

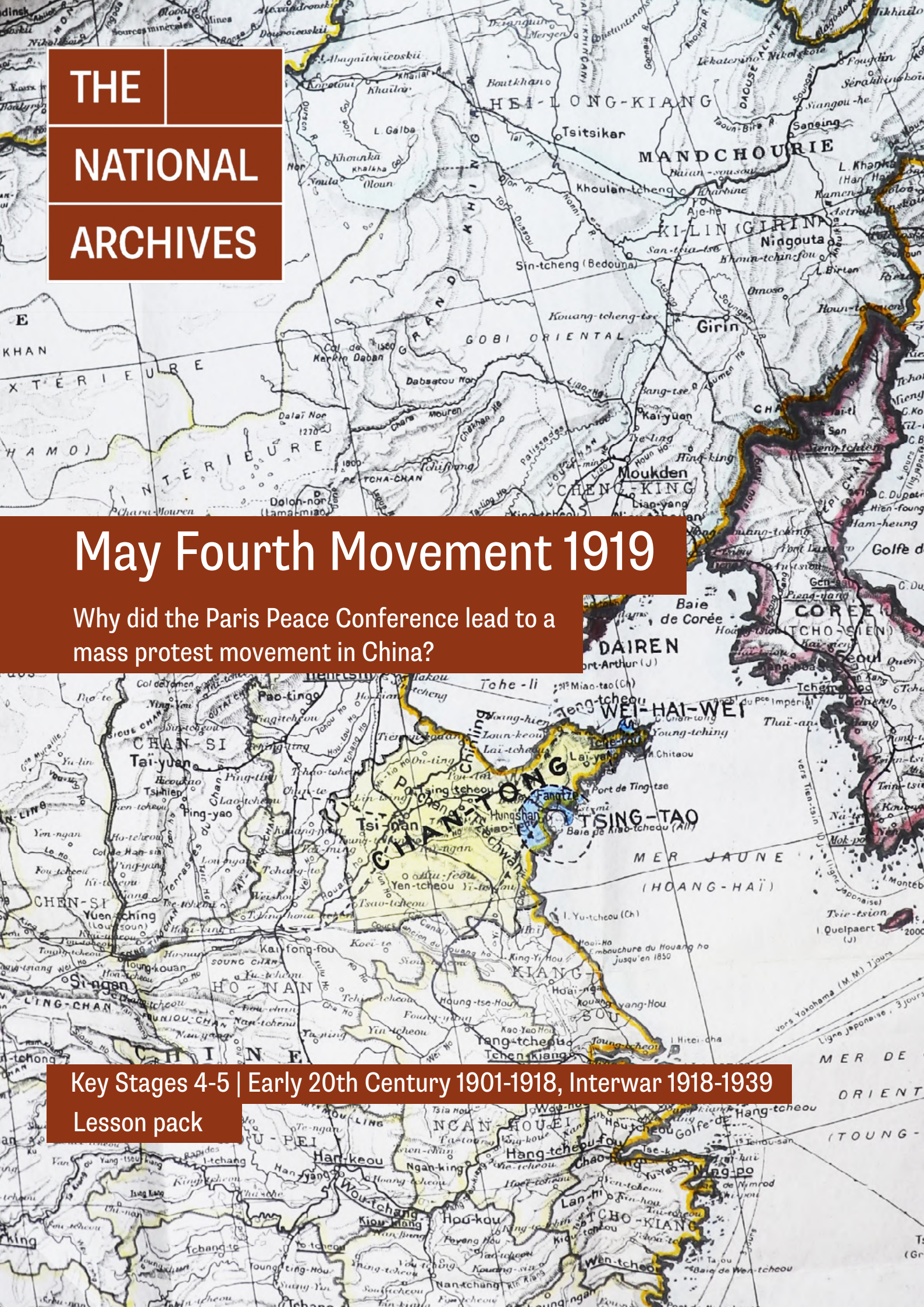
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

May Fourth Movement 1919

Why did the Paris Peace Conference lead to a mass protest movement in China?

Key Stages 4-5 | Early 20th Century 1901-1918, Interwar 1918-1939

Lesson pack



Introduction

In 1897, Germany colonised a part of China called Qingdao (also spelled Tsingtao) in the Shandong Province.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Japan joined Britain in fighting against Germany as part of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Japanese troops occupied the German territory in Shandong during the Siege of Tsingtao.

After the end of the war, the Paris Peace Conference met to set the terms for peace in the Versailles Treaty. The conference began on 18 January 1919, and the peace treaty was signed on 28 June 1919.

On 3 May 1919, a telegram from the Chinese delegates at the conference revealed that the 'Great Powers' (Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States) had decided that Japan would be allowed to keep the territory they had occupied in Shandong. A secret agreement between Britain, France, Italy, and Japan was also revealed to have been made in 1917, giving Japan the territory in exchange for military aid.

This reveal sparked a mass protest on 4 May 1919 in Beijing, mainly led by university students. The students passed resolutions, sent correspondence to the peace conference, and targeted politicians who were seen as having failed the Chinese people. The protests developed into a mass movement across China, including general strikes and boycotts. Eventually, when time came to sign the peace treaty, the Chinese delegates refused to sign.

The May Fourth Movement was a turning point for Chinese nationalism and its relationship to the West. What can British government documents tell us about how Britain and the other Great Powers viewed the Chinese demands as the Peace Conference unfolded?

Suitable for:

KS 4 - 5

Time period:

Early 20th Century 1901-1918, Interwar 1918-1939

Connections to the Curriculum:

Key stage 4

Edexcel GCSE History:
Mao's China, 1945–76

OCR GCSE History:
International Relations: the changing international order 1918–1975
China 1950–1981: The People and the State

Key stage 5

AQA A-level History:
International Relations and Global Conflict, c1890–1941
The Transformation of China, 1936–1997

Edexcel A-level History:
The making of modern China, 1860–1997
Mao's China, 1949–76
OCR A-level History:
China and its Rulers 1839–1989
International Relations 1890–1941
Japan 1853–1937

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Teachers' notes

This is the first in a planned series of three lessons on 20th century Chinese history.

This lesson can be used to support the study of Mao's China (1945-76) as well as the overall development of China in the 19th and 20th centuries. It can also support the study of international relations in the period after the First World War, especially the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles.

For GCSE students, teachers may wish to reduce the number of sources in the lesson in quantity or length or assign small groups to work on different sources for students to feedback to the class.

Discussion questions:

- What were the long-term consequences – from 1919 to today – of the May Fourth Movement?
- What do you think would have happened if the Paris Peace Conference had agreed to return Shandong to China?
- How do you think the May Fourth Movement is viewed (a) in the West (b) within China? Why is it important to explore different perspectives and interpretations in history?

Sources

All sources except for 1a & b come from the same document file in The National Archives: FO [Foreign Office] 608/210/3. This is a collection of papers related to China's claim for the return of the territory in Shandong. It is part of the broader series FO 608, containing correspondence and papers from the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference.

Sources 1a & b are both photographs of student protests during the height of the May Fourth Movement. They provide a different perspective than that of the British government sources from the rest of the lesson.

Source 2 is a telegram from Lord Arthur James Balfour, who was Foreign Secretary in Britain at the time. He is writing to Lord George Curzon, who served in the small War Cabinet and War Policy Committee during the war. This source can be used to explore Britain's perspective on the situation, as Balfour outlines both China and Japan's positions as well as his own opinion.

Source 3 is a telegram from Sir John Newell Jordan, a diplomat who headed the British legation in Beijing. He is writing to Lord George Curzon. This source gives a good outline of what was happening on the ground and what the atmosphere was like. As it is from a British perspective, it can also tell us about what British officials might have found worrisome about the movement.

Sources 4a-c are all responses opposing the decision to allow Japan's occupation. Three perspectives are represented: that of Chinese university students who have studied abroad, that of members of the general public, and that of British and American residents in Beijing. The university students take advantage of their knowledge of Western interests in arguing for a post-war spirit

Teachers' notes

of international cooperation. The Chihli Citizens' Convention is aimed directly at the Chinese delegation, drawing on the power of anger and indignation in the wider public. Finally, the Anglo-American Association is concerned with the impact on Western financial interests in China, wanting to avoid any social instability or upheavals. For these sources teachers could chose to break students into three groups, each group reading either Source 4a, 4b, or 4c using the questions provided. Then come together to create a Venn diagram with three circles looking at the similarities/differences between the sources' arguments and language.

Sources 5 and 6 are both telegrams to and from British officials. They express British concerns about the potential consequences of the May Fourth Movement, especially as it relates to the Chinese delegation's pivotal decision to sign or refuse to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty. Students can be encouraged to think about the consequences of either outcome – what would have happened if the Chinese delegates did sign the treaty, despite public opinion? What were the actual consequences, both long-term and short-term, of refusing to sign?

Tasks

Starter task

- Brainstorm: What do you know about China during the First World War? What do you know about the Paris Peace Conference/the Treaty of Versailles?
- The Treaty of Versailles was not signed by China – in this lesson, your task is to figure out why. Do you have any ideas before you start?

Sources 1a & b

Photographs of student protestors during the May Fourth Movement 1919.

- Is there an original caption or title for the photograph?
- Where is the photograph taken? Can you see anything relating to the event, environment, architecture, time of day, or season?
- What can you see in the photograph?
- Why do you think the photographs have been taken?
- Who is the audience for these photographs?
- What evidence do these photographs provide about the May Fourth Movement?
- Does the content of photographs suggest other lines of enquiry?
- What further sources would help us understand these photographs?
- Look these photographs again at the end of the lesson:
- Has your understanding of the photographs changed? Do these photographs give us a perspective on the May Fourth Movement that the written documents do not?

Source 2

Telegram from Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord George Curzon, 8 May 1919.

- According to this source:
 - What is the Chinese point of view?
 - What is the Japanese point of view?
 - What is the British point of view?
- Why do you think that Lord Balfour is supporting Japan's position?
- What appears to be Lord Balfour's attitude towards Chinese claims?

Source 3

Telegram from Sir John Newell Jordan to Lord George Curzon, 10 May 1919.

- What are the causes of the May Fourth Movement according to this telegram?
- What angered the Chinese protestors?
- Why do you think China signed treaties in 1915 and 1918 which signed over territorial rights to Japan?
- Can you describe the attitude and tone of this telegram towards these events?

Tasks

Sources 4a-c

These sources are all voicing their support for the aims of the May Fourth Movement. Each comes from a different perspective.

- Compare and contrast the three sources using this table.

	Who is writing it?	What is the main argument/s of the source?	What kind of language does the source use?
Source 4a			
Source 4b			
Source 4c			

Tasks

- What are the main differences and similarities between the sources? How do these reflect the authors of the sources?
- Which source do you think would have been most effective in changing the minds of the 'Great Powers' at the Paris Peace Conference? Why do you think all the arguments failed?

Source 5

Telegram from the British Foreign Office to the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, 22 May 1919.

- According to the British Foreign Office, what have been the consequences of the Paris Peace Conference in China?
- Why do you think Britain and the United States are worried about these consequences?
- What do you think will happen if the Chinese delegates decide **not** to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty?
- Extension activity: Research what happened in China immediately after this period. Is this what you would have expected?

Source 6

Telegram from Lord George Curzon to Lord Arthur James Balfour, 10 July 1919.

- How long after the first breakout of the May Fourth movement was this source written?
- What happened to the protest movement in June?
- What form is the protest movement taking according to this source?
- The Chinese delegates did not sign the Versailles Peace Treaty. Can you explain why? What could have been the consequences if they had signed the Treaty?

External links

[Before and After the May Fourth Movement](#)¹

Information from 'Asia for Educators' at Columbia University.

[May Fourth Movement posters](#)²

A showcase of posters from later in the decade showing the legacy of the May Fourth Movement in China.

[The Political and Cultural Impacts of the May Fourth Movement](#)³

Article from the Gale Review.

[Milestones to Peace: The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles](#)⁴

Blog post from The National Archives about the Paris Peace Conference.

[The National Archives blog posts about China](#)⁵

Blog posts from The National Archives exploring different facets of Chinese history.

[May Fourth at 100 in Singapore and Hong Kong. Memorialization, localization, and negotiation](#)⁶

Reflections on the legacy of the May Fourth Movement from The International Institute for Asian Studies.

¹ https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1750_mayfourth.htm

² <https://chinese posters.net/themes/may-fourth-movement>

³ <https://review.gale.com/2019/05/04/political-and-cultural-impacts-of-the-may-fourth-movement/>

⁴ <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/milestones-to-peace-the-paris-peace-conference-and-the-treaty-of-versailles/>

⁵ <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/tag/china/>

⁶ <https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/may-fourth-100-singapore-and-hong-kong-memorialization-localization-and>

Background

In China, the First World War brought about an intense transformation that led to national self-determination. It also gave rise to the forces that would ultimately lead to the Cultural Revolution 47 years later.

The First World War marked a turning point in the national history of many Asian countries. It gave rise to various political expectations in those countries: hopes for a new world, hopes for the ending of colonial exploitation and, most of all, hopes for being able to take part in the international democratic process.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, China faced serious internal challenges and foreign pressure. With the Qing dynasty's humiliating defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), regional dominance had moved from China to Japan. Japan's ambitions in China expanded due to its decisive victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), which guaranteed Japanese presence in south Manchuria and Korea. The 1911 Revolution had brought an end to the Qing dynasty and started the Republican era in China. However, China remained susceptible to pressure from Western powers.

In August 1914, Japan declared war against Germany as an ally to Britain based on the Anglo-Japanese alliance formed in 1902. Under that alliance, Japan invaded Kiaochow, the German leasehold in the Shandong province of China.

In 1915, Japan presented a set of twenty-one demands to the Chinese government to gain greater control over China and its territories. These demands included territorial concessions, control over railways, and extraterritorial rights for Japanese nationals in China. The central government in Beijing was powerless and financially bankrupt, so regional fragmentation had increased. They were unable to resist Japanese pressure and agreed to most of the demands. This caused widespread anger and resentment among Chinese intellectuals and the broader population.

The Chinese government sought to fix this situation and regain control over Shandong Province. In 1917, they offered to send Chinese labourers to assist the Allies in the Western Front. They hoped that the Allied powers would then put pressure on Japan to return Shandong to China after the war.

After the Armistice, the Paris Peace Conference began in January 1919. The Chinese government sent a delegation to Paris to regain Shandong. They also wanted to discuss the abolition of extraterritorial rights [foreign citizens not being subject to Chinese law], the revision of customs and tariffs, and the withdrawal of Japanese troops from China.

However, these demands were not met. Judging China's contribution to the war as minimal, the Allies confirmed Japan's colonial rights and privileges gained in China. This news was revealed in a telegram from the Chinese delegates at the conferences on 3 May 1919. The reveal triggered mass protests in Beijing the next day, followed by demonstrations in cities all over China. This is known today as the May Fourth Movement of 1919.

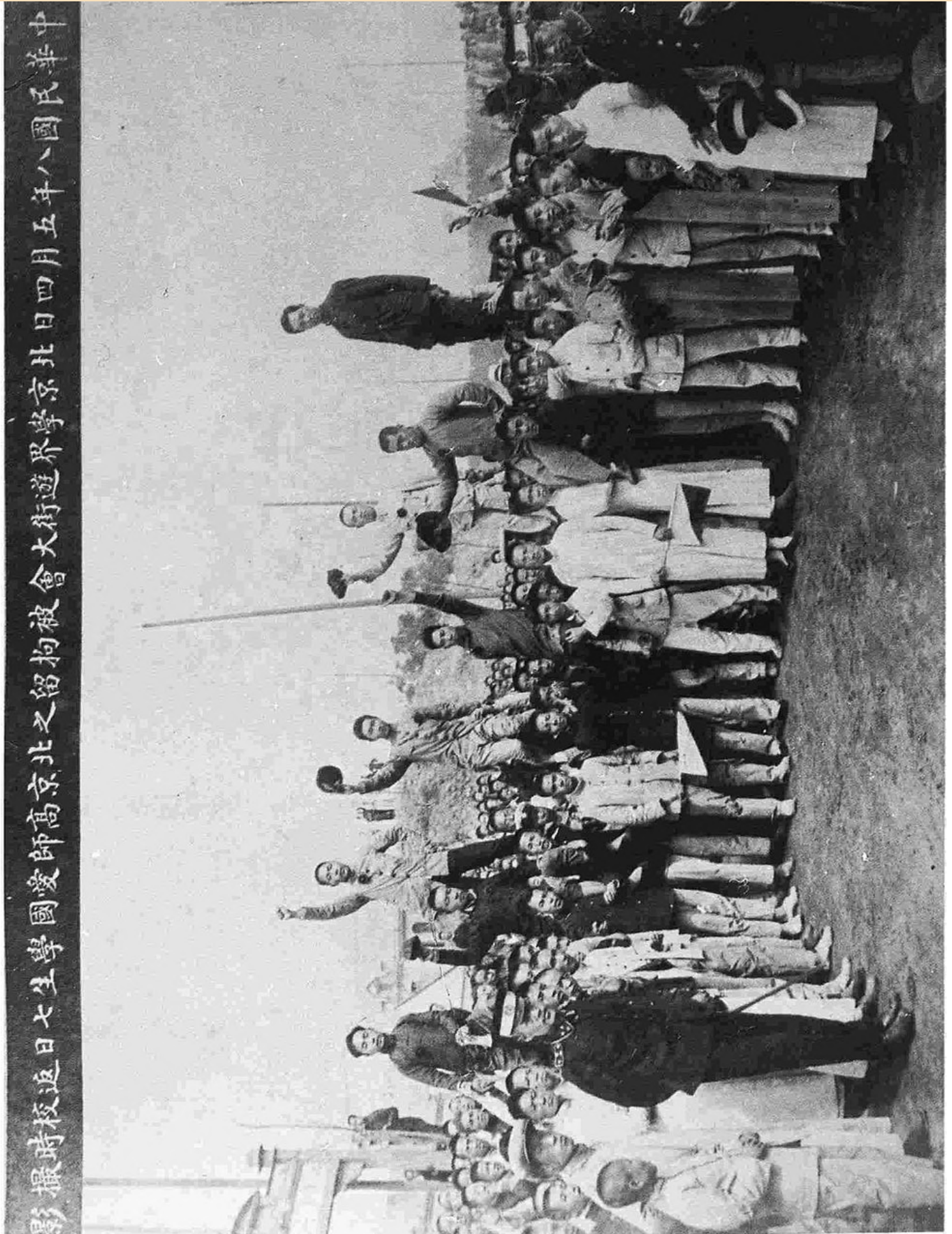
During the May Fourth Movement, protesters rallied around the principles of science, democracy,

Background

and nationalism and called for a complete overhaul of Chinese society. The movement emphasised the need for modernisation and Westernisation to create a strong, independent China. Many intellectuals and students who participated in the movement went on to become leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and played a significant role in the Chinese Communist Revolution.

The May Fourth Movement is considered a significant turning point in modern China's political and intellectual history. It dramatically changed the country's political trajectory. At this moment, China went from a feudal, introspective society and subject to semi-colonial rule by imperial powers, to a more open, forward-looking civilisation ready for social revolution and political independence. The movement emphasised a growing sense of China's national unity and the awakening of Chinese nationalism.

Source 1a: Students of Beijing Normal University returned to campus on May 7th, 1918 after being detained during the May Fourth Movement. Wikimedia Commons, public domain.



Source 1b: Students burning Japanese goods during the May Fourth Movement, Tsinghua School, Beijing. Wikimedia Commons, public domain.



Source 2: Telegram from Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord George Curzon, 8 May 1919. Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3

No. 703

May 8th, 1919.

My Lord,

One of the controversies which arose during the framing of the Peace Treaty with Germany related to the course which ought to be pursued with regard to German rights in Shantung. The Chinese contended that as Shantung was Chinese territory, and as China was a belligerent, she was entitled to claim the direct surrender of all the rights which Germany had obtained in the leased territory.

Japan, on the other hand, held the view that, as the Germans had been expelled from Shantung by forces which were in the main Japanese, and which in any case contained no Chinese contingent, the surrender of German rights in Shantung should be made to her, and that only after this surrender was accomplished should those rights be re-transferred to China.

The difference may seem rather a matter of form than of substance, but the Japanese Delegation represented the issue as one involving national honour, on which it was impossible for the Japanese Government, in face of public opinion in their own country, to make any concession.

As Your Lordship is aware, Great Britain and France pledged themselves early in 1917, before either China or America had entered the War, to support the Japanese claims; but, quite apart from this Treaty obligation, my sympathies up to this point in the controversy were entirely with the Japanese.

With these statements everybody but the Members of the Chinese Delegation appeared to be content. These gentlemen, however, do not seem to deserve much sympathy. Th

I fear that they are much disappointed by the result. They never could be got to understand that, whatever might be said of the Treaty of 1915, the Treaty of 1918 between China and Japan was a voluntary transaction between sovereign States, and a transaction which gave important pecuniary benefits to China; nor did they ever adequately realise that, by the efforts of Japan and her Allies, China, without the expenditure of a single shilling or the loss of a single life, had restored to her rights which she could never have recovered for herself.

I am, with great truth and respect,

Your Lordship's,

most obedient,

humble Servant,

(sd.) A. J. Balfour

Transcript: Source 2

My Lord,

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Source 3: Telegram from Sir John Newell Jordan to Lord George Curzon, 10 May 1919. Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3

On May 3rd a thunderbolt descended upon Peking. In the first place, the text of our secret agreement with Japan of February 1917, was disclosed, in itself sufficiently disheartening to these Chinese patriots who had looked to Great Britain to see that China received fair-play as regards the retrocession of the German rights. In the second place a telegram was received from the Chinese Delegates in Paris to the effect that the Great Powers had decided China must either accept the position as defined in the treaties and agreements extorted from her by Japan in May 1915 - that is as a result of the infamous twenty-one demands, or, in the alternative, that she must abide by her railway agreements signed by Tokyo on September 28th, 1918.

Up to this time it had been the hope of all Chinese

that the Great Powers would in the long run extricate the Chinese Government from the hopeless pass into which they had fallen through their own folly in signing away their rights to Japan as late as September last. All the more bitter then the disappointment when it was realised that they were to be held to their plighted word.

As soon as the news spread, which it did with great rapidity, intense excitement became evident throughout the whole country, and this came to a head in the capital in the form of a gigantic demonstration of Students on Sunday May 4th. The demonstration which at the outset was perfectly orderly passed a series of resolutions (text enclosed) calling for justice to China, and set out on a procession through the streets. It eventually converged on the house of Tsoo Ju Lin, to whom is ascribed in popular esteem the main role in the surrender of China's rights to Japan: and here it got out of hand, rushed the police guard and surged through the building. Tsoo Ju Lin was himself at home and escaped from the crowd but Chang Chung hsiang, late Chinese Minister in Tokyo and signatory there of the Railway Agreement of September 28th, 1918, was not so fortunate: he was seized upon by the students and so severely handled that his recovery was at one moment thought improbable. Tsoo and his family had in the meanwhile taken refuge in the Legation Quarter, at one moment in the Japanese Legation, from which he later removed to other quarters still unknown to the public though I have reason to believe that he is the guest of Tuan-chi-k'uei, ex-Minister of War. The other persons present at the house during the 'émeute was a Japanese, and I hear that this was General Banzai, Military Adviser to the President. From the above it will be gathered that there was a distinct Japanese atmosphere about Tsoo's entourage

which probably did not nullify the hostility of the crowd towards him. Eventually Tsoo's house was fired and burnt to the ground.

Transcript: Source 3

On May 3rd, a thunderbolt descended upon Peking. In the first place, the text of our secret agreement with Japan of February 1917 was disclosed, in itself sufficiently disheartening to these Chinese patriots who had looked to Great Britain to see that China received fair play as regards the retrocession [return] of the German rights. In the second place a telegram was received from the Chinese Delegates in Paris to the effect that the Great Powers had decided China must either accept the position as defined in the treaties and agreements extorted from her by Japan in May 1915 – that is as a result of the infamous twenty-one demands, or, in the alternative, that she must abide by her railway agreements signed by Tokyo on September 28th, 1918.

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Source 4a: Message from Chinese students who studied overseas to the Minister of Great Britain, 7 May 1919. Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3

Petition.

7th May, 1919.

Your Excellency,

We beg to approach Your Excellency to solicit Your Excellency's consideration and good offices in a matter the urgency of which it appears to us to override strict adherence to the usual practice in the relations subsisting between the citizens of one free state and the diplomatic representative of another free state and we are emboldened to this course by general and special considerations the force of which we hope Your Excellency will judge adequate to justify the step we now take.

During the period of the War there has grown up throughout the world a new sense of the equality of nations and the mutual responsibility of nations for each other's welfare, and it was in obedience to the compulsion of this new spirit that many nations of which China was one, led by the democracies of Britain, France, Italy and the United States, joined in the struggle against the conception of international relations which found its embodiment in the governments of the Central Powers of Europe. During the period since the signature of the Armistice and during the sittings of the Peace Conference in Paris, this new spirit has become more and more dominant, and has revealed itself many times in the utterances of great public men, and it is now axiomatic that the final Peace Treaty shall be framed so as to give to the world, so far as is humanly possible, a just settlement of its cause and equitable adjustment of conflicting claims. The Chinese people who entered the war for the vindication of principles of right

are no whit behind other peoples in desiring such a settlement.

As Your Excellency is well aware, one of the matters that is engaging the attention of the Peace Conference at this moment is the disposal of the special privileges enjoyed by Germany in the Province of Shantung. There is no need to recall to Your Excellency the history of the circumstances under which those special privileges, such as were not enjoyed by any other foreign Power in any other part of China were obtained. Nor is there need to recall in detail the fortunes of war which led to the temporary possession of those privileges by Japan. That possession and enjoyment, we take it, were but a trust placed in the hands of Japan by the Allied Powers.

That Japan sought to modify the fiduciary character of her occupation and enjoyment, and to enter upon what in our humble opinion was virtually a direct proprietorship, and attempted to achieve this end by compelling the Chinese Government to sign under threat of an ultimatum a treaty disposing of those special privileges is also within Your Excellency's knowledge.

Transcript: Source 4a

During the period of the War there has grown up throughout the world a new sense of the equality of nations and the responsibility of nations for each other's welfare, and it was in obedience to the compulsion of this new spirit that many nations of which China was one, led by the democracies of Britain, France, Italy and the United States, joined in the struggle against the conception of international relations which found its embodiment in the governments of the Central Powers of Europe. During the period since the signature of the Armistice and during the sittings of the Peace Conference in Paris, this new spirit has become more and more dominant, and has revealed itself many times in the utterances of great public men, and it is now axiomatic that the final Peace Treaty shall be framed so as to give to the world, so far as is humanly possible, a just settlement of its cause and equitable adjustment of conflicting claims. The Chinese people who entered the war for the vindication of principles of right are no whit behind other peoples in desiring such a settlement.

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As Your Excellency is well aware, one of the matters that is engaging the attention of the Peace Conference at the moment is the disposal of the special privileges enjoyed by Germany in the Province of Shantung. There is no need to recall to Your Excellency the history of the circumstances under which those special privileges, such as were not enjoyed by any other foreign power in any other part of China were obtained. Nor is there need to recall in detail the fortunes of war which led to the temporary possession of those privileges by Japan. That possession and enjoyment, we take it, were but a trust placed in the hands of Japan by the Allied Powers.

That Japan sought to modify the fiduciary character of her occupation and enjoyment, and to enter upon what in our humble opinion was virtually a direct proprietorship, and attempted to achieve this and by compelling the Chinese Government to sign under threat of an ultimatum a treaty disposing of those special privileges is also within Your Excellency's knowledge. ...

We are, etc.,

The European and American Returned Students of China.

Source 4b: Telegram from the Chihli Citizens' Convention to the Chinese delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, 17 May 1919.

Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3


17 MAY 1919 P.M.

PLEASE WITHHOLD SIGNATURE ON TREATY GIVING GERMAN RIGHTS IN SHANTUNG TO JAPAN AND NOTE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE WHICH PLEASE TRANSMIT TO PRESIDENT WILSON AND THEIR EXCELLENCIES LLOYD GEORGE CLEMENCEAU ORLANDO WE CITIZENS OF CHIHLI FEEL INDIGNANT AT THE CONFERENCE DECISION ALLOWING JAPAN TO INHERIT GERMAN RIGHTS IN SHANTUNG SINCE THE DUTY OF THE CONFERENCE IS TO SECURE PERMANENT PEACE FOR THE WORLD IT SHOULD NOT CONTINANCE ANY ACT OR CONDITION TENDING TO CREATE DISSATISFACTION AND UNREST PEACE OF THE FAR EAST WILL BE ENDANGERED IF KIAO-CHOW AND APPURTENANT RIGHTS ARE NOT DIRECTLY RETURNED TO CHINA AS ONE OF THE ALLIES SHOULD NOT SUFFER THE LOSS OF RIGHTS AND TERRITORY AS IF SHE WERE AN ENEMY EVEN THOUGH SHE DOES NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE ALL THE BENEFITS OF THE VICTORY WE EARNESTLY REQUEST YOU TO UPHOLD YOUR AVOWED PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS OUR DELEGATES HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO SIGN AWAY CHINAS RIGHTS OR TERRITORY THEIR SIGNATURE WILL BE CONSIDERED NULL AND VOID BY THE PEOPLE WHO HEREBY REGISTER WITH YOU THEIR VIGOROUS PROTEST CHIHLI CITIZENS CONVENTION

This telegram is dated May 17 1919

by Mr. Balfour

R. Buckley
1915/19



Transcript: Source 4b

PLEASE WITHHOLD SIGNATURE ON TREATY GIVING GERMAN RIGHTS IN SHANTUNG TO JAPAN AND NOTE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE WHICH PLEASE TRANSMIT TO PRESIDENT WILSON AND THEIR EXCELLENCIES LLOYD GEORGE CLEMENCEAU ORLANDO WE CITIZENS OF CHIH LI FEEL INDIGNENT AT THE CONFERENCE DECISION ALLOWING JAPAN TO INHERIT GERMAN RIGHTS IN SHANTUNG SINCE THE DUTY OF THE CONFERENCE IS TO SECURE PERMANENT PEACE FOR THE WORLD IT SHOULD NOT CONTINANCE ANY ACT OR CONDITION TENDING TO CREATE DISSATISFACTION AND UNREST PEACE OF THE FAR EAST WILL BE ENDANGERED IF KIAOCHOW AND APPURTENANT RIGHTS ARE NOT DIRECTLY RETURNED TO CHINA AS ONE OF THE ALLIES SHOULD NOT SUFFER THE LOSS OF RIGHTS AND TERRITORY AS IF SHE WERE AN ENEMY EVEN THOUGH SHE DOES NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE ALL THE BENEFITS OF THE VICTORY WE EARNESTLY REQUEST YOU TO UPHOLD YOUR AVOWED PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS OUR DELEGATES HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO SIGN AWAY CHINA'S RIGHT OR TERRITORY THEIR SIGNATURE WILL BE CONSIDERED NULL AND VOID BY THE PEOPLE WHO HEREBY REGISTER WITH YOU THEIR VIGOROUS PROTEST CHIH LI CITIZENS CONVENTION

[Stamp - translated from French]:

Chinese delegation

Peace Conference

Source 4c: Extract from a telegram from Lord George Curzon to Lord Arthur James Balfour, 16 June 1919. Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3

Anglo-American Association of Peking which is a body of representative British and American residents of large and varied experience has forwarded to myself and United States Minister copy of a resolution passed to-day at a meeting of its members and has requested us to bring it to the attention of our respective Governments.

After expressing keenest disappointment at settlement and deepest sympathy with Chinese people Association record their solemn conviction that decision taken at Paris will inevitably create acute discord between Chinese people and Japan and raise a most serious hindrance to development of economic resources of China. They add a settlement which perpetuates conditions created by Germany's aggression in Shantung in 1898 - conditions that led to similar action on the part of other nations that were contributing causes to boxer troubles of 1900 and that made inevitable Russo-Japanese war - cannot make for peace in far East, for political stability in China itself, nor for development of trade and commerce on terms equally open to all. They urge statesmen taking part in peace conference should devise and carry through a just settlement that will not endanger safety of China and peace of the world.

A somewhat similar resolution was recently passed by British and American missionaries Association in Peking." Ends.

Transcript: Source 4c

Anglo-American Association of Peking which is a body of representative British and American residents of large and varied experience has forwarded to myself and United States Minister copy of a resolution passed to-day at a meeting of its members and has requested us to bring it to the attention of our respective Governments.

After expressing keenest disappointment at settlement and deepest sympathy with Chinese people Association record their solemn conviction that decision taken at Paris will inevitably create acute discord between Chinese people and Japan and raise a most serious hindrance to development of economic resources of China. They add a settlement which perpetuates conditions created by Germany's aggression in Shantung in 1898 – conditions that led to similar action on the part of other nations that were contributing causes to boxer troubles of 1900 and that made inevitable Russo-Japanese war – cannot make for peace in Far East, for political stability in China itself, nor for development of trade and commerce on terms equally open to all. They urge statesmen taking part in peace conference should devise and carry through a just settlement that will not endanger safety of China and peace of the world.

A somewhat similar resolution was recently passed by British and American missionaries Association in Peking.

Source 5: Telegram from British Foreign Office to British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, 22 May 1919. Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3

(By Bag).

Following is text of telegram No. 745 of May 22nd from F.O. to British Delegation, Paris.

Following from Peking, No. 276. Begins.

Minister for Foreign Affairs spoke to me to-day about situation in this country. He said there was now practically no prospect of Shanghai Conference coming to a settlement and that only chance of reunion between North and South lay in an agreement between Military Governors on either side and establishment of a purely military Government. Terms of Paris Peace Conference had convinced China that Might was still Right and had greatly strengthened position of military leaders and cemented all alliance between them and military party in Japan, a great wrong had been done to China and country felt deeply aggrieved. President Wilson had held out hopes of providing some alleviation through League of Nations but he personally regarded League as a "Sham" and all assurance as "(group undecypherable) talk". China was however faced with very difficult position. If she signed Peace Treaty there would be an outcry throughout country and possibly serious (? schism)s. If she refused to sign as was present intention she would still be technically at war with Germany and left isolated.

Repeated to Tokio." Ends.

Transcript: Source 5

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Source 6: Telegram from Lord George Curzon to Lord Arthur James Balfour, 10 July 1919. Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3

Telegram from Lord Curzon to Mr. Balfour.
D. July 10th 1919.

No. 965. By Bag.

Following from Peking No. 364 of July 6th:-

VERY URGENT. Begins -

"Your telegram No. 310.

11 985

As reported in my telegram 298 Minister for Foreign Affairs officially informed myself and my colleagues that Chinese delegates had been instructed to sign, and on receiving news their refusal to sign, he tendered his resignation and has not since attended office.

Development of strikes and boycott during June produced a change in situation and led to great diversity of opinion as regards signature (see my telegram No. 328 of June 12th) but announcement that signature had been withheld came as a surprise.

Military party headed by Tuan Chi Jui still appears to be in favour of signature, but public opinion overwhelmingly approves action of delegates and would, so far as can be foreseen make itself very unpleasantly felt in the event of signature.

Strikes are (? over) for the present, but Japanese boycott still continues and temper of country is not reassuring.

Repeated to Tokio."

Ends.

Transcript: Source 6

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