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Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1919-06-05, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

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Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1919-06-05, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

Transcription
30 Seymour Road
Shanghai.
5 June, 1919.

Dear Dada,

Your letter from camp enclosing the pictures of your surroundings have just come. I can picture your environment more satisfactorily now. The place looks business-like, but oh, Dada, how dreary! Here I am saying the very thing I was trying to keep from saying! Well, anyway you will excuse my brutality.

In the papers you must have seen about the effects the granting of Tsingtau to Japan by the Allies have had on the Chinese people. There is a real whole-hearted movement in all China to boycott Japanese goods and to send protests to the Government in Peking against our delegates signing the Peace treaty. The students are the most active participants in this movement. All the large schools in Shanghai have suspended classes, and boys and girls alike altho they remain in school are not attending classes. They have mass meetings every day and they go out to the country to lecture to the illiterate people exactly what the signing over of Tsingtau is going to mean to China. The movement is rapidly spreading and those of us who know the fickleness and instability of the student mind are hoping that this movement will really continue and that results would be satisfactory. Several papers in the city have called me up to ask for my opinion on this boycott question, but I am refusing to be interviewed, for whatever I say will be twisted around. To tell you the truth, I feel that this boycott movement is effective only in so far as it leads to a constructive program. You may be sure that Japan will hold everything regarding this movement against the Chinese, and when the day comes they will make us pay if they can. And if we are not ready to face them when the day of reckoning comes, we will get the worst of it. Therefore while I approve of this boycott movement, in that it shows to the world that we have a distinctly patriotic and active spirit [leading] the oneness of our eighteen provinces, I feel that boycotting is after all a passive state. I would suggest that in every school in our country, the students should be taught contemporary history, and that the teachers should foster patriotic sentiments. It is really discouraging when one thinks of the amount of history the students study, but not one jot of it is about China since the Revolution. Our oriental mind seems to be steeped in the glories and conquests of the past, and if something is not done to change this, we shall be a second Korea.

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If I had the means I would open an industrial school for the children of the streets. They should be taught trades such as mat weaving etc. The Japanese get all our trade in making mats etc. and really if the children were taught, they would be able to do as well as the products sent from Japan, and the products could be sold infinitely cheaper. The children too should have two or three hours a day of instruction in Chinese and arithmetic so that in time they would be able to read the newspapers in the colloquial tongue and thus be informed of the state of affairs in the country.

A movement of this nature should have the backing and support of our business men. The Japs however have such a hold on our market that they could easily cripple any one who dares to [stet] finance the movement. You will find in China that the Japanese are a powerful people in business. All the largest and most influential firms with Chinese capital have strong Japanese influences. And you may be positive that there are just as many skunks in China as elsewhere.

Mother has just returned from down town and she said that under the influences of the students many of the shops have been closed, refusing to do any business until the Government takes action against our accepting the clause which would hand over Tsingtau to Japan. She said that many of the students were running wildly away from the policemen who have orders from the Government to arrest them. It is thought that because the Japs have bribed certain officials in Peking to agree to the clause regarding Tsingtau, the officials have promised to do away the boycott movement. My heart bleeds for the poor students, and I hope those who are so rotten, so damn greedy and inhuman as [page break] to sell their country Will Go To Hell. It is bad enough to hate men of another nation, but to feel perfectly helpless with rage against the very men who by all laws of decency and humanity should be patriotic is Hell. I can understand as I never could before, what France must have gone thru when Alsace and Loraine went to Germany. With Tsingtau tho, it is even worse for I feel that it is the first echo of the knell to China's integrity and solidarity. Yet if there be a God, I can not help thinking that China will be avenged, yet how hard to wait until that day.

Now, let us get away from this subject, for once I start I become so violent and rabid that there is no sanity in me left. Well, for one thing my sister has moved to a house near us. While I enjoyed their being with us I feel now that since there are only Mother and I in the house all day I am going to regain freedom and have a little privacy of the mind. Sister lives near us and so we can run back and forth. I have been getting my own things in order as things were rather in a chaos when they were here, especially as there were two children. I feel that my nerves are in a much better condition since I have had more time for reflection, and I think too that the servants are feeling that the reins which has been rather loose are now tightening up a bit. I think it is absolutely essential that one should have a sense of privacy, a feeling impossible when there are too many around.
I have had your picture framed, the one taken senior year. The effect is most satisfactory, I might call it "a study in shadow". Every one who has seen it has remarked upon the artistic effect of your pose. I think you need not worry about a career, for if the worst comes to the worst, you can make a living by posing for the photographers.

I feel so deeply about the Tsingtau situation that I have not much interest in anything else. Of course this boycott movement is effecting the small Japanese shops more than it does the large firms, and as the former are feeling the pressure, the large firms have taken their part by sending long and copious telegrams to Japan asking their Government to give Tsingtau back to us. As long as the Chinese Government denies that it has any agreement with Japan regarding Tsingtau, there is still hope for us. The Japanese are not afraid of our Government, for they know that it is weak and largely composed of self interested men. They are tho afraid of the Chinese people, for in spite of what they say about our lack of patriotic feeling, they know only too well that when roused we are a terrible people to deal with. They have had a taste of what length we might be driven to as evinced [stet] in the fact that a few days ago several Japanese settlements were destroyed by fire.

Well, I will not bore you any more. With love.
Dear Dada,

Your letter from camp enclosing the pictures of your surroundings have just come. I can picture your environment more satisfactorily now. The place looks business-like, but oh, Dada, how dreary! Here I am saying the very thing I was trying to keep from saying! Well, anyway, you will excuse my brutality.

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