“A Model of Modern Chinese Writing”

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

A MODEL OF MODERN CHINESE WRITING

As an example of the best style of modern Chinese composition nothing has appeared during recent years to excel that of the telegram sent from Nanking by five members of the Government and addressed to General Fêng Yü-hsiang. This telegram was signed by Hu Han-min, leading director of the Kuomintang in Nanking by Chang Jên-chieh, a distinguished literary man; by Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei, former Chancellor of the Peking National University; by Li Yü-yin, who is generally known as Li Shih-tsêng and who is the fifth son of the late Grand-Councillor of the Ch'ing Dynasty, Li Hung-tsao; and by Wu Ching-hêng, more commonly known as Wu Chih-hui. All of these five men have been favourable to the use of pai-hua (白話) in public education, but have clung to the best traditions of literary style in their own important writings. The choice of language in this telegram can be considered to represent the best style of modern Chinese writing. For this reason, and without any regard to the political views expressed therein, the telegram is herewith reproduced together with a translation which furnishes an indication of the meaning but conveys nothing of the literary charm of the original. The copy of the telegram is taken from the Sin Wan Pao of August 15, 1927.
Your telegram of August 11th has been received. We heartily approve of your command that we should proceed to Anch'ing to hold a Conference. On the evening of the 12th we prepared a reply to your telegram and submitted it to General Chiang just as he was taking the train to go to Shanghai. He smiled and immediately affixed his signature. On the next morning we were informed that General Chiang had made up his mind to resign.
and we proceeded to Shanghai the same evening for the purpose of urging him to remain in office. When we arrived in Shanghai he had already left for Ningpo. The circumstances reminded us of last spring when Yü (Li Shih-tseng) and Hêng (Wu Chih-hui) went to P'ing-ti-ch'uan to urge you to remain and found that you had already left a short time previously for Urga. The white steed had broken away and vanished from sight.

Friends produced the public announcement which, they said, General Chiang had prepared several days previously. As he was on the point of going to the train he showed it to some of his closest friends but said nothing about it to his advisers. When we read the statement we were greatly pleased with it.

Now the holding of a Conference to discuss matters and the necessity of assembling in a neutral place, Anch'ing, show that there are small differences of opinion between two parties. In the end there must be some concessions on both sides before harmony can be reached. Since the mistake of admitting the Communists to the Party has been repented of many times in tears and anguish, personal self-sacrifice on the part of all should voluntarily be undertaken with all possible diligence. Although we ourselves believed that it would be possible to reconcile our differences by a conference, yet how much more straightforward has been the conduct of General Chiang in accomplishing the same result by taking himself out of the way.

Since we have been subject to the confusing influences of Communism, discipline among us has been seriously weakened. In Nanking bitter abuse of Wang Chingwei has been condoned; from Hankow came a telegram reviling Chiang Kai-shih. The loaders of both parties have proved unable to control their members. While preparations are made for friendly negotiations, one side cannot but halt its Northern Expedition while the other side continues to push its drive eastward. Peaceful symbols such as jade and silk are hopelessly mixed with war implements. Will not this cause us to be a laughing stock to the world? When one is already mounted on a horse, he does not need to look for a mount. When you wish to stop a flame, it is only necessary to pull out the firewood. If one party will withdraw there will be no need of a conference or discussion. Affairs would straighten themselves out. At first we did not realize this fact and were thus far less intelligent than General Chiang. Therefore, we now have changed our idea about going to Anch'ing and have decided to return each one to his own home. By one stroke we can thus clear up the whole situation.

The admission of Communists into the Party and later their expulsion must both be considered as experience gained through mistakes. Both policies were based upon selfish considerations. In the meantime governmental conditions in both parties have become worse day by day. If at the present time we bring about a superficial unity, it will only be an occasion for strife. Each leader will proclaim himself to be chief and there will be a struggle for supremacy with the result of bringing even greater calamity upon the Party. Therefore, now is the time for us to retire. It must not be considered that we are deserting the ranks. We can only look to you as the one pillar which will support the firmament.

J.C.F.