

New Year's Dream

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“Greetings! Congratulations! It’s the New Year, a new world has come, what a truly joyful occasion! Cheers!” A Chinese man [*Zhina ren* 中国人] who goes by the name of Zhongguo Yimin (“a Chinese national”) uttered these words. He jumped off his bed at six in the morning on the first day of the first month of the Jiachen year to greet his friends. Who knows how many other people said the same words on this particular day of the year? Yet this time they are worth remembering, and here is why.

This man was the descendant of a wealthy family from the Jiangnan region, and since his childhood he always had rather an eccentric disposition. Studying aside, he also had a passion for learning crafts, and mastered all the old inland wood and metal craftsmanship skills as soon as he applied himself to them. When he turned sixteen years old, he left home after entrusting his father and elder brothers to manage the family business and his share of the inheritance, keeping for himself only some money to cover travel expenses. He went to the trading ports to find a job and learn the foreign languages, and after just three years he could pretty much speak English, French, and German. He also studied some Western common knowledge, as well as a few technical crafts, and was then set to travel abroad. Because he loved the ideas of freedom and equality more than anything else, he travelled first to the United States, and from there on to France. Since Germany was the vanguard of technology, he went there, too, and enrolled in a high-level technical school, while also studying philosophy on his own. At the time there were many populist parties from Russia represented in Germany, so he often spent time in these circles, and gradually learnt to speak Russian too. After graduating, he continued to travel: he visited England, Italy, Switzerland, and eventually made his way to Russia, as he wanted to study in detail the state of its society. He passed through Siberia, re-entering China through Manchuria. Travelling from North to South along the waterways of his country, he had the chance to examine all the places he passed through, until he returned to the port whence he had begun his journey. By the time he returned home, he was already in his thirties: the money for his tuition and his travels during those dozen-odd years was all earned by working; he had never asked for a penny from anyone, nor had he ever wasted any of his money on unnecessary things.

After having visited so many places and studied for so many years, he arrived at the following conclusion: “The energy of the human race cannot overcome yet nature, for example, plague, flood, or drought; if such natural calamities come upon us, there is no escape. This is because the world is fragmented into many nations, each of them caring only about its own advantage.

The energy of the human race is thus tied up and wasted in squabbles between nations, and the reason no single country can overcome the others is, if not loss of land, then the surrender of their sovereignty to others. And because each nation is also divided into many a households, and since these households too care only about their own advantage, the power of the human race is tied up and wasted even more. Nowadays even those who live in the most civilized nations waste half their energy on their country and half on their individual households, as a result, there doesn't exist even a single nation complete in itself, so how can we even talk about universalism? Let us first have those who have yet to create a nation do all they can to create one. Today the Slavic people and the Chinese people do have households, but do not have a nation. Yet among the Slavic people, the number of those who are devoting themselves to the establishment of their nation grows larger day by day, while the same cannot be said of the Chinese: they endlessly refer to themselves as 'Chinese,' but very few of them are really concerned with this issue. They are shameless indeed! As a matter of fact, it would not be so difficult to build a new Chinese nation, the only thing needed would be for each person to contribute all the energy tied up in their individual households to collective effort." He held on to this idea, sharing it with everyone he met. Some agreed with him, others did not.

He arrived at the trading port just as Japan and Russia were going to war against each other over control of Chinese territory, and every day the port was flooded with alerts and warnings. Yet it looked as if the people of the port continued collecting their debts, pleading for favors from others, making religious devotions, and drinking their liquor, seemingly all too busy to even read a newspaper.

"What keeps you so busy?" The young man inquired.

"Today is New Year's Eve," they said, "and tomorrow is New Year's Day. It's a big day!"

"Bah!" he thought, "the earth revolves around the sun one time and we count it as one year, but we don't even know how this demarcation began. We could just pick one day at random from the 365 days of the year and make it New Year's Eve or New Year's Day as well, what's so important about today? Besides, everybody is fussing over their own business, and nobody cares about the fact that we are letting other people fight on our own land. These people really are concerned only about their own families! If only one day these people would be able to take the further step and from being homebodies to actually become national citizens, and from national citizens to become citizens of the world, everything would be different then, and only if that day comes could we celebrate this day as being worthy of commemoration!" But since his ideas clashed with the reality all around him, he felt uncomfortable and, sighing deeply, went home to rest.

Suddenly, a loud sound of bells broke into his sleep, and he quickly got up, following the ringing of the bells, until he arrived at a large assembly hall where people were entering one after another. At the door of the assembly hall, a man asked for his name and checked it on a notebook before letting him in. The arrangement of the seats inside the assembly hall followed the geography of China's river basins, that is the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, the White River, and the Xijiang River, with its different sections designated according to similarity of dialects and customs instead of provincial boundaries, such as He-Dong, He-Xi, Jiang-Nan, Jiang-Bei, and the like. Each section hosted hundreds if not thousands of people, and more kept pouring in.

The bell suddenly stopped ringing and at that moment a man stepped onto a podium and addressed the assembly: "All of us here call ourselves Chinese, but let me ask you, do we deserve to do so? In our minds there is a country called China, but if we do not now earnestly go about

building a nation, I am afraid that soon we will never again have the chance to do so! Consider, for example, that Russia and Japan are fighting in Manchuria, yet in regard to this matter we have declared ourselves 'outsiders.' Will we then also declare ourselves 'outsiders' when England and Germany take the Yangtze region as a battlefield in the future? Will we be 'outsiders' when England fights France or Japan in Fujian or Guangdong? Because of being 'outsiders' through and through, we will have nothing left to build a new nation with, and when that time comes, the situation will be truly hopeless! But if today we can manage to prevent the first occurrence of this 'outsiderness,' then there will not be a precedent for it in the future.

"In what way does this declaration of 'outsiderness' and neutrality represent the opinion of the public? This is rather the decision of a bunch of fools who counterfeit public opinion. In today's world there naturally cannot be anything like national unanimity, but opinions of the majority will always be stronger than those of the minority. Yet nowadays the opinions of a few individuals are accepted as if they represented the ideas of us, the majority. It is like a shop where somebody has counterfeited the owner's seal, pretending to be the person in charge of the accounts, and has started to steal and sell away its goods while cashing in on the profits. When the buyers came to pick up the goods, the crowd becomes aware of what is going on, and there is no way people would agree to it. But it is no use if all we do is send a telegram or write article. In situations like this, we must use real force to chase away the imposter and have it out with the people coming to collect the goods.

"If we cannot reason things through, then we have no choice left but to go to war. Fighting a war is not such a difficult endeavor: we already have the soldiers and the provisions to maintain them, but we are not willing to deploy them in a public cause. As for why we are not willing to do that, it is because our eyes are fixed only on our own households and cannot see this larger enterprise! I will give you another example: imagine a house that is getting robbed, its money and legal documents all being stolen. The children in the house will certainly be oblivious to what is going on until their favorite toys come to be stolen. Then, and only then would the children spare no effort to try to get their toys back. What the children do not realize is that with the money and deeds the thieves stole the family could buy them many more toys, but now that the money is gone, the family will starve to death. What would be the point of having toys anyway? Caring about one's own family without caring about the good of the country is to behave like these children. But even if one has a certain understanding of the situation and say 'I am willing to devote my whole life,' this is still useless if everybody else just sits by and watches. If I contribute wealth to the public good and it ends up turning into somebody else's personal fortune while my own family suffers in vain, I will then decide to make no more contributions! But if we look at the current situation, it would be wrong to ascribe this kind of behavior simply to people's depravity: these people are rather prisoners of old customs. If we want to get rid of these customs, we must establish a new rule: one shall receive in proportion to his or her own efforts, and when there is no effort, there shall be no benefit. To call this karma would not be wrong, and if put into effect everyone would exert themselves."

At this point, numerous attendants brought out some pamphlets and distributed them to the assembly. The man on the podium resumed his speech: "Gentlemen, you have all been chosen as representatives of our various districts to deliberate on legislation. Would you give your approval to the motion we are about to submit?" This "Zhongguo Yimin" then vaguely recalled that his hometown had indeed taken part in the process of selection of representatives, and that he had

been chosen for the task, so he picked up a pamphlet and studied it carefully. The proposals included therein were divided into five sections:

Section one—in which a two-part survey is presented:

The first part of the survey concerns the land: such things as mountains, rivers, weather, climate, and the natural assets of the country; products from the surface of the land; the minerals obtainable from the ground, and resources derived from the waters and the atmosphere.

The second part of the survey concerns the population: how many are under the age of seven; how many are between the ages of seven and sixteen; how many are between the ages of twenty-four and forty-eight; and how many are older than forty-eight (in which age should be calculated as one year for each revolution of the earth around the sun after a person is born); how many have received education and how many have not; how many have an occupation and how many do not; how many are, deaf-mute, blind, otherwise disabled and impaired, or mentally ill.

Section two—an assessment of the country's spatial planning and construction: of the railways and the waterways; of the farm land, pasture land, schools, factories, kitchens, tailor shops, communal canteens, parks, hospitals, public dormitories, residences for married couples, nurseries, retirement homes, institutions for educating the blind and the dumb, work places for the disabled and the impaired, warehouses, logistical facilities, libraries, theatres, legislative halls, statistics bureaus, newspapers, and courts.

Section three—containing a two-part discussion on employment:

The first part concerns the most common occupations: those that involve the processing of natural resources (such as agriculture and manufacturing); those that involve the movement of resources (such as mining and transportation).

The second part concerns those jobs that involve the management of intellectual resources, such as the professions related to education, publishing, and entertainment, or the disciplines dedicated to the eradication of harm, such as medicine and jurisprudence.

Section four—concerning the life cycle of a person: children shall be raised and nourished until the age of seven; education shall start at the age of seven and continue until the age of twenty-four; the working age shall be from twenty-four to forty-eight years old; retirement shall come at the age of forty-eight (although one may also maintain a part-time occupation in the field of education and the like).

Section five—concerning the everyday life of a person: in a day of twenty-four hours, eight hours shall be devoted to work; eight hours shall be devoted to eating, resting and enjoying oneself; and eight hours shall be left for sleeping.

The pamphlet also contained all sorts of information and suggestions regarding how to implement the new system thereby described, all elucidated in full detail. After all the participants of the assembly had read the document, the man on the podium spoke again: "Gentlemen, you

should have all read the proposal by now. If you saw anything inappropriate, I urge you to express your views.”

One representative stood up and said: “This program is really excellent, but nowadays all occupations are undertaken for personal gain, which is why people are willing to do the most hazardous and difficult jobs, because in the end their personal gain will be much higher than if they worked at other jobs. But if it is true that according to this new system all occupations shall receive equal compensation, who wouldn’t choose then the easiest task? Nobody would be willing to do the most difficult and hazardous jobs any more, and I am afraid that in this way the world will cease to advance.”

“No need to worry about that,” the man on the podium answered. “People are lazy only if a job is not compatible with their strength and temperament; if the task really befits the worker’s abilities, there is no way to turn him away from it. I will give you an example: the eyes are made for seeing, would it be possible to order them to stay closed and not to see? The ears are made for hearing, would it be possible to force them not to hear? Breathing benefits the lungs, and the nose works for them, while food benefits the stomach, and the mouth and tongue work at its service. There are different kinds of workers in our nation, and, like the sense organs and limbs of a body, if we do not misuse them, all will be well. For this reason, the fields of medicine and education are the most important of all, because they can provide us a detailed profile of the body and the spirit of the people, both for what traits that are inherited, and for those that stem from habit. If the nation has a certain occupation to fill, we need not fear there will not be someone suitable willing to perform it. As for technology, the manufacture of machines is most important, so all the most dangerous tasks can be performed by machines instead. There will still be, however, dangerous and arduous tasks, and in accord with our rule of flexibility, these occupations need not require the full eight hours of the working day, so this should not pose any problems.” Thereupon, all the representatives in the hall applauded their approval.

Another man stood and said: “Yes, working conditions can be adjusted this way, but I am afraid there will still be resistance from the part of those who passed themselves off as being in charge of running things, and from those who are used to living off their own personal properties and refuse to see the light: they will try to find ways to obstruct.”

The man on the podium spoke again: “Assuredly so, but gentlemen, you represent the collectivity, thus whatever you approve will represent the will of the collectivity. In the management of public affairs the majority will overcome the minority, and if somebody intends to obstruct the cause of the public for the sake of his own selfish interest, then this person will be considered an enemy of the public. There is an old saying that conveys this idea well: ‘We would rather hear the family of an official crying than see the tears of the people who suffer from that official.’ We will be better off if we are a bit ruthless. Nowadays a system of wireless telegraphy has been put in place everywhere: since you have already agreed to the proposals, we can send telegrams to all areas, set up statistics bureaus and courts, finally implement the whole program so everything can be set in motion. But diplomacy also requires special solutions that I would like you to consider.” The attendants then distributed another pamphlet, the content of which was arranged in three articles:

Article one—the recovery of Manchuria:

It is not the case that the Chinese army is incapable of fighting a war, but rather that our soldiers do not know whether they are fighting for themselves or merely

for those who have hired them, which has given rise to the sayings that “maintain an army for a thousand days but deploy it only one” and “the imperial court does not deploy a hungry army.” Provisions for the troops are meagre to begin with, and our commanders embezzle part of those, so it’s no wonder that the soldiers are reticent to put their lives on the line. But even if these commanders were more enlightened, there would still be many others who would obstruct them. Under our new system, we will get rid of the obstructionists and oust the ignorant commanders. Once the soldiers see the new national law is in place, they will understand that this land is their own property, and they will take charge of their responsibilities as soldiers. They won’t have to worry any more about their provisions, and they can also rest assured that the families they have always worried about are being taken care of. What will hold them back from exerting themselves to the utmost then? Furthermore, with the reform of the law mounted brigands will come to terms with the authorities, while many more among the populace will volunteer to join the army; local militias will be formed all around the country that will be able to answer to each other’s call, so the power of the army will be more than sufficient to push back the Russian troops. We should thus declare war on Russia immediately. While it is true that our navy can only rely on a few old vessels of no real use, the cadets which we had sent to study in England have now returned, and if we were to put them in command of these vessels, they would be able to capture some Russian merchant ships, and in this way we could provide the Japanese some support. On the one hand, we will send a diplomatic dispatch to Japan to negotiate an agreement: we will offer them our support to cover the costs of their naval warfare. Because the Japanese economy is suffering, there is no way they will not gladly accept the assistance. In this way we can claim half of the success of the Japanese navy. On the other hand, we will instruct the Chinese students who graduated from Russian universities to infiltrate various regions of Russia to mobilize the populist parties to overthrow the government. Attacking from three sides like this, won’t we be able to take back Manchuria?

Article two—the eradication of foreign spheres of influence:

For these they have always relied on railway construction and mining. With the reform of the state, the Chinese people will cease to have differences among one another, but they will become exceedingly aware of the differences between our country and others. Despite their capital, foreigners will not be able to hire a single Chinese worker to work for them, and we will negotiate with the foreigners, saying: “The treaties we signed in the past were uncivilized, and now anything the public will not comply with cannot be implemented.” We will return their capital, even with extra interest, and rescind the treaties. We will buy back everything they have already built and opened.

Article three—the dismantling the foreign concessions:

With the reform of the state, we will have only one transportation industry; there will be no more what is called commercial management. We will export only the surplus of our country’s production. A portion of the old trade relations will remain, insofar

as China will have to buy from outside those resources that it lacks. Nevertheless, this trade will be managed by a public enterprise that will deal with it, and no private citizen will be allowed to trade with foreigners. Every year a quota for imports will be decided in advance, and foreign merchants will have no room to compete. As for the Chinese who now live in the concessions, if they do not intend to return to their hometowns, they can join with their compatriots to start joint enterprises within the new rules. If they apply themselves, they won't have to worry about not having work or food: they will never wish to continue to do those jobs like compradors, interpreters, and stewards, in which they were obliged to be at the beck and call of foreigners! Once the foreigners stop entering the country, the civilizational level of the Chinese will rise, and their consuls will not have anything left to do. As for Chinese abroad, with the exception of the three categories of students, tourists, and the diplomatic corps, either they follow the new rules, or they come back home. As for Chinese envoys abroad, they won't be needed anymore. If all these measures are put into effect, will consuls still be needed to occupy the concessions? We'll just give them a little money and buy the concessions back. With the exception of tourists and diplomats, foreigners will have to abide to by our new laws in order to be allowed to stay in the country.

After the members of the assembly had gone through these articles, one of them stood up to and said: "Foreigners talk the language of power, not of justice [*gongli* 公理]. Setting aside the issue of how to deal with Russia, in regard to the latter two points, they will stick to the old treaties and say that if you say you do not intend to recognize these treaties any more, they will simply respond by not recognizing our nation, and take advantage of the situation by suppressing us with military force. What good can come of that?"

The man on the podium took the floor again: "We have also taken this possibility into consideration. In talking of military prowess, our soldiers are motivated by pure patriotism, while their motivation is only half patriotic. In terms of skills and technique, we have many among us who have graduated from German military schools and the naval academies of Britain, and all of them have, in turn, trained groups of acolytes, so we have no fear of falling behind. As for our weapons and ammunition, we have accumulated a sufficiency in the past and, when combined with what we have produced recently, we will have more than enough. But for warships, even though we do have experts who are able to build them, I am afraid we lack time to do so; going abroad to buy them while the Russians are fighting at our doorstep as we speak is not a feasible option either. We intend to send representatives to the largest shipyards abroad, and pay high prices to buy warships that are almost finished, like the Japanese did in buying the Japanese did in buying their Kasuga cruisers and the Nisshin: this solution will allow us to sail the newly acquired ships back home at once when the war is concluded. If we still cannot catch up, there is nothing to be done about it, so we'll have to get hardhearted. Within three months' time the submarines and airplanes currently under construction will be ready to deploy: when the enemy's warships arrive, we will be able to meet them with our underwater mines and our bombs from above. No matter how well armored they are, they will all be broken into bits. Admittedly, this course of action is ruthless, because no one will survive these attacks. We are expecting to apply this strategy only in the event of emergency. Normally we advocate military attack by both the

army and the navy to reduce fatalities. That is why we have military science as a special branch of learning!”

Once the man on the podium concluded his speech, another representative stood up and said: “It really does seem that we have planned out all our strategies in advance, but I have another concern: these plans require a lot of money, and at the moment we are still trying to pay back reparations for past wars. In trying to put in place the New Policies, we are constantly told we don’t have the money to do so; they try to extort it, but still come up with nothing. If we have to maintain an army, acquire new ships, and buy back the concessions, the cost of all these things combined is going to be on the order of billions, so could you please explain us where you intend to obtain this amount?”

The man on the podium said: “The Chinese people are actually not poor, and many people simply store away money which they have no intention of using for public purposes, but rather do the opposite: they prey on the collectivity in order to accumulate personal wealth. As a result, the public runs out of money and is forced to extort it from the poor, thus making us all appear even poorer. Setting aside resources like property and mines and counting only readily available money, our self-declared rulers, together with the rich, keep their money hidden inside their mansions, they bury it in the ground, and they store it in foreign banks. If we were to add up all this money and calculate on a per capita basis over our four hundred million citizens, while it will not match the 2854 dollars of income per person of the British, nor the 2282 dollars of the Americans, but we would get quite close to the 552 dollars of the Russians and the 239 dollars of the Japanese. Granted it is not going to be five hundred billion, but certainly over one hundred billion. Under our current system, our nation has no other need for this money, so is there any reason this sum cannot be used in its entirety to settle our diplomatic issues?”

Once the assembly pondered this—the man on the podium clearly had a point—they all expressed their approval. The speaker nodded his head and left the stage, while another official announced that the new national system had been decided upon and the meeting was adjourned. One by one, the representatives left the assembly hall. This Mr. “Yimin” left the hall too. Having forgotten where he lived, he proceeded to stroll aimlessly around the city, until, without being aware of it, he eventually arrived at a place where he saw a big building, whose sign revealed it to be the designated residence of the representatives of the national assembly. The building was divided according to the same principle used for the seats in the assembly hall, and each district was assigned its own space, with a park, a canteen, the lodgings, a library, a reading room, and a conference room. These spaces were not dissimilar to those mentioned in one of the pamphlets distributed during the meeting. Here, the national representatives would gather on a daily basis to discuss matters of state, and because this was after all their profession, hence the dedicated meeting rooms. Outside the meeting rooms there were wireless telegraph stations which could communicate with the statistics bureaus of the various districts: in this way the new laws and regulations could be transmitted everywhere directly. It goes without saying that these reached the middle class, but the lowest strata of society was positively affected by the new system as well: these people were accustomed to knowing about their hardships, pain, envy, fear, karmic cause and effect, and distrust because of the novels, songs, popular lectures, and shows they enjoyed. Yet once they discovered there was a bright path before them, they were utterly moved. Early on in the process a model village was built, and its management was entrusted to the most enlightened of the elite for the rest to observe, so not a single person disapproved of the new system.

Among the rich and the self-appointed rulers there remained only some who were crazily determined to obstruct the reform process, and despite all attempts to talk sense to them, they paid no heed. They were evaluated in the assembly, and eventually deemed guilty. The charges were brought to court, and after the judges had confirmed their guilt, notices of their convictions were posted in marketplaces all over the country, and they were condemned to death. The culprits were put to death by electrocution, and their bodies were marked with writings that listed their crimes and the punishments they had received. It was as if these individuals were struck by the god of thunder, as popular legend has it. These measures were all implemented by the tribunals having harnessed electronics: the judges analyzed matters extensively before sentence was passed, and if there were any doubts about the case, they were debated in the assembly, so once a verdict was pronounced, the punishment was applied immediately. These events came as mysteriously as wraiths, so there was no way to guard against them or elude their course. If the first death could be explained away as happenstance, after two or three other people met the same fate, the members of the opposition party were as if standing in the middle of an empty room under the stare gaze and judgement of the many, and they were utterly terrified. Once those who are law-abiding citizens heard of this, they were actually happy and they gradually surrendered. Estimating all cases, north and south, those actually sentenced to death were not more than two hundred people. Among them there were some of the most well-known wealthy figures, who were surrounded by coteries of sycophants and lackeys, who at the beginning stood on their side. Yet when the tribunals promulgated the sentences, these latter soon realized that death for them was inevitable, so they quickly changed their minds and made amends, to the extent that within a year the whole country was of one mind. All the measures were adopted successfully, and everything anticipated came to pass as expected. This is the whole story he related. During this time, "Yimin" did not actually stay in his lodgings the whole year, but received all of the news of the reform process by telegraph, because a few days after the initial meeting, he was dispatched to Russia in order to mobilize the Russian populist parties, while another representative stood in for him at the assembly. In Russia, everything proceeded as expected: in a few months' time the Russian populist parties prevailed and Manchuria was returned.

After "Yimin" came back from Russia, he returned to his hometown to manage a factory that had been established there. At that time, because of the abolition of foreign spheres of influence and the concessions, many foreign countries still did not comply with the new order. In the eyes of foreigners, China was like a paradise, a rich and temperate land. They believed the land was populated with inferior animals which, like dogs, horses, cattle, and sheep, either slaved away at their owners' will, or waited to be exploited. These animals only knew how to persecute each other, and lived in a dog-eat-dog kind of way: they would never have the strength to resist the foreigners. And it just so happened that there were some people who passed themselves off as being in charge, who would handle the rope and the knife to deal with these beasts. These people were willing to do the bidding of the foreigners, so why would the latter not take advantage of this? But things didn't quite work out as expected, with these lower animals finally able to destroy the ropes and knives and decide to stand up to secure their own heavenly kingdom. They wouldn't be reconciled, and with only the Russian populist party in support. Having risen up from their own ropes and knives, overcome adversity and obtained their revenge, they were at last to manage things their own way. Finally, when justice won out, it turned out China and Russia had been collaborating behind closed doors all along: the two sides planned their actions in synchrony, and Russia was the first to recognize the new Chinese nation. America, where the

rights of the people are deemed most important, soon recognized it too. But other nations, either ruled by hereditary monarchs or commanded by some arrogant and oligarchic political party, could not tolerate losing such a good place. They believed that the Chinese were most averse to the notions of disloyalty, lack of filiality, and treason, and if these accusations were forcibly applied to the new dispensation, even if you insulted them to their faces, or tortured and killed them, they would bow in gratitude nevertheless. Furthermore, if they managed to avenge the former emperor then they would have the right to serve as emperor on their own part, for which there were precedents. They looked at China and saw it as this wonderful melon that they had discussed carving up a number of times, and now their occasion had finally arrived. Prompted by the old belief that an army can only be strong in an autocracy, and that the new China, now that it was advocating republicanism and equality, could not possess any military strength, and they could attack at their leisure. Each foreign nation thus set a date, assembled their armies and navies, and attacked by different routes: their navies through Hong Kong, Xiamen, Dinghai, Shanghai, Yantai, Tianjin, or Lüshun; their land forces advanced from Korea, India, and Vietnam. Some countries advanced alone, while some others formed coalitions of two or three, their armies responding to each other's calls and their banners covering the sky; the masts of their ships stood like forests on the surface of the sea. It was more spectacular than the Vertical Alliance against Qin by the six states in the Warring States Period, or the Fifth Coalition against France in 1814: they wanted to reduce the land of China to dust.

But in the end suffice it to say that true gold does not fear fire, and it is not a matter of numbers. In general, a defensive war is easier to fight than an offensive one, and the only concern on the part of the defender is enemy agents revealing their strategic plans, but the Chinese people by this time took their country as their own soul, they fought for no other right beyond this, they would never damage it one bit. The enemy tried many ways to hire people as informants, but they could not find any. They could not even get their hands on detailed maps. Neither could they get any clues as to our tactics and strategies. Now, these foreign countries, no matter their civilization, they were still of fighting for material gains—this was their horizon—and we had plenty of money to hire high level spies and obtain detailed information about their troop movements.

At each land battle, because of the difference of positions between attackers and defenders, as well as the disparity in patriotic conviction, the invaders were driven back every time. As for the war at sea, even though the enemies kept probing the waters with telescopes, lighting up the night with searchlights, and sending minesweepers on reconnaissance, they were never able to detect anything apart from the few soldiers who manned our coastal batteries. They thus felt confident enough to enter our harbors. When they began to exchange fire with the shore batteries, either the shells would explode from the air or torpedoes would hit them from below, so no ship was spared. It was only after firing commenced that we deployed this ruthless strategy. The spectacle was unbearable, yet it had to be this way if we were to defend ourselves. Since they could not purchase any informants, they could not know our plans. Only later, by using the telescopes of the ships not directly engaged in battle and by tracking the time and the location of the explosions, did they figure out our two means of attack. Even if they could have figured out a way to counteract our attacks, there would have been no time to do so into practice, so the only thing left for them to do was to retreat with their damaged ships.

The armies and fleets of the invading nations were vanquished by China. Those entities that had been referred to as spheres of influence were completely eliminated, and all occupied territories given back to China. In the end, the Chinese decided to close their ports, but the foreign

countries, refusing to accept this, convened a major Berlin, the capital of Germany, where they discussed ways to break down China's resistance. "The love of the Chinese for their country is so pure that I fear there is no way to break it," they said, "it would be better for us to give up and talk reconciliation, at least that way we would still be able to gain some benefit through trade." Eventually, through the mediation of Russia and America, they came to terms with us.

Even though we had won the war, we had no intention of taking advantage of our position, but on the contrary, with their militaries in disarray, we proposed a cessation of hostilities. We requested the institution of an international court, and the creation of several contingents of a world army. The composition of both the court and the army had to reflect the size of the population of each country involved. We requested that, with the exception of police forces, no country could maintain any form of national army; if two countries were to become involved in a dispute, it would have to be adjudicated by the international court. If any party refused to accept its judgment, the world army would attack them. If disputes were to arise between the citizens of a country and their government, that matter too would be taken to the court.

When other countries heard about the Chinese proposal, they took it as words from heaven, which, when conjoined with the strength of Russia and America, resulted in no one daring to oppose it. The treaty was thus signed and put into effect at once. From then on, there were no more wars, and people lived happily and peacefully, with the happiness of the Chinese naturally greatly exceeding that of others. If someone came up with a new method or discovered a new source of profit, everybody would benefit from it, so that all the ills of the past, such as insufficiencies of funds, and lack of talent, ceased to exist. Civilization reached its apex. As for customs and morality, names were abandoned, and numbers used instead. The categories of ruler and subject were no more, and the administration of the public interest became a matter of logic, with no room left for the confusion brought about by passing the buck. The categories of father and son were no more, as there would always be someone to take care of the education of the young, of the well-being of the old, and the health needs of the sick; the categories of husbands and wives were no more, because if two individuals agreed to live with each other, they could simply go straightforwardly to a park and become engaged, then proceed to the marriage bureau; the sordid practices of prostitution and adultery existed no more. Laws against rape were soon promulgated, and the most serious cases were punished with death; idleness was sanctioned with such measures as reductions of food and limitations of movement. Eventually these laws became obsolete, as no one violated them, and the tribunals were closed.

Railways now reached every corner of the country. Many terms such as "yours" or "mine" that were used to express difference and adjectives concerning judgement among people like "good," "evil," "grateful," and "rancorous" ceased to exist, with swearwords and curses dying out even more spontaneously. With the development of transportation, language became simpler too: a national language was adopted together with new set of characters which could transcribe both meaning and sound, and could be learnt quickly. A single language for writing and speech came into use, and was adopted for the publication of all new books, magazines, and newspapers; it also recorded the principles and the philosophy upon which the new nation had been built, its best customs and traditions, so that everyone appreciated them, regardless of their country of origin. Because this new language was easy, there was hardly anybody who would did not learn it. Language cultivates thought, and thinking constructs reality: this new system was adopted by Russia too, and then by the United States, eventually spreading to India, Australia, and the continents of Asia, Europe, Africa, and the rest of the Americas, such that in less than

sixty years this new system had spread to all five continents. Everyone discussed convening an international meeting to eliminate national boundaries and abolish the international court and world army, which by that time had become merely nominal institutions. Because people did not have any more reason to fight with each other, they planned to join in a common effort to overcome nature and to take control over the climate and the seasons, also making plans to conquer the atmosphere and colonize space, the ultimate destination of the competitive spirit of the world's humans.

The date of this international meeting was not chosen by chance, it was the first day of the first month of the year of a new Jiachen cycle; by then, "Zhongguo Yimin" was more than ninety years old. On that day he could not contain his joy, as all his aspirations had come to pass. On his way to the international conference, he stumbled upon a friend, but as he was about to wish him new year's greetings, the sound of a bell suddenly woke him up. It was in a dream that he had met his friend, and while the world he woke up in was still a dark one, he still wished to say: "Greetings! Congratulations! It is the New Year, a new world has come!"

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