not successful at their attempts at reform, it did wake the government up and make the aware of the need to seriously begin plans to reform China.

Many people and organizations have attempted to reform China and search for new ways to make China a great power again. Their attempts also aimed at helping China cope with their rapidly changing world by modernizing their country. Change is always a difficult thing to Implement but for China it was inevitable. The struggle in China for reform had been a long and tedious battle but necessary for the survival of a nation