

THE ADVENTURES OF CHINESE STUDENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Politically, economically, and otherwise the two and half years of warfare on the Asiatic mainland has affected the East and the rest of the world to a considerable extent. In the educational field the invaders have wrought havoc. More than eighty per cent of China's institutions of learning have suffered partial damages or total destruction. The few that have survived and those others that continue to exist generally find their way to the interior where they can recuperate and carry on a war-time education, an education to meet the crisis, and one bound to be long remembered.

In the meantime, the morale of the Chinese people is incredibly high. There is a war of national regeneration, baptism of fire and blood. They adhere to their original program of resistance and reconstruction. In order that such a program will carry on the army of her youthful intellectuals must be rightly trained. A great number of the students moved with their colleges and universities westward, but there are also many others who have chosen to continue their education abroad. Even at normal times, America and Europe play hosts to hundreds of Chinese students yearly, and they still act as such. Aside from these countries the Chinese student finds another host who is right at the next door—the Philippines. Since the outbreak of hostilities the Philippines has not only received grateful refugees from her neighbor but also along with them many eager students. In fact, if statistics were to be taken it will show that during the past two years more Chinese students have come to the Philippines than to any other country. Generally their reasons for coming to this country may be of the following:

- a. For safety. It is not very conducive to study when danger threatens around and overhead.
- b. Financial advantage (though still much to the disadvantage). The peso is only half of the American dollar, and much lower yet than the English pound. Expenses are a lot cheaper here than Europe or America. At the present rate of foreign exchange only the very rich can afford to send their children to Europe or America.
- c. Educational possibilities. Before he embarked the Chinese student has learned from some sources about the educational stand-

ing of the Philippine colleges and universities. Here he can study any course he desires under the the tropical sun.

- d. Proximity to homeland. Manila is only a stone's throw from China. Home messages and communications can be sent and received much oftener and quicker. At any time when condition is improved it is easier to afford a family reunion.
- e. Family relations. Many of the students have relatives in the Philippines. Thus they will be better taken care of during their stay here.

When the Chinese student has finally made up his mind to come here he, of course, needs to make the necessary preparation. First of all he makes sure of his financial support during his sojourn. If he comes from a rich family, all is well with him. But if his parents belong to an ordinary middle-class it is going to be quite hard to negotiate for the fund against the great odd in exchange. However, finally he succeeds to secure sufficient money and find a suitable quarantor. Then he takes his letter of acceptance (which he has already received from some universities in the Philippines upon application); in Hongkong, the applicant goes to the Chinese Consular Invoice office, 5 Queen's Road Central, for a Section 6 Certificate.

According to regulations of the Ministry of Education, only students who are graduates of colleges or universities and who have had two years practical training after graduation, are allowed to go abroad. Ordinarily a student has to spend and P150-P200 for transportation, head tax P16.00 and other expenses. Then he presents these to the American Consulate for a visa. When this is done he is ready to book his fare and goes on board the next steamer for Manila.

The long days spent in the ocean liner are days of intense anxiety. Anticipation of seeing a foreign land and the vague idea of the landing procedure keeps him ever on tip-toes. At length he wakes up one morning to find the vessel ploughing into the Manila harbor. Quarantines and document inspections he now understands to be part of the voyage. But this is not all! If he has previously arranged with the Chinese Consulate to meet him then his lot is easier. But should it happen that he is by nature not so alert, and no such distinguished personalities come to his aid, his ordeal has just begun. Yes, though he may be fortunate enough to have a friend or two on shore, yet to his regret they will not be permitted to intrude into the "floating palace"—(a regulation recently passed by the Manila Customs). Finally, he is escorted to a certain place which they call Engineer Island and there he is safely locked inside a large but very crowded house called the Detention House (Chinese call it "water house"). The period of his detention depends on how early he

can contact with someone to clear him out of the mess. The detention house greatly resembles a refugee camp. Here he finds hundreds of his compatriots most of whom have come here earlier than he. Apparently they have not followed the proper channel, or they lack somebody capable and sympathetic enough to help them out. His short stay in that corner of the earth must have been a real challenge to him—how to help his country so that the day may not be long when all his Countrymen may fully enjoy that freedom and privilege given by the Creator who created ALL MEN EQUAL. The Chinese student at last, by dint of his doubly careful previous preparation and an expensive contact with some immigration agents, leaves the bosom of Engineer Island with thanksgiving in his heart.

But getting out of the detention house does not spell entire relief henceforth. Where shall he park himself? Manila is a large city, almost rivaling Canton and Shanghai in size and clamor. Wide, busy streets; dark, narrow lanes; and houses of all native and foreign styles, but for the time being he has no sure place to lay his weary head. Temporarily he enters a hotel which charges a staggering fee. The next few days he takes counsels from his newly formed acquaintances and hunts all around the city of Manila for a decent boarding house or dormitory which will accommodate him at reasonable rate. He finds that practically all the dormitories are fully occupied, especially so when the school-opening season is on. After much diligent search and research he arrives at a little cell to which he must adapt himself to his best ingenuity.

After his room is set in order he likes to visit around and acquaint himself with the different colleges and universities which he intends to enter. It is not unusual that he may change his mind several times as to which of these institutions he should enroll himself. As there is yet no board of recommendation for Chinese students he has nowhere to obtain sound counsels. His final decision is usually the outcome of what appeals to him most and the opinions of others which may not be reliable. So his first year will be more or less a trying-out-affair. The day comes when he expects to be admitted into the classrooms. The registrar requires him to present his prerequisites. He produces a high school or college diploma which is sometimes printed only in square blocks of Chinese characters. The registrar does not read Chinese characters and the applicant has to bring it, together with his grades, to the Chinese Consulate to be translated and certified. This done and he brings it back to the registrar. If this is the University of The Philippines then he may be admitted or rejected at the discretion of the registrar. But if it is a private college his grades and diploma will be submitted to the Bureau of Education for recognition. Meanwhile he may be admitted to some of the classes temporarily as a special student. After a month or so he receives his verdict, either recognized or rejected, often he is placed one or two years lower, for very rarely the Bureau recognizes his grades

and diploma at face value. In class he is dragged by another evil—language difficulty. Most of the students newly come from China are not too good in the English tongue. This places him in a great disadvantage, because everything in class is carried on through the English medium. He may be a good student but the professor may not recognize the fact. Therefore his first year is also a year of primarily language acquisition.

Out of the classrooms he is confronted by a social life problem. At large the Chinese students in the Philippines live separately unto themselves either by small aggregations or singly. Thus there is not much mutual intercourse among them. They lack a general organization to bind them together for good. For this reason each goes after his own social pursuits. Many of them who lack a strong conscientious principle are thus easily led astray. Theaters, dance halls, night clubs and places of ill-repute tend to distract their minds from lessons. However, fortunate indeed those who belong to this category are but a handful. Sooner or later they are lost to oblivion. A new China needs trained men of sturdy character to build her up. How could they build up a strong nation when they have thus indulged themselves? The Chinese Consulate and responsible leaders of the Chinese community should waste no time in forming a central organization for all the Chinese students in the Philippines with an interest to promote their welfare and mutual cooperation.

We deplore the fact that although we have a host of students here yet up to the present time their contribution to their mother country in lines of education, science, and technique is practically nil. It is high time for Chinese research students to make a careful survey of all the Chinese students in this country with particular attention to their courses of study, social aspects and financial condition, then compile a complete report similar to that which they have done in America and in Europe. We hope that in near future a Directory of Chinese Students in the Philippines may be compiled since the Philippines is attracting more and more Chinese students each year. Such an achievement will also help to strengthen the Philippine Chinese student unit as a factor in the reinforcement of their country.

And finally, as the Chinese students struggle to come over here for further education in various courses we beseech both the Chinese and the Philippine governments to do all they can to expedite their landing. When that realized dream is fulfilled it *would certainly be a happy day*. Since according to Section 6, the law specifies that as students in a foreign land they belong to the "exempt class" and are in no way hindered or detained in their landing. We fondly hope for the advent of the day when it will no more be necessary for students from Cathay to be detained in the Engineer Island.