

HOW TO REMOVE CHINA'S ANTAGONISM

A Letter to a Correspondent of the *Asahi* (1919)



Dr. Sun Yat-sen with representatives of the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Sinbun* in Osaka, Japan on March 11, 1913

You have asked me why the Chinese entertain such deep hatred toward Japan, and how the feeling between the two countries can be harmonized. I wish to answer your questions with all sincerity and hope that they will reach my old Japanese friends. I have been a very strong advocate of Sino-Japanese friendship, and I thus lament the efforts of the Japanese Government of recent years to help Chinese officialdom in its efforts to frustrate the Kuomintang.

Members of the Kuomintang can be likened to Japan's Reformists of 50 years ago. Japan was originally a weak country, but because of her good fortune in having these Reformists she later became a Great Power. Kuomintang members wish to follow the example of these Japanese and reform China. That is why I have always advocated friendship with Japan. However, Japanese militarists, aiming at imperialism and forgetting the deeds and aspirations of the Reformists, are trying to extend their aggressive policy to China, where they expect the least resistance. This constitutes the fundamental point of issue between the Chinese and Japanese policies. In the opinion of the Japanese, Japan is no more aggressive toward China than other Powers are. Why should China hate Japan alone? Alas, the situation is similar to that if a younger brother, associating himself with robbers, commits a robbery at the house of his elder brother and then complains that his brother should hate him more bitterly than he hates the robbers when they are of the same blood. This resembles Japanese arguments about the same racial stock and identical language.

Furthermore, when Japan declared war against Germany, she assured the Powers, at the time of her occupation of Tsingtao, that Tsingtao would be returned to China. But when China entered the war, Japan concluded secret pacts with the Powers demanding the inheritance of all German rights and privileges in Shantung. Japan was one of the Powers which induced and advised China to participate in the War. It is very apparent, then, that Japan wanted China to toil so that she could reap the fruit of China's exertion. Such a state of affairs, in the eyes of the Chinese, is similar to that denoted by the Cantonese expression of "selling pigs." Formerly, when land in Peru, Chile and Cuba was being reclaimed, foreign capitalists, in view of the industriousness of the Chinese and their cheap wages, recruited Chinese workers. At that time Chinese labor was not allowed to go abroad. The foreign capitalists were compelled to recruit Chinese workers through Macao, and the number of such workers going abroad totaled over 100,000 per year. These workers were all recruited from China's interior with promises of good pay and prospects of fortunes, but once they set foot at Macao their fate was sealed. Sold by the abductors at high prices to foreigners and shipped abroad for manual work, they would suffer torture for the rest of their lives; their lot was no different from that of the infant pig. Therefore such workers were all called "Young Pigs." Japan advised China to participate in the War and in the meantime wanted to grasp privileges in Shantung. What she did was no different from selling China as a pig!

The position of "pigs" is lower than that of house slaves. If the latter work hard and industriously, they can expect some pity and reward from their masters. At least they are clothed and fed. Pigs are not so. No matter how badly he needs money, a "pig agent" in Macao will never sell his house slaves. He would recruit "pigs" for this purpose, persons having absolutely no relationship with him. Japan would not ask Formosa and Korea to be exploited by others for her own benefit, which shows that she treated China as inferior even to Formosa and Korea, how can we endure this!

If this is to be taken as a precedent, then Japan will ask China to participate in all future wars in order to derive benefits there from herself. She is simply treating China as a "pig." "Pig Agents" in Macao sell Chinese workers to foreign capitalists in order to get some monetary benefit from the foreigners, but in asking China to enter the War, Japan not only got the right to manage three island groups in the South Seas, but also wished to get privileges in Shantung. Not only did she sell China as "pig" but, in addition, was aiming at cutting a fat slice from the pig itself. Such conduct on the part of the Japanese is one reason why the Chinese hate the Japanese to their very bones.

Japan defended her action by saying that she got privileges in Shantung by fighting for them. Should that be the case, why did she not openly demand such privileges from the Powers at the time when she overpowered Tsingtao. There are two sides in the European War, those in favor of "aggression"— Germany, Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria — and those against "aggression" — Britain, France, the United States and Russia.

The number of cities that have been captured by the Anglo-American troops in Europe is perhaps a hundred times greater than Tsingtao, and the sacrifices those countries have sustained are manifold, but such cities have all been returned to their rightful owners. Japan entered the war in opposition to "aggression." Why should she demand the inheritance of German privileges in Shantung just because she captured Tsingtao? If Japan's aims were "aggressive" in the beginning, she ought to have entered the War on the side of Germany and others. Japan also said that China had not done much good after her participation in the war, and therefore could not expect to get the fruits of Japan's toil. She failed to realize that war was declared on Germany and Austria against "aggression," and therefore all territory taken by them by force during the last 100 years or more should be returned to their original owners. The Polish and Czech nations, likewise, did not achieve much, but they had their land returned. Why should Shantung and Tsingtao be different? Denmark was a neutral State, but Danish territory taken by Germany 60 years ago has already been returned. Is it not, therefore, just that China, by entering the war, should expect the return of Tsingtao?

The Japanese people used to advocate friendship on the grounds of a common racial stock and culture, but their way of treating China is more reprehensible than that of other foreign Powers. No wonder that the Chinese hate the Japanese and befriend the Europeans and Americans. How can the Japanese militarists, with their present conduct, expect to get what they want. For Japan to inherit the German privileges in Shantung will be for her to incur the same fate that Germany is facing. Responsible people among our eastern neighbor, if they are sincere in their talk of a common race and common culture, should urge the Japanese Government to change its fundamental policy and stop its aggression in China. Only then will East Asia enjoy the blessings of permanent peace and enter a new era of reconstruction and prosperity.