

Ranking, Dec. 14, 1938.

1938

Dear Peter, Shin (Y.M.C.A.)

I have long wanted to write to you;-- I have thought of you daily ever since we said goodbye to each other, now nearly three months ago. For a long time it was impossible to write, of course, and then I got so busy in this relief work that there was no time for writing any but the most necessary letters. My hands are still very full, but I feel that I can't delay longer in getting word to you about the situation here.

You have heard, I suppose, that the Y.M.C.A. building was burned on the 20th of December. It was practically a total loss, though somehow the restaurant in the rear escaped and also the shower and the bathrooms and your little south-west corner room on the ground floor of the main building. The safe was broken open before we could get to it ourselves, but fortunately most of the papers were discovered. Such money as may have been there was gone, of course; and I am afraid all the records have been destroyed. S. Y. Chang, Liu Hsu and Chen Hui-wei are all staying down there now and salvaging such things as may still be worth anything. The school escaped the burning but was pretty badly looted. It was first occupied by Chinese troops and then by Japanese for a while. After conference with S. C. Lu and Wilson in Shanghai last week, it was decided to give up the school buildings, move such furniture as may still be worth salvaging to 22 Chung Hua Road, and return the lease to the Christian Advent Mission. I had hoped we might use the school as place where we could start on some sort of a program in time and also run a hostel there, I am afraid, though, that judging from the way things are going now there is little if any chance of our doing anything useful as an association for some considerable time to time. The question of finance, of course, presents a most serious difficulty-- there seems to be no constituency here from which we could secure support and the National Committee needs what little funds it has for war and emergency work. It was with the greatest reluctance that I finally consented to the temporary closing of our work here. The matter of a Board of Directors is another difficulty-- at present there isn't a single member of our Board in Ranking, and I'm afraid it will be a long time before any of them return here.

As for staff-- Song Ding and S. Y. Chang are the only ones here, besides some 17 servants. Song Ding and I have arranged to be taken on by our Safety Zone Committee for the being; the National Committee will pay Chang's and the two servants' wages to look after the property. The other servants I have released, paying them up to the middle of January, though two of them, Jiao Hsueh and Lao Li, I have working here at our Committee head quarters. I put three into the school compound to clean that place up, but they will be released at the end of this month. We have had no word from any of the rest of our staff except Chow, who is living at the 1 in Chungking. I have written him suggesting that he find work in another place if he can. I am worried, though, about Shaw and Hsiao and do you suppose they will be able to find something to do? It's odd that I haven't heard from them. Jiao Hsueh has promised to be back before the end of November, but either he got cold feet or something happened to delay him. Shaw also promised to be back after talking his family to leave. If you have any word from any of these men, please let me know. Address me at the National Committee, 131 Chung Hua Road, Shanghai. The postal service is not yet re-established here.



Hankow, Feb. 14, 1938.

The National Committee would be well by every available current coming up the river. There is also a chance that I shall be going to Shanghai again next week. I went the time before, leaving Jan. 29, by a British steamer, the "Bee," and returned the 10th by the U. S. S. "Oahu". It was only with the greatest difficulty that I got permission from the Japanese authorities to go and return.

You will be greatly distressed to see Hankow as it is today. About 60% of the stores have been burned down and nearly 50% of the homes. Song Bing's home was burned just about three weeks ago and he lost everything. I haven't any idea of what the condition of your home is, for we are not allowed to go outside the city gates. Fortunately things have taken a turn for the better now and the people are leaving the home for their homes-- those that have any homes left! Our camp population has gone down from 75,000 to just about half that figure. For two months, however, there has been terror and violence, unrestrained-- the suffering of the poor people has been appalling. It would have been much worse, however, if it had not been for the work of our Committee; so I shall always be grateful that I remained here through it all. Perhaps some day I shall have an opportunity to tell you something of our experiences.

I wish I could write at greater length, must not do so now. Please let me hear from you at your very earliest convenience, and let me have any suggestions and information that might be helpful in the situation here. Please give my most cordial greetings, too, to your colleagues in the N.A.S.C.--to J. H. and May (tell him I saw his wife last week--met by her at a tiffin in my honor at the Y.M.C.A. Singico, Teddy, Jack Young, Doc Lee, Steen and the rest of the good fellows. By the way, if you type your letter, send a carbon to me c/o Y.M.C.A., Kowloon for there is some probability that I will be down there between the 29th of this month and the 2nd of next-- but that's not for publication!

Over with the best of wishes,

Most sincerely yours,

George A. Fitch

Signed George A. Fitch

P.S.-- about the future: I hope it will be possible for you and me to continue to work together again once this wretched war is over. Where we are going to get another building from is a question, of course, but may be we can find friends in America who will help us. We'll see if we can get clearance for an appeal, anyway.

G. A. F.