

JAPAN AND CHINA'S UNEQUAL TREATIES

This is an address delivered by Dr. Sun Yat-sen at a Welcome Dinner given for him on November 28, 1924, at the Oriental Hotel in Kobe, Japan.

The Kobe Chamber of Commerce, the Nippon-Chinese Industrial Association, our Chinese Consul and Chinese residents in Kobe; Gentlemen:—I am deeply grateful to you for the warm reception you have accorded me this evening. Casual observation of the enthusiasm with which the entire Japanese public have welcomed me during my present trip through Kobe, has brought home to me the close friendship that exists between the Chinese and Japanese peoples. Considering Sino-Japanese relations from every possible angle, the two nations should march forward hand in hand in a united effort to further their mutual interests. For instance, I am now making a trip from the south to the north of China, or, metaphorically speaking, from the southern to the northern part of my home, and my passage through Kobe is like a stop-over in a Japanese family. Thus, even when moving from the southern to the northern part of my own home, I have to pass through a Japanese household. The Chinese and Japanese nations are intimately related, not only from the point of view of communications but in all other respects as well. There is a saying among the people of both countries that China and Japan are brother nations, whose people are of a similar race and culture; that, therefore, they should join hands in common effort.

During the early days, the leaders of the Reformation Movement in Japan advocated Sino-Japanese co-operation. The Meiji Reformation has now been successfully accomplished, but the saying above has not yet been translated into reality. How would you account for this? The explanation lies in the fact that during the several decades that Japan was going through the process of modernization, China was fast asleep and absolutely unconscious. She remained asleep and unconscious through all the years when sweeping changes came over the world, and when European and American influence and pressure spread to the East. It was not until thirteen years ago (1911) that a revolution took place in China. The Chinese revolution was initiated by a few intellectual leaders inspired with the hope of reforming the government, awakening the people and restoring the nation to her former status.

The situation which confronts the revolution in China is quite different from that which confronted the Meiji Restoration. At the time of the Meiji Restoration, Western influence had not yet consolidated itself in the East; moreover, there were no other obstacles presented by the East itself. Japan, therefore, met with no difficulties in arming herself and in improving her administrative system. The Meiji Restoration was thus successfully accomplished. Thirteen years ago, when the Chinese Revolution broken out, European and American influence had long ago secured a stronghold and consolidated itself in East Asia. What is more, all China's neighbors had become strong nations. Whenever an attempt was made at improvement, obstacles were encountered at every turn. Even if the difficulties were overcome, the final aim was not easy to achieve. Therefore the Revolution remains unaccomplished after thirteen years of efforts.

It is true that in those thirteen years the revolutionists have succeeded in overthrowing the Manchu regime, dethroning the new Emperor Yuan Shih-kai and sweeping away many obstacles that stood in the way of revolutionary success. Even the big warlords, Tsao Kun and Wu Pei-fu, have recently been crushed so that all obstacles within the country have been removed. Since all the internal obstacles have been removed, it should now be possible to bring the revolution to final success. Why, then, do I say that the revolution can still not achieve success and be brought to a satisfactory conclusion? Because here are external hindrances which have yet to be overcome. These external hindrances are the Unequal Treaties forced in the past upon China by the foreign Powers.

The superficial meaning of the text of the treaties is quite easy to understand, but the inner significance is not only unknown to the Chinese themselves but can hardly be grasped even by the Japanese, who are, by way of speaking, only spectators. Briefly, these treaties were signed in the past by China with over ten countries, which thereby put China in a position unequal to their own and extorted from her all kinds of special privileges. Since the termination of the European war, the treaties with Germany and Austria have been abolished, so that these countries no longer enjoy special privileges in China. The treaties with Germany and Austria have been abrogated upon China's request in consequence of their defeat in the war. Of late, Russia has also renounced her unequal treaty with China. In the case of Russia, the abrogation is due to the fact that Russia, since her revolution, has awakened to a sense of justice, and come to the realization that such treaties are so unfair to China and so arbitrary that she has voluntarily cancelled her treaty and surrendered the special privileges which she used to enjoy in China. Thus, three countries have already cancelled their Unequal Treaties with China. In the meantime, however, more than ten countries have not yet rescinded the Unequal Treaties, by means of which they have usurped China's sovereignty.

What is the exact nature of these Unequal Treaties? In plain words, these treaties are nothing short of bonds signed by the former Chinese Government selling the Chinese people into slavery to the foreigners. At the present moment, more than ten countries still hold such bonds, that is to say, we have still more than ten masters. We are the slaves of more than ten countries, and our land is a colony owned in common by them all. Life would not be so hard for us, if our country were the colony of only one country, but when our country is a colony for more than ten countries, we must, of course, suffer painfully. Let us take, for example, Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand, which are all colonies of one country, Great Britain. In normal times; Great Britain enjoys few advantages in these colonies, whilst at the same time she assumes serious obligations towards them. The population in these colonies, on the contrary, derive great benefits from the mother country. In the case of China, who is a colony of more than ten countries, these countries enjoy special privileges without performing any obligations, and, moreover, maltreat her people. The Chinese people slave for their masters without ever receiving the slightest favor from them. They are persecuted and oppressed so relentlessly that there is no escape for them within the confines of their own land, and they would rather flee abroad to become the slaves of one foreign country. Many Cantonese, for instance, have fled to Hongkong, the South Sea Islands and America, from

where they never wish to return to their homeland. Naturally, it is far more happy to tea the slaves of one country than to be the slaves of more than ten countries. China, being a colony for more than ten countries, is not an independent nation. China's status is lower than a colony, and may indeed be called a "sub-colony." Her territory is larger than that of the United States, and her population, numbering 400,000,000 is greater than the American population. The United States is at present the richest and strongest country in the world, while China with her vast territory and huge population cannot even exist as an independent nation. The present condition of China may be attributed to many factors, but the principal factor is the restrictions imposed on her by the Unequal Treaties. The fact that China is at present not an independent nation but a colony of more than ten countries, is not realized by the Chinese themselves, nor, as far as I can see, by the Japanese.

Japan is now the strongest independent country in East Asia in addition to being one of the Great World Powers. Should Japan realize that China is a colony of more than ten countries, it is impossible, it seems to me, for Japan as an independent country to seek friendship with one possessed of a quasi-colonial status.

The following interesting story will serve as a fitting illustration. Once upon a time, there were two friends, A and B, in Kwangtung. A was a native of Canton, a man of great influence and high social standing, a member of the local gentry as one might call him. B, on the other hand, was a "life-long servant" (permanent slave-servants in Cantonese families are customarily called "life-long servants," equivalent to the "old slaves" in North China), who had not yet been freed from the status of a slave. He had made a big fortune by doing business in Canton, and had acquired great influence. Through a friend's introduction B met and formed an acquaintance with A. One day, A invited B to dinner, and the two grandees set out swaggeringly on their way to a restaurant. While strutting along the street in high spirits, they suddenly came upon B's master, who was a bumpkin just arrived in the city from the countryside. The master, shabbily dressed and bare-footed, was carrying an umbrella. He had walked a long distance and was fairly exhausted. As B was his "life-long servant," he accosted B unceremoniously and abruptly: "I haven't seen you for a long time. How is it that you have become so prosperous? Where are you going dressed so smartly? I am so tired from walking. Will you carry this big umbrella for me and wait upon me for a while?" Being a "life long servant" of the old rustic, B could not refuse to comply. He took the umbrella and walked off with his master, being unable to join A to dinner. Thus A failed to entertain his friend B. China has signed many treaties containing a "most-favored nation" clause with the various Powers by which privileges enjoyed by one Power are equally shared by other Powers. Japan is unaware of the fact that she is one of China's masters, and keeps on talking of Sino-Japanese friendship. She is like A who wanted to invite his friend B to dinner and who could not do so because in the way to the restaurant B's master suddenly appeared and wanted B to carry his umbrella for him. China is like a "life-long servant," not a freeman, and she has more than ten masters. If Japan desires to befriend us and invite us to dinner, we may encounter one, two, three, four or even ten masters on our way to the restaurant. These masters will never pass us by without ordering us to carry umbrellas for them. However sincere the Japanese may be in their invitation, they will be

unable to get their Chinese guests to the dinner. Under such circumstances it is impossible for China to meet Japan on equal terms.

If, therefore, Japan sincerely wishes the friendship of China, she should first help China to abolish the Unequal Treaties, to regain the control of her own house, and to recover her liberties. Not until then will China be in a position to talk friendship with Japan. It is commonly said that both China and Japan have the same language and the same culture. In other words, we are brother countries. From the standpoint of history, a history of several thousands of years, China is the elder, Japan the younger brother. If the brothers now desire to have a family reunion, then Japan, as the younger brother, should realize that the elder brother has been a slave of more than ten countries, and has for a long time been suffering intensely. The cause of this suffering lies in the Unequal Treaties. It is our hope that Japan, as the younger brother, will assist the elder brother in his efforts to abolish these Unequal Treaties, and to secure emancipation from his serfdom. It is only when this has been achieved, that China and Japan can be reunited as brothers.