

RE-COMMEMORATING 1644¹

The 360th Anniversary of the Jiashen Year

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Once again we encounter the Jiashen 甲申 year.² Three hundred sixty years ago, in 1644, the 21st year of the sexagenary cycle of the lunar calendar, known as the Jiashen year, China underwent cataclysmic change. An old dynasty perished, and a new one died as it emerged from the womb. An even newer dynasty leaped onto the stage of history, and this dynasty changed China as well as itself. Everything we have today is related to this dynasty.

Sixty years ago, in 1944, Guo Moruo,³ living in Chongqing, wrote his long essay “Commemorating the 300th Anniversary of the Jiashen Year.” This was on the eve of the victory of the Chinese revolution, and Guo’s essay played an inestimable role in our Party’s seizing political power over China. Mao Zedong set great store by this essay and made it a document of internal rectification for the Party. Reading it today is both an inspiring and a baneful experience.

It is inspiring in that it impelled our Party to absorb the lesson of Li Zicheng’s⁴ defeat; it is baneful in that it flogs the corpse of feudalism while promoting the spirit of feudalism. The style is smooth and its motivation pure, but its conception falls short of the mark. Of course we cannot be overly demanding of our forebears; even Mao could not break with custom. When Mao left Xibaipo⁵ for Beijing, as he stepped into the jeep he excitedly said to Zhou Enlai, “Today we’re going to Beijing for the civil service exam. We can’t be like Li Zicheng!” He also said, “There’s the imperial exam as well!” Although Mao was joking when he said this, it reflected a shadow deep in his soul. Could we in the Communist Party be like Li Zicheng? Was it enough merely not to be like Li Zicheng? Not only could we not be like Li Zicheng, we could not be

¹Editors’ note (EN): The Chinese version of this article (甲申再祭) was published by *Guo Jia Zhan Lue (National Strategy)*, September 2004.

²Translator’s note (TN): The author’s Chinese readers would be aware that 2004 was a *Jiashen* year, as were 1644 and 1944. The sexagenary cycle of the Chinese lunar calendar rotates among five Heavenly Stems (the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water) and 12 Earthly Branches (the animals of the zodiac). The Jiashen year combines the first Heavenly Stem *jia*, representing Wood, with the ninth Earthly Branch *shen*, representing the Monkey.

³EN: Guo Moruo (1892 – 1978) was a well-known Chinese author, poet, historian, archaeologist, and high ranking government official of P. R. China. --Editor’s note.

⁴TN: Li Zicheng (1606-1645) was a rebel leader who overthrew the Ming dynasty in 1644 and ruled as emperor of the Shun dynasty until his death one year later.

⁵TN: Xibaipo is the Hebei village where the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army conducted the last stages of the revolution from May 1948 to March 1949.

like anyone else, either; we could only be ourselves. The Communist Party was the banner of humanity, and had no reference object in the endless river of feudalism. The fact is that we of course didn't become Li Zicheng, but Li Zicheng's blood flowed in our veins, so could we hope to score 100 in the civil service exam? After entering Beijing, the movement swarmed upward in violent struggle. Revolution swallowed up revolution, and the people imposed dictatorship on the people. The Divine Land⁶ once again sank into upheaval. This situation did not end until the Deng Xiaoping era.

The Jiashen year has special meaning to the Chinese people, and its return makes the mind race. Benedetto Croce⁷ said, "All history is contemporary history." I would like to say that contemporary history cannot escape history (all contemporary history has historical parallels). I would also like to say that we must press on toward history for the sake of tomorrow. Hence this essay commemorating, once again, the Jiashen year.

I. Emperors

The history of the Jiashen year tells us that Chinese history is a history of leaders. That is, it is purely a history of heroes. When we say that the people create history, we are in fact saying that the representatives of the people – heroes – create history. In the West, before Britain's great bourgeois revolution, its history was also a history of leaders, but from then on it was increasingly less so, and especially today it is not. China has no religion; China's genuine religion is Confucianism, and without eliminating Confucianism, monarchs remain firmly entrenched. The history of an individual is the history of all, and the history of all is the history of one individual. Our people have always needed leaders.

In 1644, China had four emperors: Shunzhi (in fact, Dorgon),⁸ Chongzhen,⁹ Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong.¹⁰ Which one qualified as a leader? History, like a woman, only embraces a qualified leader. Those who are unqualified merely smooth the path for the champion. If everything that occurred in the Jiashen year is seen as a scene of historical intercourse, we can make the following analogy: Chongzhen tidied the

⁶TN: China is also referred to as "the Divine Land or Cotinent."

⁷TN: 1866-1952, Italian idealist philosopher and historian.

⁸TN: Dorgon was the 14th son of Nurhaci, khan of the Later Jin Dynasty, which came to be known as the Qing. During the reign of his half-brother Hong Taiji, Dorgon participated in the military conquests of Mongolia and Korea. After Hong Taiji died in 1643, Dorgon vied with Hong Taiji's eldest son, Hooge, for the throne, and as a compromise, Hong Taiji's ninth son, who was only six years old, became the Shunzhi Emperor. Dorgon was appointed regent and became the de factor ruler.

⁹TN: Born Zhu Youjian (1611-1644), Chongzhen was the 16th and last emperor of the Ming dynasty, reigning from 1627 to 1644.

¹⁰TN: Zhang Xianzhong (1606-1647) was a leader of a peasant revolt who conquered Sichuan before being killed by the Manchu invaders.

room, Li Zicheng arranged the bedding, Zhang Xianzhong did the undressing, and Dorgon enthusiastically performed the coupling. Emperor Chongzhen was obviously extremely unqualified as a ruler. The Ming dynasty was the worst in all of China's history. The bloodline of Zhu Yuanzhang's clan had the most shameless of all genes. Emperor Chongzhen's famous quote was, "We are not the ruler of a failed state." How was he not? He was most certainly the ruler of a failed state. It was a historical inevitability that the Ming dynasty would die in his hands. It died rightly and without the least suspense involved. There was more than one ruler of failed states in Chinese history; some brought their states to ruin through overindulgence in liquor or sex, some through brutality or extravagance, but Emperor Chongzhen did it by exterminating talent. An overview of late Ming history gives us an intense sensation: It seems that Emperor Chongzhen had a profound hatred for the talented people under him, and could only feel satisfied by seeing them dead. The strategy of punitive expeditions is a strategy that puts talented people to good use. Although the Ming dynasty perished, talent still abounded throughout the land. Today's China, although having had its fill of suffering and tribulation, is still full of talented people. The key is how to discover and use them. Likewise there was a group of people who in the hands of Emperor Chongzhen were ministers of a failed state, and who in the hands of Li Zicheng were fawning ministers, but who in Dorgon's hands became ministers who founded a nation. This fact remains electrifying even 300 years later.

For thousands of years, China's social form was not merely "rule by men" but "rule by one man." "I am the nation." Under the rule of a single man, the more talent that was available, the more stable the nation. Why didn't Chongzhen learn from Liu Bang and Li Shimin,¹¹ who whether seen as using talent as lackeys, or using lackeys as talent, still constantly developed the country under sustained rule? This was the personal disposition of Emperor Chongzhen; his character determined his fate, and his fate decided the fate of China's people. He regarded himself as a man of genius and his ministers as mediocrities, but unfortunately he himself was a mediocrity. A second-rate leader doesn't dare make use of first-rate subordinates. Chongzhen was at best third-rate goods, so whom would he dare put to use? The majority of China's emperors had one outstanding characteristic: a peasant mentality. From ancient times, China pursued a practice of small farms worked by their peasant owners. Major landlords were few, because China had a 2,000-year history of opposing land mergers. Consequently, landlords could not be a deciding factor. Families

¹¹TN: Liu Bang (256 or 247-195 B.C.) was a peasant rebel leader who founded the Han dynasty, reigning as Gaozu from 202 to 295 B.C. Li Shimin (?-649) was leader of an insurrection against Sui dynasty who founded the Tang dynasty, reigning from 626 to 649 as Tang Taizong.

who worked their own land engaged mainly in production and had no surplus capital, and when there was surplus labor, there was no place to send it; that is the main reason why China didn't have industry. The poor enjoyed cursing the wealthy, and the wealthy enjoyed cursing those who were even wealthier. Peasants could move energetically at this low level. Peasants revolted and overthrew the emperor and ultimately wanted to become emperors themselves. Chen Sheng and Wu Guang were that way, Zhu Yuanzhang¹² was that way, and so was Li Zicheng. Stalin once said, "Peasants oppose landlords and embrace emperors."¹³ This is why.

Chongzhen had a deeply engrained peasant character. This undoubtedly came from Zhu Yuanzhang's bloodline. The "eastern matter"¹⁴ and "suppression of bandits" both required money, and as emergencies arose again and again on the front, Chongzhen even planned to borrow one year's rents from the people, with the result that the entire country was filled with complaints punning on Chongzhen's name by calling him Emperor Harsh Levy (*chongzheng*). Was he out of money? No. When Li Zicheng plundered the Forbidden City and broke open the palace treasure store, he was struck dumb. The treasury "had an unused accumulation of 37 million minted coins, and 10 million ingots of gold, each weighing 500 *liang*¹⁵ per ingot." Much of the gold and silver was moldering with disuse. With such an enormous store of money, what fear was there of not having enough to pay the army? It was more than enough for Li Zicheng.

There was no lack of talent, but Chongzhen didn't dare make use of his men of talent. Yuan Chonghuan¹⁶ was a man of talent, and that's why he died so violently. According to the official histories, Yuan Chonghuan said to Emperor Chongzhen: "Give me enough money, grain, soldiers and horses, and I can defend Liao myself." So bold and heroic! Chongzhen was speechless. Why was he speechless? What was drifting through his murky mind at that moment? I feel that at that moment he must have felt a

¹²TN: Military commanders Chen Sheng and Wu Guang led the first rebellion against the Qin dynasty. Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398) was a military leader who rose up against the Mongol Yuan dynasty and founded the Ming Dynasty, reigning as Hongwu from 1368 to 1398.

¹³TN: "When we speak of [Cossack rebels] Razin and Pugachev, it must never be forgotten that they were tsarists: they were opposed to the landlords, but were in favor of a 'good tsar.'" Joseph Stalin, "An Interview with the German Author Emil Ludwig," December 13, 1931, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/dec/13a.htm>

¹⁴Author's Note: The "eastern matter" (*dongshi*) refers to waging war against the Donglu ("eastern prisoners"), a pejorative term used in the Ming dynasty to refer to the Manchus.

¹⁵TN: One *liang* equals 50 grams.

¹⁶Yuan Chonghuan (1584-1630) was a Ming dynasty general known for his defense of Liaoning from the Manchu invaders. Yuan defeated Nurhaci in the first Battle of Ningyuan and then Huang Taiji at the second Battle of Ningyuan. Even so, he was falsely charged with treason, apparently through allegations made by the Manchus, and Chongzhen ordered him executed by slow slicing.

thread of jealousy. I don't believe that Huang Taiji's clumsy strategy of sowing dissension could have deceived Chongzhen into ordering Yuan Chonghuan dismembered. Based on Chongzhen's character, I daresay he was lacking in everything but envy. The Chinese people lack this characteristic least of all. Francis Bacon called envy an "evil eye."¹⁷ Emperor Chongzhen possessed a pair of evil eyes. Freud said that human beings have a natural propensity for envy, but Western culture restrains this quality. The Bible explicitly includes envy among the Seven Deadly Sins.¹⁸ Chinese culture, however, amplifies this quality. Western culture is a culture that creates talent, but Chinese culture is a culture that smothers talent. China's more than 2,000 years of history is essentially a history of smothering talent, of the inhibition of thought and of killing people out of jealousy. Every person envies, and every person is envied. In China, people who are outstanding in their thinking or actions are beaten back unless they have a background of power and influence. The Chinese culture tells us to keep our distance from talent, because talent is dangerous. Talent will never be forgiven by one's contemporaries. Others will never praise the talent of the living, but only of the dead. The closer one is to the ruler, the more unfortunate it is to have talent.

Zhang Xianzhong also had a very jealous mentality, including envy of intellectuals and talented people, because he was also a thorough peasant. But he was stronger than Emperor Chongzhen in one respect: He was up front about it, not furtive like Chongzhen. After proclaiming himself emperor in Sichuan, Zhang Xianzhong took on the top scorer in the imperial examination, a man of abundant wit and talent. Zhang Xianzhong didn't let him far from his side and was always asking for him, but after a short time he also killed that person. When asked why, Zhang Xianzhong stroked his beard and said, "I loved that young fellow too much!" In the Chinese, envy is not only a mental impulse, but is regularly manifested as jealous behavior and in the actual persecution and even killing of others.

Smothering talent and genius inevitably encourages the incompetent and despicable.¹⁹ A man of talent who proudly and aloofly guards his own convictions is sure to end up in Hell. When Yuan Chonghuan was dismembered, the ordinary people of Beijing ate up every scrap of his flesh. China has from ancient times been a Hell for talented people, while

¹⁷TN: Francis Bacon, "Of Envy," in *Essays, Civil and Moral*, The Harvard Classics, 1909-14.

¹⁸TN: The Seven Deadly Sins is an early Christian rather than Biblical concept, but see Mark 7: 20-23 (NIV), quoting Jesus as saying: "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

¹⁹TN: The term the author uses here is *goucai*, literally "dog talent," referring to a person whose chief ability is in slavish pandering to the powerful, as opposed to the word for genuine talent or genius, *tiancai*, or "heavenly talent."

the incompetent and despicable cheerfully stick with their masters and end up in Paradise. The incompetent and despicable have three outstanding characteristics: 1) They are climbers. In Stengel's words, wherever there is the motivation for advancement, there will be flattery.²⁰ 2) They inform against others. The eyes of the envious are ever sharp and discerning. 3) They spread rumors to defame others. Only if those who are defamed gain power will the defamers' envy be transformed into terror and their hatred into adulation. From ancient times, Chinese have only worshiped power and not talent.

Li Zicheng was both an emperor and a peasant. His tragedy was not in losing, but rather in almost winning. Of course he was heroic. People become heroes for different reasons; some due to historical mistakes, some due to historical coincidence. Li Zicheng became a hero because of history's mercilessness – first in his favor and then against him, which makes him a particularly sympathetic figure. Three hundred years after Li Zicheng lost his life, his fate still marks him as an outstanding man of his times. Today a bronze statue of Li Zicheng towers in solitude on Beijing's northern side, the direction from which he entered the city. Much has been written about him, but what people haven't discovered is that he lost on account of the same flaw as his opponent, Emperor Chongzhen: his peasant character and small-mindedness. As merciless as history is, it was still written by him. In China, the peasant temperament destroyed one generation of leaders after another, including those who swore not to be another Li Zicheng. The peasant problem is one that we still face today.

After Li Zicheng entered Beijing, he behaved like a complete peasant. The whole country was his, but he was still determined to grab all the wealth he could. As with Chongzhen, even when the country was no longer his, he kept grabbing. Li Zicheng took over Chongzhen's treasury lock, stock and barrel, but that was not enough – he still had high officials and relatives of the emperor tortured and interrogated on a daily basis in order to extort more gold and silver from them. The Dashun army spent 42 days in Beijing, and nearly every day transported large quantities of gold and silver to Xi'an. After Wu Sangui²¹ revolted, Li Zicheng personally led

²⁰TN: Richard Stengel, *You're Too Kind: A Brief History of Flattery*, Simon & Schuster, 2000.

²¹TN: Wu Sangui (1612-1678) was a Ming general. After capturing Beijing, Li Zicheng took Wu's family into custody and called for Wu to defect. When Wu did not immediately reply, Li executed 38 members of Wu's household and displayed his father's head on the city wall. Enraged, Wu negotiated an alliance with Dorgon. In May 1644, Wu opened the gates of the Shanhai Pass in the Great Wall to allow the Qing forces into China, and joined the Qing army in defeating Li Zicheng's Shun army in the Battle of Shanhai Pass. Wu was rewarded with a fiefdom in Yunnan but was never trusted by the Qing court. When the Kangxi Emperor decided to resettle Wu Sangui and two other princes in Manchuria in 1673, the three revolted and staged an eight-year war against the Qing. Soon after declaring himself emperor of the Great Zhou Dynasty in 1678, Wu died and his grandson, Wu Shifan,

his army to Shanhai. The Dashun army was composed of crack troops, but this expeditionary force went to battle loaded with large and small bundles. What was in the bundles? It was treasure they had plundered, along with women. Li Zicheng's objective in entering Beijing was to enrich himself. He had no intention of establishing the capital of his regime in Beijing. He said, "Shaanxi is my home, and my riches must return to my home province. Ten Yanjings²² are not worth a single Xi'an!" His vision was barely more advanced than that of Xiang Yu.²³

Li Zicheng spent his whole life on the battlefield, but his greatest opponent was himself. He didn't change himself, and as a result he was unable to change the world. His battlefield was so vast, but his mindset was so narrow. What is interesting is that, like Emperor Chongzhen, he was jealous of talented and capable people. His killing of Li Yan²⁴ was just another version of Congzhen's killing of Yuan Chonghuan. Song Xiance's²⁵ augury of the "18th son assuming the throne" was clearly something Li Cunxu²⁶ had concocted 1,000 years earlier, but it bound up Li Zicheng's mind like an oppressive dream. Li Yan was also surnamed Li and was also a man of talent, nearly a genius, so he had him butchered. Li Yan merely gave him some alternative views, but he couldn't tolerate it.

In China, anyone who wants or dares to raise a differing opinion ultimately loses both fortune and honor and sees his family scattered to the winds. Raising an alternative opinion in a nation of slaves is the minimum prerequisite for becoming a free person. Raising an alternative opinion is tantamount to declaring war on the despicable and incompetent, and it usually fails. Survival requires covering up one's true colors. "From ancient times to the present, in China and abroad, it is only China's abundance of disguises that has caused foreigners to acclaim its virtuosity." Killing Li Yan and Niu Jinxing²⁷ served an important purpose, corresponding to a quote from Lu Xun: "The tyrant's subjects are even

took over his struggle, but the Wu clan forces were defeated in 1681. The Kangxi Emperor had Wu Sangui's corpse scattered across China.

²²TN: The old name for Beijing.

²³TN: Ruler of Western Chu after the fall of the Qin dynasty, Xiang Yu engaged in a long struggle with Liu Bang, who eventually defeated him and founded the Han dynasty. Compared with Liu Bang, Xiang Yu was notable for brutal slaughter and looting in the cities he defeated.

²⁴TN: Li Yan was one of Li Zicheng's military advisors.

²⁵TN: Song Xiance was a lame dwarf credited with powers sorcery and divination. He became a military strategist for Li after telling him that an eighteenth grandson surnamed Li would assume the imperial throne.

²⁶Author's Note: Li Cunxu, the son of warlord Li Keyong, founded the Later Tang (923 to 926) during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. He was a member of the Turkic Shatuo tribe, but because Li Keyong rendered meritorious service in suppressing the Huang Chao Uprising, the Tang court conferred upon him the royal surname Li. Before establishing the Later Tang, Li Cunxu compiled an augural book that recorded his ascendancy to the throne.

²⁷TN: Niu Jinxing was chancellor under Li Zicheng's Shun dynasty.

more brutal than the tyrant.”²⁸ Fortunately Li Zicheng failed; if he hadn’t, the Shun dynasty would have been no better than the Ming dynasty. It is only failure that prevents the road to autocracy from being so overcrowded. The revolutionary character of peasants is not firm. Li Zicheng was likewise not a thorough revolutionary. After pushing Wu Sangui to the other side, Li Zicheng decided to lead his army himself. Song Xiance and Li Yan both advised him not to rush to battle, saying, “If the Emperor goes north, it’s disadvantageous to the Emperor; if Sangui comes, it’s disadvantageous to Sangui.” Li insisted on going, but while he spoke of waging war, he remained delusional and he shillyshallied; he was irresolute yet full of passion. When he left Beijing he brought two people with him. One was Wu Sangui’s father, Wu Xiang, and the other was the former Shanhai Pass military inspector, Zhang Ruolin, who was a friend of Wu Sangui. This action showed that Li still wanted to bring Wu Sangui over. Li Zicheng was indecisive, but Wu Sangui was resolute and Dorgon was even more resolute. The result of their collision was inevitable. Fighting is fighting, peace is peace; once there is fighting there can be no peace, and once there is peace there can be no fighting. After losing your virtue, don’t expect an archway to be raised in your memory. Excessive desire must be restrained. Enormous short-term success provoked Li Zicheng’s sky-high desires. In this sense, short-term success may not be success.

As for Zhang Xianzhong, it’s better not even to speak of him. He was not a man, but almost a beast. He was abnormal, and his perversion stemmed from despair. The great Ming dynasty had been toppled by his erstwhile cohort Li Zicheng, and the Qing army was sweeping across the Central Plains. No matter what happened, he would never get his turn on the throne, and so he inevitably gave himself over to dissipation. Zhang Xianzhong’s atrocities in Sichuan cannot be scoured from memory even when 1,000 years have passed. In 2001 I was posted in Chengdu, and during a capital construction project in a certain nearby county, nearly 10,000 bones were unearthed, which were verified to be victims of Zhang Xianzhong. On the tenth day of the 11th month of the Jiashen year, Zhang’s Daxi (Great Western) Army drove people out of the eastern gate of Chengdu and slaughtered them at Jiuyan Bridge. Just as the executioners raised their swords, three claps of thunder rang out, and Zhang Xianzhong angrily shouted toward heaven, “You released me among men to kill, so why do you try to frighten me today with thunder?” He ordered his troops to assemble a great cannon and fire three shots into the heavens. The first day, countless people were killed, and their corpses clogged the river so severely that Jiuyan Bridge snapped. Whenever Zhang Xianzhong’s army carried out a massacre in a locality, they kept a detailed record of the number killed, including how many piles of severed heads

²⁸TN: Lu Xun, “The Tyrant’s Subjects,” *Hot Wind*.

there were, and how many piles of severed hands and ears. An incident that best illustrates Zhang Xianzhong's perversion is when he attacked Macheng and chopped off the bound feet of the women there, then took his favorite concubine to view the enormous pile of feet. The concubine smiled and said, "This looks very nice, but all it lacks is a pair of exquisite bound feet placed at the very top, and then it will be perfect." Zhang Xianzhong said with a smile, "Your feet are the most exquisite." He then had his concubine's feet chopped off and placed them on top of the pile. Zhang Xianzhong said, "How delightful!"

In the Jiashen year, amidst the battles that changed the dynasty from Ming to Qing, China's only decent leader was Dorgon. A frequently heard and repeated slogan is "Revitalize China!", and Dorgon rendered outstanding service to revitalizing China. Dorgon is the pride of the Chinese people, even though he is not the pride of the Han race. When the Manchus entered and occupied the Central Plains, in a sense they rescued the Chinese people, but it cannot be said that they rescued Chinese culture. The four great civilizations of the ancient world no longer exist. Today's Egyptians and Greeks are not the same people who created civilization. Why has Chinese civilization been able to last till this day? It is because ethnic minorities time and time again brought fresh blood to the Han race. Most of these ethnic minorities came from the north. The greatest threats to Ancient China were always from the north, but its hope likewise always lay in the north. I made a calculation and found that the emperors of ancient China basically all came from the north. Even kings in the south were born in the north. Most of the places where capitals were founded were along the Longhai Railway,²⁹ i.e., in the area of modern-day Henan. Henan is the place of origin of the Han race and the cradle of the Chinese people. Yet there is now an appalling phenomenon of people all over China ridiculing the people of Henan. What's the matter with Henan people? Would there be a China without Henan?

In the hands of Zhu Yuanzhang's clan the Han race became thoroughly rotten. How can it be said that "the sprouts of capitalism" emerged during the Ming dynasty? The tree of feudalism was evergreen. China was stagnant, and there's only one way for stagnant water to develop, and that is toward stench and rot. Everything was in a nearly hopeless situation. At this juncture, the dashing and vital Dorgon came on stage. The Manchu people possessed a tremendous spirit of initiative. They had lived very comfortably on the other side of the Shanhai Pass: vast expanses of fertile land, herds of cattle and sheep, political peace, a skilled and valiant army. But they were not satisfied with that, and cast their gaze toward the Central Plains. Even after the Central Plains were in

²⁹TN: A major east-west railway in China, which runs from Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province on the Yellow Sea to Lanzhou, Gansu Province, and passes through the provinces of Anhui, Henan and Shaanxi for a total length of 1,759 kilometers.

their possession, they didn't let up their pace and continued to look further afield. Like Genghis Khan, the cavalry of the Eight Banners took the expeditions of the cold-weapon era to their ultimate perfection. The greatest contribution that Dorgon and his descendants made to Chinese history was to completely unify the country. Up to the present, we continue to enjoy this rich legacy left to us by Prince Rui.³⁰ When the Qing dynasty replaced the Ming, the Ming controlled only 3.55 million square kilometers of territory. Without Dorgon, today we would be leaving China once we crossed the Shanhai Pass, or the Jiayu Pass.³¹ In the hands of the Manchus, China's territory increased more than three-fold; the Qing dynasty left the Republic of China with a territory of 11 million square kilometers.

The Ming dynasty was a great nation, but the Han were a weak people. The Qing was a small nation, but the Manchus were a mighty people. The most noteworthy sign of a powerful race is its breadth of mind and its willingness to accept any good thing. This expansiveness of thought leads to modesty, and modesty leads to expansiveness. The Manchus worshiped Han culture as they did their own ancestors. Mr. Liang Sicheng³² once accompanied a Soviet architect in touring the Imperial Palace. When facing the resplendent and awe-inspiring imperial complex, the Soviet architect said, "I can hardly keep from kneeling down!" Presumably Dorgon, the moment he stepped into the Forbidden City, must have had the same feeling, otherwise we have no way of understanding why he and his descendants so passionately desired to emulate Han culture. When the Manchus founded their state, the problem they faced was assimilation with Han culture. When the Manchu dynasty fell, the problem it faced was assimilation with Western culture. The sinicization of the prince regent who founded the state succeeded, but actually failed. The Westernization of the prince regent who led the fallen state failed, also in reality.³³

The Manchus never rejected anything they considered excellent, and that is why they were strong and prosperous. Among all excellent things, they were least likely to reject talent. In this way they resembled today's strongest country, which dominates the world. Just as a vast ocean absorbs a hundred waterways, this country recruits the talent of the whole world and especially of China. Nowadays, China's first-rate talent lives abroad, its second-rate talent lives along the coast, and only third-rate talents are found in the government organs, where they engage in corruption. Science has no national boundaries, but scientists have nationality. At present

³⁰TN: Another name for Dorgon, who was only named emperor posthumously.

³¹TN: Jiayu Pass or Jiayuguan is the first pass at the west end of the Great Wall of China, near the city of Jiayuguan in Gansu Province.

³²TN: 1901-1972, a prominent Chinese architect.

³³Author's Note: The Qing dynasty produced two prince regents: The first was Dorgon and the second was Zaifeng, the father of the last emperor, Pu Yi. There is an old saying: "The successful one was prince regent, and the failure was also prince regent."

many major Western countries can assemble groups of top Peking University and Tsinghua University graduates. Does China lack talent? No. China lacks the soil to accommodate the growth of talent. The Ming dynasty was the same; Chongzhen eliminated his capable subordinates. The Qing emperors valued talent like they valued their lives, and this included valuing talent in the enemy camp. The Jinzhou garrison commander Zu Dashou killed countless Qing soldiers, and after surrendering he fled and then surrendered again ten years later, but Emperor Huang Taiji still tolerated him and put him to use. His tolerance was like an ocean. No wonder countless talented people exhausted themselves on his behalf. This kind of tolerance, it goes without saying, far exceeded that of the Ming emperors, and even Li Shimin³⁴ could not claim to be better. Dorgon went Huang Taiji one better. When Wu Sangui surrendered, Dorgon immediately gave him equal status as a feudal prince. Reading this segment of history today, we still feel ashamed. I once went to the birthplace of the Manchu dynasty, Hetu Ala, in Xinbin County, Liaoning Province. Its city walls are small and narrow. How could such a place breed people of such grand ambition as the Aisin Gioro clan? Before they crossed the Shanhai Pass, their greatest satisfaction was in adequate food and shelter. According to the histories, just before the great battle at Shanhai Pass, the Qing army halted at Huanxiling and had a meal of vegetable and meat steamed buns. We might expect that before throwing themselves into a major battle that would decide the fate of their people and their country, soldiers would gorge themselves on the best food available, and the fact that this was steamed buns indicates what kind of food they usually ate. But these people, who considered meat and vegetable steamed buns a luxury, had enough mettle to swallow up the universe. Zhao Wumian³⁵ believes that the Qing dynasty was one of the best in China's history. While this is debatable, what is beyond dispute is that the 13 emperors of the Qing dynasty³⁶ are near the top of the list of all of China's emperors, especially compared with the 13 emperors of the Ming. The Aisin Gioros were an outstanding breed. The Zhus of the Ming dynasty were defective. Among the Aisin Gioro clan, Dorgon stands out. Nurhaci was a gifted military leader and Huang Taiji was gifted in politics, but Dorgon was gifted in both areas. Looking back at the history of the Jiashen year, we can clearly see that Dorgon had a team of talented men clustered around him, what we would today refer to as an elite group. The government of that great world power of today that I mentioned just now

³⁴TN: Founder of the Tang dynasty.

³⁵TN: Zhao Wumian, born Xu Xiaohe in 1956, is a well-known writer currently living in the U.S.

³⁶TN: The writer is also including in this number Dorgon, who was only posthumously named emperor and didn't have his own era name. Officially, there were only 12 emperors in the Qing dynasty.

also has this kind of elite group. It relies on a system ensuring that the elite rise to the top of the government pyramid, but Dorgon relied on his perception to gather the elite at the top of his pyramid. These two groups of elites separated by hundreds of years have several characteristics in common: 1) They have a continuous, complete and distinct strategic mindset. The Han dynasty's victory over the Xiongnu was due to Liu Che's determination, Huo Qubing's noble spirit, Zhang Qian's tenaciousness and Li Guang's courage,³⁷ but most important was the completeness and continuity of their strategic thinking. A test of strategic skill is something like a contest of ace martial arts fighters; victory or defeat is decided by the concentration of attention, and sometimes doesn't even require a crossing of swords. After the 9-11 incident, that country rapidly grasped the critical moment to enter Central Asia and in one stroke gained control of the region Czar Peter had always dreamed of capturing. This was certainly no ad-hoc or impromptu move, but rather resulted from extremely long-term strategic research and preparation. 2) They don't make mistakes, seldom make mistakes or quickly correct mistakes when they make them. Countries that lack an elite group very easily make mistakes, regularly make mistakes, and once they make mistakes, they don't know how to correct them.

Yet I'm compelled to point out that the final outcome of the two elite groups is not the same: The talent of that country is always talent, whether in or out of power. China's emperors throughout the ages, including Dorgon, took the same attitude toward talented people as they did toward the toilet; they would climb on when they needed them, and then they were done with them. That's why China's toilets are always so foul.

Dorgon's intelligence led him to possess an enormous talent bank, and his talent bank made him even more intelligent. Every move Dorgon made radiated with keen intellect. He fully deserved his title of "farsighted prince regent" (*Rui Qinwang*). In the Jiashen year, what this young man in his 30s signed onto was an enormous setup. Look at him, not at all flustered but calm and unhurried. Ingenious plans repeatedly issued from the army tent. In his use of people alone he surpassed Chongzhen ten million-fold. After he swallowed up China, it was not only the Han who crawled at his feet, but also Mongolians, Uyghurs and Tibetans. The Qing dynasty differentiated its rule. Toward the Tibetans it used religion. Aren't you Buddhist? I'll build you temples in Chengde modeled on Lhasa and invite lamas to head them. Toward Mongolians they used marriage. Are you restive? I'll give all the imperial princesses in marriage to Mongolian princes, and the children they bear will be my nephews. Once you've grown, will you rebel against your uncle?

³⁷TN: Liu Che (156-87 B.C.), also known as Emperor Wu or Wudi, is considered one of the greatest Han emperors, ruling for 54 years from 141 to 87 B.C. Among his talented officials were the generals Li Guang and Huo Qubing and the envoy Zhang Qian.

They extended less courtesy to the Han; the Han were far less fortunate than the Mongolians and the Tibetans. Dorgon used two hands against the Han, and they were very hard hands. One hand was to deify Han Confucianism. Not long after occupying China, Dorgon performed a theatrical sacrifice to Confucius. Then he reinstated the imperial civil-service examination system. He knew the Han had a flaw, which was that they craved to become officials. If I give you hope of becoming an official, I can lead you around by the nose. The other hand was suppression: killing, head-shaving, changing apparel. This was a rape of Confucianism. Confucius once said that one's hair and limbs were given by one's parents, so no injury should be done to them. Dorgon said, I will injure them. The Manchus shaved their hair at the forehead in order to prevent the hair obstructing their line of vision while riding a horse or shooting an arrow. At the back of the head they grew a long, coarse braid that could be coiled into a pillow when sleeping in the open. For the Han to shave their heads symbolized that they were a thoroughly conquered nation – no, a thoroughly conquered race. The most thorough subjugation is mental subjugation. Changes to one's external appearance has a major effect on one's psychology. For a man, shaving one's hair was tantamount to castration, and in a certain sense was a kind of physical death. Dorgon's command for the Han to shave their hair was in fact a kind of spiritual dismemberment. For 360 years, this wound of the Han people continued to bleed. Within China's borders, only one ethnicity was required to shave their hair, and that was the Han; only one ethnicity was required to change their mode of dress, and that was the Han. Dorgon's hostility toward the Han was as intense as his adoration of their culture, and was remarkably bound up with it. To this day, the Han remain the only major ethnic group in the world that don't have their own national costume. Not long ago, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum in Shanghai, all of the attending leaders dressed in the costume of their host country, referred to as the *tangzhuang*, or "Tang suit." What was this "Tang suit"? It was in fact the *magua*, the mandarin jacket of the Manchu. The *qipao* and the *magua* were memorials left behind by Dorgon.

The emergence of Dorgon was both the good fortune and the bane of the Chinese people. Because of him, China's feudal society continued for another 340 years. In virtually the same era as Dorgon's, one group after another of European Protestants sailed across the seas and found their paradise in another continent. About 100 years after the time of Dorgon, that great continent gave rise to a man named Washington. He could have become a king, but he refused, and at the same time he didn't allow anyone else to become king, either. This was the result of both wisdom and rationality, and of course also of religious belief. When Washington and his people drafted their constitution and established their government, they forever averted the mentality of expecting and seeking a great man,

and for that reason, that country never produced a dictatorship formed by power. That country does not lack great men any more than any other country in the world, but there great men have no relationship to power and despotism.

Why did we have only a Dorgon? Why did we deserve only a Dorgon?

II. People

Once Chinese civilization matured, it lost its vitality and began to decline. The ability of the Chinese race and Chinese civilization to last till this day owes much to the achievements of ethnic minorities, in particular the Manchu. Every time there was a merging of ethnic groups, or it might be said, when the Han ethnicity was subjugated, Chinese civilization reached a new peak. But the path to this peak was often paved with blood.

The history of the Jiashen year is written in the blood of the Han. The Manchu nobility trod on countless Han corpses as they approached the sacrificial altar of their most glorious undertaking. During the Ming Chengzu era,³⁸ a census established that China had a population of 60 million. By the end of the Ming it had reached 100 million. After the Manchus occupied the Central Plains, during the Qing Shizu era,³⁹ another census was taken and found that only 14 million people were left, a reduction of more than 80 percent. Some 60 million people had been slaughtered in battle during the dynastic shift from the Ming to the Qing. In the small city of Yangzhou, 800,000 people were killed.⁴⁰ In subjugating the Han, the Manchus always implemented a fixed policy: massacre. They were not this way with the Mongolians and Koreans. After the Qing army captured the region east of the Liao River, their first worry was that the poor would have no way of supporting themselves and would revolt, so they snatched up all of the local poor and killed them, referred to as “killing poor devils.” Two years later, the Qing army feared that the rich of the region would revolt against their oppression, so they killed all the rich, referred to as “killing wealthy families.” After these two mass slaughters, the Han in the region east of the Liao River were virtually wiped out. After crossing the Shanhai Pass, the Manchus killed again and again until the earth shook and the gods wept. In the course of this slaughter, the country’s countenance was altered. In the 1930s, when the Japanese occupied China, they carried out the same general plan of

³⁸TN: Emperor Yongle, 1360-1424.

³⁹TN: Emperor Shunzhi, 1644-1661.

⁴⁰TN: The Yangzhou massacre in 1645 was carried out by Qing troops under Prince Dodo after they conquered the city from forces loyal to the Southern Ming regime of the Hongguang Emperor. The massacre lasted ten days after the city fell on May 20, 1645, with the number of victims reported as close to 800,000. However, some modern Chinese scholars say this number is exaggerated, and that the city had a population of only 300,000 at the time, with a population of 800,000 for all of Yangzhou Prefecture.

annihilation that the Manchu had. Their itinerary was identical, and so were their methods; even their massacres were the same. The Rape of Nanking or the Nanjing Massacre was a modern version of the “Ten Days in Yangzhou.” When reading history in my youth, I wept for the Han people. Reading history as an adult produces a different feeling. Why was the history of the Jiashen year so tragic? When a great country falls to a small one, who is to blame? It couldn’t be said that China lacked soldiers or territory, so why capitulate at the first sign of trouble? When the Manchus crossed the Shanhai Pass, their armed force totaled only 170,000 men, including eight banners of Manchus, eight banners of Mongolians and eight banners of Han. Li Zicheng’s army, on the other hand, was a million strong, not to mention the Ming regular army. There were more than 100 million Han. Yet those 170,000 Manchus forced their way through China singing songs of triumph all the way. They created the greatest miracle in the military history of the world. As a military man, I can scarcely keep from prostrating myself before the Eight Banner Army. At the same time, I wonder bitterly what was the matter with our ancestors. How could they be so weak and cowardly?

During the same time period as the Jiashen year, an incident occurred in Europe: The army led by Louis XIV of France engaged in an annihilating attack on Holland.⁴¹ Holland was a very small country and could not hold off the attack, yet its people vowed to die rather than surrender. The Dutch people broke through the seawall and allowed the Atlantic to inundate their country. They preferred to have all their property and homes destroyed by the floodwaters rather than leave them to be plundered by the invaders. They then went out to the sea on ships and drifted in the high seas, refusing to surrender. They were like the Han of old. In ancient times, the Han were the world’s most valiant race. The pre-Qin era was the prime of the Han race. Paging through Sima Qian’s *Historical Records*, do we see any chapters on traitors? Statistically speaking, during the Han dynasty, a Han soldier could handle five Xiongnu. By the Song dynasty, the situation was reversed; one Jin soldier could withstand ten Song soldiers. By the Ming dynasty, I believe one Qing soldier could probably resist 100 Han soldiers. By the end of the Ming, in the Jiashen year, England, which entered the world stage around the same time as the Manchus, sent an expeditionary force of several thousand men halfway around the world to attack China, and the Qing regime’s million-strong standing army was reduced to begging for mercy.

What changed? What caused the Han to become so substandard? Theoretically, by the Jiashen year we had already been ejected from the community of nations. We were dead in spirit, even though our bodies remained alive. Was it a war that we lost? What we lost was spirit.

⁴¹TN: The Franco-Dutch war occurred from 1672 to 1678. The opening of the floodgates occurred in 1672.

Someone once said in a tone of self-congratulation that there was not a single ethnic group that was not assimilated on Chinese soil, and that was the power of culture. I beg to differ – and not only I, but the great thinkers of the past also beg to differ. Hegel said that China was a nation of famine. What he referred to was not the natural world. Lu Xun also referred to the Chinese as “disaster victims.” The most treacherous aspect of Chinese culture is that it can neither be easily killed off nor easily survive. It is in a perpetually moribund state. The Jews tenaciously defend their spiritual homeland, Judaism, but we lost our spiritual home long ago. The continuation of our race depends chiefly on the breeding of progeny. Liang Qichao said, “The Chinese race... is the most powerfully expansive race in the world.”⁴² Our reproductive power is especially strong, but our quantity is not matched by quality. Whenever disaster or calamity occurs, our numbers play a decisive role. The Qing dynasty, which imposed the most brutal rule on the Han ethnicity, caused the Han to expedite their reproductive fervor, and in 200-plus years, the population multiplied many fold, to the point where it had reached 450 million by the time the Republic of China took over. Today, only India has been able to match China. This reproduction came at the price of degeneration. The Jewish people are the same today as they were 2,000 years ago. Even Auschwitz could not change them. But we have changed, changed to the point where even we can hardly recognize ourselves. Even the Manchus who conquered the Han changed. When the Qing regime fell, you could walk through the streets of Beijing and see Manchus old and young strolling with their birds and singing songs. This race with the vast prairies coursing through their veins had been debilitated to such an unspeakable extent. Only in the open spaces outside the cities could you see a few Manchus out with their falcons. From their bold movements, and from the awe-inspiring movements of the falcon as it captured a sparrow, one could vaguely glimpse the heroic bearing of the long-dead Dorgon.

Religion is of course an important reason, but that is a different story. In reading the history of the Jiashen year, rather than criticizing religion, it would be better to criticize Confucianism. Just as a fish rots from the head downward, the fundamental reason has to be sought in the head. Behind every major reversal that the Chinese people have suffered, a black hand can be seen, and that is Confucianism. The Han gained their name from Emperor Han Wudi, but Han Wudi committed a crime against the Han people. If the Qin dynasty hadn't been overturned, or had been overturned at some later date, China might not be so disgraceful now. Qin Shihuang didn't tolerate Confucians. Of course, Qin Shihuang's centralized regime had certain blood ties to the successor dynasties that esteemed Confucian learning alone. Lu Xun also couldn't tolerate Confucianism, nor could

⁴²TN: Liang Qichao, 1873-1929, was an intellectual leader of the early twentieth century. This quote comes from his essay “On the National Character of the Chinese.”

Liang Qichao, Lin Yutang or Hu Shi. Mao Zedong also couldn't tolerate Confucianism; he said he was of the same mind as Lu Xun. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao criticized Confucius, and although this could be considered to have practical political motivations, didn't it also have an element of cultural introspection? This is an open question. Confucianism established imperial authority, and imperial authority established dictatorship, and dictatorship established despotism. Despotism always loses. The failure of the Jiashen year was on this point. A nation without religious beliefs has no hope. A nation that treats Confucianism as a religion is certain to degenerate.

The core of Confucianism's doctrine is its worship of the Sage (*chongshengxing*): All thinking ends with the Sage and cannot go beyond him. All power ends with the sovereign and cannot be changed. Only one ideology exists in society, and that is the ideology of the emperor. Only one voice exists, and that is the emperor's voice. Once a particular ideology becomes a country's sole ideology and is set down in law, its people can forget about having any imagination or intelligence. The American President Woodrow Wilson once said, "People who know how to think don't know how to act, and people who know how to act don't know how to think." In China over the past millennium there has been only action and no thought. If there has been thought, it has been the emperor's thought. In the Ming dynasty, because of Zhu Yuanzhang's brutality, the Chinese people's propensity for catering to their superiors developed to an extreme. The entire dynasty was filled with horror, and China was a nation of spiritual slaves. Whatever the people are like, their government will be the same. Whatever the leader is like, the people will be the same. Chongzhen intended to be strong, so why wasn't the Ming dynasty strong? Chongzhen wanted the nation to be stable, so why was it in tumult? The minds of a hundred million people revolved around the mind of one man – this is the greatest instability. The completely sinicized Qing dynasty was no better than the Ming in this respect. Although its territory was vast, it was the dynasty with the least freedom and creativity in all of Chinese history. In the previous century, the great neighboring country to our north collapsed, and that was the result of ideological ruin. The direct cause of its dismantling was ostensibly economic stagnation, but in fact it was long-term ideological control that created economic stagnation. The ruling party of that neighboring country spent decades tirelessly engaged in one task: making its people lose their ability to think. Losing the ability to think means losing creativity and even losing the will to live. Several decades is only enough to cause the intellectual decline of two or three generations. What about several centuries? Or several millennia? Ideological imperiousness inevitably leads to imperiousness in political authority. In an age devoted to destroying thought, thinkers could only travel one of two roads: toward death or toward capitulation.

In ancient China, the country was a country of one family, of one surname. During the Jiashen year, Gu Yanwu⁴³ once said, “When the state falls, so does the nation.” The fall of a dynasty and a surname is the fall of the state, and a people subjugated by an alien nationality is what is called a fallen nation. The history of the Jiashen year is the fall of both the state and the nation. The people of the nation were unable to exert themselves on behalf of the state, so the state fell. The state was unable to protect the people, so the nation fell. The most obvious reasoning is that, since the state belongs to your one family, why should I zealously defend it? Why should I protect someone else’s property? The *Twenty-Four Dynastic Histories* (*Ershisi Shi*) is the history of 24 families. Since emperors regarded the state as their private property, the people also saw the state as a commodity. This point can be verified by the disintegration of the ruling party in that neighboring country to the north. When the ruling party was declared disbanded, not only were the masses unusually calm, but even the numerous party members were also unusually calm. They didn’t have the feeling of having lost political power. When the people have no sovereign rights, it’s hard for a regime to endure. The people don’t regard this regime as their own regime, but rather as the regime of those in power; party members don’t regard the party in power as their own party, but as the party of those who are in authority over the party. The vast majority of party members regarded the dissolution of the ruling party as if it were happening to another party. For these people, there was nothing to defend apart from their own interests.

This point was most brutally evidenced in the relationship between the Ming emperors and their officials. The Ming was a dynasty in which people were flogged. In no other dynasty did the emperors take such delight in spanking their ministers. This is the famous historical phenomenon of the “caning of courtiers.” One false word, and down came the trousers and out came the cane. Sometimes more than 100 senior officials would be pressed down on the vermilion palace steps and forced to expose a sea of snowy buttocks. Canes danced in the air and blood sprayed in a splendid show. Zhu Yuanzhang and his descendants regarded their ministers as dung. The humiliation of their noblest functionaries typically began with that most private and unrepresentable of body parts. Zhu Yuanzhang certainly had a sadistic streak. By the time of Emperor Chongzhen, this had reached a new level. One time, when a senior minister refused to admit his error, Chongzhen burst into a rage and ordered him tortured in the throne room. Several cabinet ministers quickly objected, “Torture hasn’t taken place in the palace in 300 years!” Emperor

⁴³TN: Gu Yanwu (1613-1682) was a Chinese philologist and geographer who engaged in anti-Manchu activities after the Ming dynasty was overthrown. He was noted for making a distinction between the state and the nation.

Chongzhen said, “And there’s been no one like this fellow in 300 years.” The man was beaten nearly to death.

The Ming dynasty was the most oppressive toward its officials, and its emperors also met tragic ends. As Li Zicheng prepared to invade the Forbidden City, Emperor Chongzhen struck the gong to summon his officials, and not a single one appeared. Only one eunuch accompanied him when he killed himself on Coal Hill. When Li Zicheng found Emperor Chongzhen’s corpse, he placed it at a major intersection, and not a single Ming minister ran over to mourn him; only one monk presented a bowl of porridge in offering. The next day, Li Zicheng ordered the officials to report to him, and nearly all of them scurried over and stood there waiting in the courtyard the entire day without Li Zicheng or Liu Zongmin⁴⁴ showing their faces. Referring to this segment of the Jiashen year, the historical record states, “All 100 officials surrendered without hesitation.” Why did they surrender so easily? Could it have had anything to do with the “caning of courtiers”? From Zhu Yuanzhang to Zhu Di to Zhu Youjian, the Ming dynasty created a precedent for slaughtering the largest number of ministers in the most horrific, unreasonable and shameless manner, and Ming dynasty ministers also created the precedent for the largest mass surrender in all of China’s dynasties. The integrity of the ministers was truly less than that of a bunch of powdered and willow-waisted prostitutes. There is another fact I noticed: The closer to the autocratic hub, i.e., to Beijing, the larger the number of ministers who surrendered, and the fewer who died to preserve their integrity. The further north, the fewer the battles, and the further south, the more intense the battles. *Record of Communications during the Jiashen Year*, written by a Ming author, states that when Li Zicheng attacked Beijing, the Ming court had more than 400,000 soldiers defending the capital, and officers numbering in the thousands: “Facing hard battle against the enemy, only two died defending the border.” When Beijing fell, among the officials all over China who committed suicide, southerners outnumbered northerners. Here are some specific figures: Zhejiang, 6; Jiangxi, 2; Henan, 2... Only one under the direct jurisdiction of Beijing. There were no dirges being performed in Yanzhao.⁴⁵ There were righteous men in Wuyue.⁴⁶ China’s direction turned gradually south. The massacres all occurred in the south. I’m a layman when it comes to music, but as soon as I hear a Yangzhou tune, I feel an inescapable grief, as if hearing the wailing of 800,000 suffering souls. There is tragedy in sorrow and sorrow in tragedy. Yuan Chonghuan

⁴⁴TN: Liu Zongmin was one of Li Zicheng’s senior military commanders.

⁴⁵TN: Yanzhao is the ancient name for the area now comprised of Beijing and northern Tianjin, Shanxi and Henan, and southern Mongolia. Liu’s reference to dirges performed in Yanzhao comes from the *Geographical Gazetteer of the Book of Sui*, the official history of the Sui dynasty.

⁴⁶TN: The ancient name for the region south of the Yangtze River.

was a southerner, and the righteous man surnamed She⁴⁷ who collected Yuan's remains for burial was also a southerner. He never returned to the south, and his family remained in Beijing to keep watch over General Yuan's remains for 17 generations.

After the ministers who had been humiliated by the Ming court arrived in the Qing court, they became rejuvenated and displayed awe-inspiring courage, strategic skill and wisdom when battling their own compatriots. The people who genuinely conquered the Han nation were themselves Han. The *Biography of Kangxi* states, "In the process of subjugating the Chinese empire, the Manchus had to pay almost no price; rather, the most courageous of the Han took the place of Manchus in fighting against their own people." Wu Sangui did not exhibit impressive combat effectiveness on the Ningyuan frontline, but once he changed his allegiance, he became fierce as a panther and was consistently victorious over Li Zicheng's army. Wu Sangui fought from the northeast right down to Burma. His outstanding military service can only compare with that of Lin Biao, who fought from the northeast to the South China Sea. Hong Chengchou⁴⁸ was at his wit's end when trapped at Song Mountain, but after surrendering, he came up with one brilliant strategy after another and rallied the troops to subdue the region south of the Yangtze. The Ming dynasty's Nanjing Deputy Minister of Rites, Qian Qianyi, attempted to drown himself, but failed because the "water was too cold." Instead, he surrendered and became a Qing official. The literary works of Qian and the author of "The Song of Yuanyuan," Wu Weiye,⁴⁹ reached their peak during the Qing dynasty. Qian Qianyi invented a special kind of jacket with a small collar and wide sleeves. A scholar asked him what dynastic style this garment represented, and Qian replied, "The small collar indicates my respect for the current dynasty, but the wide sleeves indicate that I have not forgotten the previous dynasty." The scholar said ironically, "Sir, you are truly a leader of two dynasties!"⁵⁰ Qian Qianyi suffered too much humiliation, yet he lived comfortably to the age of 82, which shows that he managed very well under the new dynasty. The highest payment the Manchus gave to these former Ming dynasty ministers was to put all of them into the

⁴⁷TN: After Yuan was killed by "slow slicing," a city guard surnamed She took the head and buried it outside of the city, and the guard's family continued to guard it for generations afterward.

⁴⁸Author's Note: Hong Chengchou, once appointed viceroy of Suliao during the Ming dynasty, led a force of 130,000 men in rescuing Jinzhou, which was under siege by Huang Taiji, and after suffering a major defeat at Songshan, he was taken prisoner and surrendered. When the Qing army crossed Shanhai Pass, he eagerly masterminded a scheme for Dorgon and personally united the armed forces in suppressing the region south of the Yangtze.

⁴⁹TN: Wu was one of the "Three Masters of Jiangdong" along with Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi.

⁵⁰TN: A pun on the word for leader, *lingxiu*, which combines the words for collar and sleeve.

Biographies of Turncoat Officials (Erchen Zhuan). China's first book of history was stately and mournful. Its last book of history contained lively depictions of traitors. And not just one traitor: a great nest full of them.

Autocracy is also a kind of ideology. In our cultural legacy, this brutal system, in which a minority exerts total control over the fates of the majority, is both fragile and strong. It is fragile because it cannot bear any attack from outside, and it is strong because every attack from outside gives it a new lease on life. It is like "a rite of power transfer in which an autocracy on the verge of death is handed over to an autocracy that is full of vigor." As for the people who live under an autocracy, the most detestable characteristic of autocracy is its stultification of the people. Accomplishing this requires pressure, which brings about submission, and submission inevitably breeds a slave mentality. China's Buddhism and Daoism are anti-intellectual and contribute to the ignorance of ordinary people, but neither is the equal of Confucianism in this respect. Confucianism bred a masochistic tendency in the Chinese people, and an extreme tolerance for humiliation. In the face of totalitarianism and autocracy, the Chinese people were like dead men, and in the face of foreign invasion they were likewise dead men. In times of peace they had no dignity, and in times of war it was just as hard for them to have dignity. When a slave is a slave before his master, can he transform into a master before a foreign invader? You must be dreaming!

The Chinese of the Jiashen year were in a state of disunity. The classic scene of disunity is as follows: Countless people gather in a turbulent tide and adjust themselves into uniformity as they go along, shouting slogans that shake the heavens. The slogan they most enjoy shouting is "Patriotism!" and "The humiliation of the Chinese people is over and will never return!" Their sensitivity to patriots versus traitors is a hundred times greater than their sensitivity to autocracy versus democracy. Because the humiliation of recent times has given Chinese people's psychology a kind of "incompleteness," we respond by saying time and time again that we have "risen up." The thinking appears more united than the territory. But the moment the enemy arrives, everyone scatters helter-skelter. At the end of the Ming dynasty, before the Qing army crossed the Shanhai Pass, they several times broke through the wall to wage battles of harassment against Beijing. Sun Chuanting⁵¹ won a great victory at Tong Pass (Tongguan) and entered Beijing to protect the emperor. One day, his troops encountered a small unit of Qing cavalry. The Ming army had thousands of men, who in Sun Chuanting's words "had experienced a hundred battles." The Qing troops consisted of only a few dozen men. The two sides were separated by a river. The Ming army shouted, "We fuck

⁵¹Author's Note: Sun Chuanting, Governor of Shaanxi, scored a major defeat against Li Zicheng by ambushing him in the southern plains below Tong Pass. Li Zicheng was left with only 18 cavalrymen and fled into Shangluo Mountain.

your wives and daughters!” The Qing troops laughed, and from their encampment they pulled out nearly a hundred women in colorful dress, and pointed at them, saying, “These are your sisters and mothers who have all been fucked by us!” And so saying, they set about it right there in broad daylight. At the same time, a dozen or so cavalymen began crossing the river, and the thousands of Ming troops turned heels and fled pell-mell, with countless men trampled to death in the process.

Autocracy eats people, and the people become sheep. The Han were sheep. The knees of the Han bend with particular ease; they bend toward the emperor, and they bend toward the enemy. In the Jiashen year, the entire territory of China gave off the odor of sheep. However large the flock, it still consists of sheep. A wolf doesn't care whether it faces one sheep or a herd of them. The city wall of Yangzhou was broken, and the Qing army began its slaughter. Yangzhou became Hell. A scene even more memorable than Hell was that of the people extending their necks to be slaughtered. The historical record states that upon coming across a single Manchu soldier, “no matter how numerous the southerners, they all prostrated themselves and stretched out their necks to receive the knife, with not a single one daring to flee.” Just as a single Mongolian soldier was able to order hundreds of Persians to tie each other up obediently, and then killed all of them, the Qing soldiers did the same in Yangzhou. One Qing soldier, encountering 50 robust young men, brandished his knife and yelled, “The barbarians are here! The barbarians are here!” All of them were filled with fear and trepidation and not one dared to move. That Qing soldier escorted the men to the killing field, and not a single man dared to resist or protest, and not a single one even dared to flee. After reaching the execution ground, the Qing soldier shouted, “Kneel!” All of them knelt and allowed themselves to be butchered.

A similar situation occurred in Nanjing during the War of Resistance Against Japan. A division of Kuomintang troops encountered a small unit of 16 Japanese and obediently surrendered. A few hundred Japanese soldiers escorted tens of thousands of Kuomintang prisoners of war to Swallow Rock (Yanziji) to be massacred, and those prisoners didn't even have the courage to flee. One Military Commission vice-chairman said that in his home county in Shandong Province, when seven or eight Jap devils came in to wipe it out, 30,000 to 40,000 soldiers and civilians deserted. The women of Yangzhou, famous for their beauty, willingly offered their bodies to the Qing soldiers in exchange for their lives. Amidst the cries of agony that filled the city, some women carefully decked themselves out and then stood in the doorways, flirting with the Qing troops. One Qing soldier said, “When we attacked Korea and captured tens of thousands of women, not a single one surrendered her chastity; how can mighty China be as shameless as this?” The Qing soldiers ordered these women to strip off their clothes and escorted them

away. Up until the Kangxi era, at Ningguta (in Heilongjiang) or near Mongolia, one could find these now elderly women, who had endured their fill of humiliation. They spoke with Yangzhou accents and wore animal skins. I believe their tragic souls haunt those white hills and black rivers to this day.

In an autocratic society, people's characters are the most slavish and the least tolerant. The more slavish the mentality, the less tolerant it is. Lack of mutual trust is a long-standing characteristic of our people. Such people are always cowardly in public wars but courageous in private battles. China's civil war was a rare spectacle in world history. I believe that the more devastating a nation is in civil war, the less capable it is in external conflict. Conversely, the more incompetent a nation is in external conflict, the more ferocious it is in civil war. Montesquieu said something very profound: "China is ruled by the rod."⁵² I feel this statement has a dual meaning, the first explaining the brutality of the ruling class, and the second explaining the brutality of the people. This point was revealed most thoroughly in the brutality of the Cultural Revolution. "A nation only needs to carry out a Great Leap Forward or Cultural Revolution, either one of the two, and that nation will be forever remembered in the annals of *The Guinness Book of Shame*." But it wasn't enough for us to carry out these two things. As soon as the Cultural Revolution was over, we began to forget it. The Cultural Revolution is the most shameful episode in our nation's cultural, political and even spiritual history, and is a topic that we can never avoid in our lifetimes. Pan Yue⁵³ has said, "The problems and consequences exposed by the series of 'revolutionary movements' we've carried out since the founding of our country are that the elite class that we internally fostered has been almost completely suppressed, and the sprouts of the middle class have also been wiped out." Because China didn't carry out a revolution against feudalism, capitalism upended the so-called proletariat. Lu Xun said, "China likes to say it loves peace, but in fact it loves fighting, loves watching things fight and loves watching its own people fight, but doesn't dare fight foreign invaders."⁵⁴

China's traitors are plentiful and varied, too numerous to exhaust as a subject. Where is the traitor? The traitor is in our hearts and minds. China experienced two massive upsurges in traitors. The first was in the Jiashen year, and the second was during the War of Resistance Against Japan. Traitors have two characteristics: One is servility and compliance before the foreign master and a total slave mentality; the second is fighting civil war and showing peerless courage when attacking one's compatriots. In

⁵²TN: Montesquieu quoted the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Du Halde as saying, "C'est le baton qui gouverne la China." Montesquieu, *L'esprit des Lois*, VIII, No. 21.

⁵³TN: Pan Yue (b. 1960) is a Vice-minister for Environmental Protection.

⁵⁴TN: Lu Xun wrote this in an essay entitled "Watching the Fighting" (*Guan dou*) originally published in a column in Shanghai's *Shenbao* on January 31, 1933.

the Jiashen year, the Qing army assault was pressing toward Hubei, and Li Zicheng was being pursued like a dog without its master and was about to die in Jiugong Mountain. At this juncture, the Ming army commander garrisoned at Wuhan, Zuo Liangyu, came down to the lower Yangtze region preparing to attack Nanjing, referred to euphemistically as “ridding the emperor of his close courtiers.” Whose hands was Nanjing in? Nanjing was still in the hand of the Chinese. Ma Shiyong, defending Nanjing, likewise exposed his traitorous countenance by saying, “We’d rather die at the hands of the Qing than at the hands of Zuo Liangyu!”

The Qing army was brutal, but the Han in their civil war showed equal brutality. At the same time that massacres occurred in the cities of Yangzhou, Jiading and Jiangyin, massacres also occurred in localities controlled by the Han. At almost the same time that Dorgon reinstated the imperial civil service exams, Zhang Xianzhong pretended to enlist scholars through exams in Chengdu, and next to the doorway of the place where the exams were to be held he strung a rope about four feet above the ground and had the students line up according to their names on the register; anyone who stood taller than the rope was escorted to Qingyanggong outside the Western gate and killed. He killed tens of thousands of people in this way, and writing brushes and ink stones piled up like a mountain in the exam room. Zhang Xianzhong loathed men of letters, believing them to be crafty and hypocritical, so he basically killed off all the scholars in Sichuan. On one day alone he killed off his 20 civil officials. When someone suggested that he was killing too many people, he said, “Are you afraid no one will be an official?”

Leaving aside Zhang Xianzhong, was the Dashun army, known for its strict military discipline, any better in its treatment of the people? When the Dashun army overcame Tongcheng in Anhui Province, the ordinary people welcomed the troops with food and drink. One old peasant at the city gate waylaid several soldiers and began nattering on about how he had been oppressed by the local authorities, and how desolate his life was. A petty chieftain of the Dashun army said, “Oh dear, since your life is so hard, why keep on living?” Whereupon he killed the old peasant.

Have the Han changed at all today? The answer lies in the heart of each member of the Han race. Our bodies still bear the deep brand of the Jiashen year. Can our people withstand yet another Jiashen upheaval? Our lives are too full of jockeying for position and playing it safe. Western culture emphasizes struggling against nature, so it has given birth to one thinker and inventor after another. Chinese culture emphasizes fighting with other people, so it has produced one champion persecutor after another. China is a paradise for informers. In the Jiashen year, Jiangsu had a man who had been an official in the Ming court, and who had run off to hide in the countryside and teach. On his chest were tattooed the words “Worthy of the current dynasty,” on his left arm the words “Living as a

Ming man” and on his right arm the words “Dying as a Ming ghost.” One day, when he disrobed to bathe, someone saw the tattoos and immediately reported him to the local authorities, who executed him. During the Nanjing massacre, after the Japanese seized Kuomintang soldiers, they began screening them. Among the more than 10,000 detainees were divisional and regimental commanders who had concealed themselves by changing their uniforms. The Japanese shouted, “Who are the officers? Stand forward!” Immediately a forest of fingers pointed at the commanders. But the final outcome was the same for them all: The pointers and the men they had pointed at were all doomed.

What is it that makes our people hate and fear each other so much? In this hatred and fear we have exhausted most of the resources of national spirit. The root of Chinese culture is low-cost survival. What life form is most tenacious? The lowest life-forms, such as crickets and ants. The noblest life is the most easily broken, like a lion’s. Ants pack together in a swarm, destroying themselves and all of their conquerors.

China’s fall at the hands of the Manchus was China’s good fortune. The Manchu rule over the Han was the Manchus’ misfortune. Based on the behavior of the Han in the Jiashen year, the core of the Han race was already rotten. Its choice was its necessity. It had already attained its desire and had lost what it had to lose. Character changes fate and fate changes character. China could not accept what it could not change, nor could it change what it could not accept. It could not obtain what it desired, and it did not desire what it had obtained. There was no kind of immorality that disquieted its conscience. Not a single person heeded the interrogation of internal morality. The value of life was lower than the value of commodities. Chinese politics is an extension of Chinese culture. The history of a civilization is originally a history of people becoming increasingly unshackled, and therefore should increasingly become the history of the people. But the history of our civilization is a history of people becoming increasingly shackled, and therefore it is a history of shackles. China’s backwardness is in fact a cultural backwardness. Culture is an ability. It is formidable, but easy to ignore. Culture is the mirror of society, and the future is the mirror of culture.

III. Opportunity

The hardest to obtain and the easiest to slip through one’s fingers is opportunity. Opportunity is like a thief – it arrives without a sound, and when it leaves, your loss is grievous. The life of a nation is long, and the essential part is in just one or two steps. Whoever seizes victory takes command of history. Whoever seizes opportunity seizes victory. Scanning history, ancient and modern history and of China and abroad, we find that great men are called great because they seized opportunity. Opportunity is

the stairway that separates heroes from cowards; ascending one step is everything, while descending one step nullifies everything. It seems that one small step often requires a generation of hard trudging. Heroic individuals seem to grasp opportunity in a single brilliant stroke, but it takes a lifetime of effort.

Li Zicheng was a farm boy who never went to school and who relied on intuition in making revolution. He always consulted Heaven before grasping an opportunity. On New Year's Day in the first Chongzhen year there was a great snowfall, and Li Zicheng was drinking liquor with several impoverished comrades in the mountains. His friends pushed Zicheng to lead an uprising, saying, "Who knows, maybe you could become emperor!" Zicheng said, "Let's consult Heaven." He took an arrow and stuck it in the snow, and made obeisance, saying, "If I am to become emperor, let the snow rise to the height of the arrow; if not, then not!" As it turned out, the snow fell all day and covered the top of the arrow. Zicheng was overjoyed and launched his uprising. More than ten years later, he marched into Beijing. Below Chengtian Gate, which is now called Tiananmen, he consulted Heaven again. He aimed his arrow at the inscribed board above the gate and said, "If the harrow hits the character for 'tian' (heaven) I will rule the country with stability." As it turned out, the arrow didn't hit that character. Using the arrow twice, at the beginning and the ending of his uprising, shows that his thinking remained stuck at an elementary stage. After Li Zicheng captured Xi'an, he established the Dashun state, and his revolution was in an excellent situation. At that moment, the Ming dynasty was no longer any match for him, but who, then, was his opponent? It was the Manchus, who were eyeing China covetously from beyond the Shanhai Pass. Only the might of the Manchus could bring about a major reversal of Li Zicheng's undertaking. Just like today, in the next few decades, the world has only one country – that fellow who currently enjoys the greatest stature – whose power can cause the progress of China's modernization to experience a major reversal, while other countries cannot. What did Li Zicheng need in the Jiashen year? Time. What does today's China need? Time. If Li Zicheng hadn't been so anxious to head north and had left Beijing to Chongzhen, he would have effectively left Dorgon with the Great Wall defense line from Shanhai Pass to Datong and Xuanhua. In particular the Shanhai Pass, built more than 200 years earlier at the beginning of the Ming, combined with Wu Sangui's Guanning cavalry was basically impregnable. Before the Jiashen year, the Qing army entered the pass four times, always breaking through the wall from places like Shanxi, Mongolia and Hebei, but after taking their fill of plunder, they withdrew the way they came, not daring to remain long, and that was because of the Shanhai Pass. Without Shanhai, there would have been no Central Plains. Li Zicheng should have settled his rump in Xi'an. Apart from the central Shaanxi plain, what more

advantageous position was there for him? Liu Bang and Li Shimin beckoned him.⁵⁵ Shaanxi and Gansu were a vast expanse of impregnable cities, and were self-sufficient regions in ancient China. Li Zicheng was himself a native of Shaanxi, and would have lived a charmed life in his native land. He should have ensured his base area was running well before embarking on new adventures.

In the Jiashen year, a restless air flowed through Xi'an. Easy victory made Li Zicheng impatient. The person with patience is the one who will succeed. Huang Taiji's patience was outstanding. Crossing the pass several times, his horse's head had brushed against Beijing. The soldiers of the Eight Banners had certainly gulped down water beneath Beijing's gray city wall on more than one occasion. Many imperial officials advised Huang Taiji to take Beijing, but he earnestly told them: "The Ming dynasty is a great tree with deep roots and dense foliage. We Manchus don't have the strength at present to cut it down in one go. Taking Beijing would be no use. I'll now see to it that everything you do chops away the branches of that great tree one by one. Today one branch, tomorrow another, and after many days, it will wither. Finally, with a light push, it will topple to the ground." Huang Taiji's philosophical words are recorded in the history books along with his illustrious name. What Huang Taiji wanted wasn't merely Beijing, but all of China. History followed Huang Taiji's prediction to the letter. If Li Zicheng had been half as patient as Huang Taiji, the Dashun army may have been able to unite the Yellow River and Yangtze River regions. If the Manchus still tried for the Central Plains then, the cost to them would have been much greater.

Opportunity sometimes puts in a false appearance. Non-opportunity posing as opportunity saunters over like a lovely woman and easily misleads a person. Li Zicheng led his Dashun army on a northern expedition, fording the Yellow River and taking Taiyuan without any major fight and then charging straight toward Ningwu. The army commander at Ningwu Pass, Zhou Yuji, refused to surrender. Li Zicheng was enraged and attacked the city. The 4,000 Ningwu soldiers were pitted one against ten, and the fighting was brutal. Zhou Yuji had under him more than 20 Hunü from Central Asia, all of them skilled bowmen. They defended Zhou Yuji's residence to the death and then carried out group self-immolation. Zhou Yuji killed dozens of people and died with his body so shot full of arrows that he looked like a hedgehog. Li Zicheng massacred Ningwu, but although Ningwu fell, Li Zicheng looked around the battlefield full of mutilated corpses and began thinking of retreating. He said, "If just this place of Ningwu Pass was so hard to attack, the closer we get to Beijing, the more impregnable will be the passes we encounter. Datong, Xuanhua, Yanghe, Juzhu are all strategic locations with armies

⁵⁵TN: Liu Bang and Li Shimin both established their capitals in Chang'an, as Xi'an was formerly called.

skilled at warfare. If we keep fighting our way north, how great will our losses be? When will we finally reach Beijing?" Just at this time, the Datong army commander Jiang Xiang sent someone with a document of surrender and invited Li Zicheng north. With Datong won as easily as spitting in his hands, Zicheng was ecstatic. This fortuitous incident changed history. For Li Zicheng, Jiang Yu's surrender looked like a Heaven-sent opportunity, but in fact it was a trap. If Li Zicheng had withdrawn his troops from Ningwu Pass, the situation wouldn't have rapidly deteriorated. But once he was thrown into confusion by this lovely opportunity, he continued his way north on a road of no return.

Li Zicheng's grasp of opportunity was stalled at a preliminary stage, and the Manchu dynasty's grasp of historical opportunity was also stalled at a preliminary stage. When I examine the Jiashen year from a Chinese perspective, I applaud the good fortune of the Chinese people. When examining the Jiashen year from a global perspective, I rue the misfortune of the Chinese people. It was in the Jiashen year, in England, on the other side of the world, that Cromwell led the Parliamentarian cavalry to a decisive victory in the Battle of Marston Moor. This battle was an important symbol of success for Britain's bourgeois revolution. Five years after Emperor Chongzhen hanged himself, Charles I of Britain's House of Stuart stepped up to the execution block. In the 1640s, two great monarchs of the East and West met their demise, but their deaths had different consequences: In the West, the bourgeoisie mounted the world stage and presented a new appearance. But in China, one tyranny replaced another. China's history, in essence, has no history, because it is just a repetition of monarchs falling with no progress resulting, and consequently it is said that its history is a planar cycle. The West, however, leaped out of this cycle and entered a wave-like trajectory that carried it upward. The Jiashen year was a symbolic year for the West in entering this trajectory, and China began to lag behind the West at that time. By the time Guo Moruo wrote his famous essay, the West was 300 years ahead of China, whether in terms of political civilization, economic system or science and technology.

I've always held the view that the Opium Wars came at the wrong time. Marx said the Opium Wars had a dual nature, with both negative and positive significance. If this logic holds water, the Opium Wars missed the two most opportune moments: One was when the Ming dynasty was thoroughly rotten. When fruit goes rotten, you just throw it away. If capitalism had come in at that time, China would certainly have experienced epic change. The second time was when the Manchus first entered the Central Plains. At that time, the Qing was roiling with primitive fervor and impetuosity; it was already drunk on Chinese culture, and if a culture even better than Chinese culture had appeared, it would have not hesitated to reject the inferior and seize the superior. The

door of Japan had been blasted open by Western gunboats, but Japan treated the civilization behind the Western gunboats with a practical and sagacious attitude, and throughout the entire nation, regardless of class, there emerged a massive upsurge in wholesale Westernization. The eighteenth century Japanese certainly did no better than the Manchus of the Jiashen year would have done. Unfortunately, the Opium Wars occurred after the Manchus had been thoroughly assimilated by Han culture. The Manchus ultimately absorbed Chinese culture lock, stock and barrel and perpetuated Chinese culture, but what they absorbed was the worst of Chinese culture, so the final outcome was also the worst. Wallowing in the quagmire of feudalism, the Ming dynasty couldn't save itself, but the Manchus could have managed this. Based on their performance in the Jiashen year, they had an intense sensitivity to historical opportunity. The Battle of Shanhai Pass is clear proof of this. When Li Zicheng overcame Beijing, the Manchu side knew nothing of it. By then, the Manchu army had already set off, prepared to do as on the previous four occasions, breaking through the Great Wall at Xifengkou or Qiangziling and then engaging in guerrilla warfare against Beijing and its environs. On the 15th day of the fourth month of the Jiashen year, the army reached a place called Wenghou southwest of Shenyang and suddenly stopped advancing. Wu Sangui's emissary had arrived, and it was at that point that Dorgon received accurate news of the fall of Beijing. Wu Sangui asked Dorgon to continue advancing along his original path and to enter the Great Wall at Xifengkou in order to block a retreat by Li Zicheng, and then to join the Guanning army in encircling and annihilating him. The situation changed in the space of a breath. Yesterday's enemy became an ally and an even stronger enemy emerged. Dorgon was given just one day. This was the longest day in the short life of that young man. Finally he decided to take his army straight to Shanhai and to ignore Wu Sangui's request to proceed to Xifengkou. He knew the opportune moment was at hand and he couldn't afford to hesitate. He was determined to fight head-to-head with Li Zicheng at Shanhai Pass. When a country defeats a powerful country, it becomes a powerful country. The Wenghou decision was that of a great war strategist. The Eight Banner Army took off like an arrow. The Qing army advanced toward Shanhai Pass at a speed of 100 kilometers per day, about the same speed as the Red Army rushed toward the Dadu River, while Li Zicheng proceeded at a snail's pace after leaving Beijing. Beijing was more than 200 kilometers from Shanhai Pass, and after eight days, the Dashun army reached Shanhai Pass at almost the same time as the Qing army. If Li Zicheng had arrived one day earlier, the Battle of Shanhai Pass would have ended differently. In the Battle of Shanhai Pass that occurred on the next day, and which decided China's fate, Dorgon ordered Wu Sangui to first engage the Dashun Army in battle while he looked on from the sidelines. The Dashun Army fought with

increasing heroism, and Wu Sangui was soon unable to withstand it. At this moment, a gale-force wind suddenly blew in from the sea. It was a strange wind that arrived just in time, and it blew toward the peasant army. Later the Qing dynasty histories referred to it as a “divine wind.” Could this wind also be an opportunity? Dorgon immediately grasped the fabulous opportunity of this wind and led his army full-steam ahead. The hills rang and the sea howled. The peasant army was blinded by the sand blown into their eyes by this storm that blotted out sun and sky, and when they were finally able to open their eyes, they suddenly discovered that their opponents had changed into shaven-haired Qing soldiers. Their will to fight collapsed in an instant. Li Zicheng was positioned on a mountain peak watching the battle when a monk told him, “It’s Tartar soldiers!” Zicheng turned his horse around and fled. This wasn’t a battle, but a massacre.

Opportunity is like the sun; it shines on everyone alike. Seizing the opportunity means seizing history. The Manchus didn’t follow a road of renewal and development like the British, and there are several reasons for this, but they could have done so. The Han, however, could not have. To blame the Manchus on this point is somewhat unfair. The most important reason, first of all, is that they didn’t know their opponent. Indeed, when the British warships arrived at their front door 200 years later, Emperor Daoguang and his ministers didn’t even know where England was.

In the Jiashen year, Li Zicheng likewise lost by not knowing his opponent. A good part of his wrong judgment of the situation stemmed from this. The greatest disaster is not to know one’s opponent. He knew how powerful he himself was, but not how powerful his enemy was. In particular, if the might of the enemy is greater than we realize, the situation becomes untenable. Although the Manchus were nomadic people with a low productive force, their battle capabilities were not poor. The fighting capacity of the nomadic peoples burned for centuries and destroyed three civilizations. They didn’t know how to cultivate fields, but they knew how to invent weapons of war. The stirrup was invented by China’s nomadic peoples. With this small object, they became invincible and rode their horses right through Europe. During the Battle of Sarhu,⁵⁶ the Ming army’s armor was made of cane, leather and waste metal, and the Korean reinforcements wore armor made of paper or willow strips, while the Qing troops were almost all wearing suits of armor made of refined iron. Apart from breast plates and back plates, even their heads, arms and legs were protected, and even their horses wore armor. The armor was so hard that only the strongest arrow could pierce it beyond 100 paces. The

⁵⁶TN: A series of conflicts between the Manchus and China’s Ming Dynasty in 1619, in which the Manchu cavalry scored an overwhelming victory over forces equipped with matchlocks and cannons.

Battle of Sarhu took place in 1619, and 25 years later, in the Jiashen year, the Eight Banner Army was even better equipped.

The Dashun army had also been tempered by its protracted revolutionary war. The Qin realm produced “armies of tigers and wolves,” and the Dashun was likewise such an army. I’ll give an example: The horses of the Dashun army normally didn’t drink water, but rather blood. The army killed its prisoners and watered its horses with their blood. The horses were used to drinking blood and disdained to drink water. The day before battle, the Dashun wouldn’t give their horses anything to drink, allowing them to become extremely thirsty. Upon entering the battlefield, as soon as the warhorses caught the scent of blood, they galloped forward whinnying, their eyes bloodshot, just like lions. Riding such horses to charge the enemy’s position made the soldiers invincible. Thinking of this now makes one’s hair stand on end, but even so, the Dashun army was still no match for the Eight Banners cavalry – not only were they no match, but they collapsed at the first blow. Just think how mighty that enemy must have been. Two hundred years later, the Qing dynasty suffered crushing defeat in the Opium Wars, and they lost because they didn’t know their adversary. By the time Guo Moruo wrote his essay, however, we not only knew ourselves, but also our opponent. We are a hundred times more fortunate than the Manchus. Due to historical circumstances, the Qing court could only choose between “bad” and “worse,” but we can choose between “good” and “bad.” Just as historical opportunity beckoned to the Manchus, it now beckons us. In the Jiashen year, when the Ming became the Qing, China faced the problems of its citizens’ moral quality and its rulers’ governing quality. By the time Guo Moruo wrote his “commemoration” of the Jiashen year, having experienced the rude awakening of the Opium Wars 100 years earlier, and the struggles of our distinguished predecessors, both qualities had reached a height that the ancients could never have hoped to attain, and the time should have arrived for our transformation into a great nation.

We finally reached this great transformation, but it was not on the 300th anniversary of the Jiashen year, but rather nearly another sexagenary cycle later, when Deng Xiaoping mounted the stage of history. Before then, we once again narrowly missed a historic opportunity. The specter commemorated by Guo Moruo in his essay was truly intrepid, not only drifting through China and Asian countries with Asiatic modes of production, but even enveloping for a time that immense neighboring country to our north. Ancient Greece created the city-state, and the Qin dynasty created centralized bureaucratic government. Greece’s influence was worldwide, but the Qin dynasty’s influence was only on China. That country to our north created modern totalitarian autocracy, and its influence was likewise on China; of course at a certain stage it also influenced several small countries in Eastern Europe. Mao worried that

capitalism would be restored in China, but that is impossible. The only thing that can be restored in China is feudalism. It was restored in the past, and unless its roots are completely destroyed it could be restored in the future as well. Deng Xiaoping's historical contribution is not only in ending the Cultural Revolution, but also in ending China's millennia-long planar cycle with no progress, and directing China in the 1980s into the same current of development as the rest of the world. Great reforms have always been the product of a great spirit. Deng Xiaoping's spirit should be referred to in Chinese history as the "first year of the Deng Xiaoping era." Deng Xiaoping changed our inner beings. Changes to the inner being are more profound and far-reaching than changes in the political or economic domain. Deng Xiaoping changed our thinking, and thought is the most sensual organ.

Today, opportunity is once more smiling on China. China has never enjoyed such a secure environment as it does today. For the first time in the 2,000 years since Qin Shihuang built the Great Wall, China is immune from a threat from the north. For the first time in the 160 years since the Opium Wars, China is immune from a threat from the seas. For the first time since the 1894 Sino-Japanese War, China is immune from a threat from that small island to its north. If in the twenty-first century China can achieve a complete century of peace to construct its modernization, it will certainly become the most powerful country in the world. We should not allow any other elements to shake this platform. Now that this opportunity has arrived, we should grab hold of it and not let it slip away. We cannot applaud half-measures. Our frame of mind is most important. We must become adept at changing our state of mind. Changing our state of mind will change the world.

This will be a true commemoration.

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