Foreword to *Minxing bao*

Chen Jiongming

1919

The happiness of full equality is not the kind of false hope that Heaven will automatically bless every single soul on earth. Rather, it gives the human spirit the opportunity for regeneration. If we want to realize this happiness of equality and the opportunity for spiritual regeneration, there is no need for us to do any more searching. What we need is a great awakening of every mind so that all may be free of the prevailing erroneous thinking that "each must struggle for his own existence without any concern for the life and death of others"…

Once thought is transformed, mankind can easily break from the old life and the old institutions. Along the path of evolution, the world as a whole will find a new life and new institutions so as to reach ultimately the stage where there will be no boundaries between states, between nations, or between individuals…

Some people say that since the world has not yet reached the utopian stage, nationalism cannot be abandoned. I do not agree with this view, because nations are only transitory institutions in the evolutionary process of the world and are definitely unnecessary in its later stages of development. As a matter of fact, nationalism has been used by ambitious politicians as a way to fool their people and bully the world…

Strong nations, of course, have used nationalism as an excuse for aggression. Weak ones have used it very effectively in the short term to awaken their people to fight for survival. But once they succeed, they begin to take on the bestial attributes of arrogance and militancy. Then ambitious politicians, believing in their almighty power, take one step further in preaching imperialism, Nietzscheanism, militarism, and the like, to devastate the world and enslave mankind. Let us look at today's strong nations: Which one has not "climbed up" from being weak yesterday?

Some people say that we can put restraints on the use of nationalism. The strong nations do not need nationalism because their existence is protected. The weak nations may use nationalism as a temporary measure for self-protection; and in so doing, they should refrain from fostering anti-foreign feelings, and respect the principle of coexistence with all nations. These are very reasoned arguments. But I believe that it is virtually impossible to restrain nationalism in practice and still retain it as an effective weapon for weak nations…

To restrain nationalism by using another doctrine would fatally reduce its effectiveness as a measure to make weak nations strong and prosperous. If we were to preach nationalism and another "restraining" doctrine at the same time, the result, I believe, would be one of the following: (1) Nationalism would be seriously restricted in its development; (2) it would be abandoned as

something despicable compared with the "restraining" doctrine; and (3) each [doctrine] would pursue its own course, incapable of cooperation…

Men have the natural capacity for brotherly or fratenal love (*bo'ai*). If one knows how to love his country, why not teach him to extend his full capacity to love all of human society? To be able to love all mankind means that one cannot discard his compassion for others since it is linked at least in part to all mankind in the historical past… If any nation is being oppressed today, we can rush to offer her assistance without being in conflict with the compassion we hold for other nations… Is not the concept of "socialism of all mankind" (*quanrenlei shehui zhuyi*) a better doctrine?

The fact that China is making little progress today has created pessimism at the "crippled" evolution of the world. If we want to accelerate a healthy evolution of the world and make the concept of "socialism of all mankind" a reality, I believe that China, as the most populous nation on earth, should bear a major responsibility.

Yesterday's Napoleon attempted to use imperialism to form a united Europe. Today's William II embraced Nietzscheanism in an effort to master the world. Both failed quickly… But as long as the world cannot break with the concept of nations, human society will not know a day of tranquility… What kind of weapon can we use to break down national boundaries? We certainly cannot depend on the use of force, nor on the efforts of one nation… To promote the healthy evolution [of society] is the responsibility of all mankind. Therefore, the weapon to be used must be people's minds.

These "minds" must be devoted to the creation of that healthy evolution, not to the manufacture of evils. If they can be reformed in a unified way, then we will have a weapon with which to break down national boundaries…

China occupies a large territory in the world and has the greatest population, but the contributions of her old culture to today's world are no longer adequate. By refusing to seek new reform through the human mind, China will not only remain stagnant herself, but will also deny an opportunity for the world's Powers to break with their ambitious dream of world domination… Is it not the responsibility of China to seek this reform?

Therefore, if we resolve to work for the benefit of the world, we must start with the reform of China; to reform China, we must start with the reform of our minds… Once our minds are reformed, new opportunities will naturally follow…

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