

ADB - 11

NOT FOR PUBLICATION3 Ta Hsueh Chia Tao
Peiping, China
March 7, 1948Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Since last December I have been living almost in the middle of the Hsia Tan area of PeiTa, or Peking National University. Ta Hsueh Chia Tao, the hutung on which I live, is a ten-foot wide alley which wanders casually through the university area. The PeiTa College of Science casts its shadow over the south wall of our compound, and the Colleges of Public Affairs and Liberal Arts lie just to the east of us.

Living in this environment I inevitably have had many contacts with the university, and with its students and professors, from whom I have received definite impressions of student opinions and activities. I have also met men at other universities, Yenching and Tsinghua in particular, but my most numerous contacts have been in PeiTa.

This letter is a report on what I have learned from and about students in Peiping.

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On February 7 of this year a mass student meeting was held on "Democratic Ground", a large square centrally located in the Hsia Tan area of PeiTa University. Students from colleges and universities in Peiping and Tientsin which are represented in the North China Student Union assembled to demonstrate and protest against the government. The incidents inspiring this "Accusation Meeting" were both national and local. Several days previously a demonstration at TungChi University in Shanghai resulted in injuries to a number of students and the arrest of many more. In Peiping five university and college students had just been arrested by the Garrison Commander on charges of Communist conspiracy and were being held incommunicado. The February 7 meeting was held to express sympathy for the TungChi students and to protest the Peiping arrests.

About two thousand students (perhaps more) assembled in front of an improvised stage. The majority sat closely packed on the ground. They were ringed by a line of standing students whose hands were joined to prevent arrivals and departures from disturbing the main body. Numerous placards indicated various groups, and others carried slogans. Nearby walls were plastered with hand-written newspapers carrying accounts of the recent events, slogans, and exhortations to the students. Cartoons depicted oppression by Kuomintang

authorities. More than one showed a sinister "Uncle Sam", as an "ally of reaction". While the students sat listening quietly a succession of student leaders and sympathetic professors spoke from the platform. They spoke with emotion, and often their voices rose to a shrill pitch. They decried the recent events, condemned the Kuomintang and the Central Government, and called for student unity. "The sacred word 'constitution' has been stained by the government." "Students should not only go to the library for books but should do something to protect themselves." "Students must organize against the anti-democratic government." "The present government officials cannot reconstruct China. Only the students when organized can do it. Reconstruction of China is impossible unless the whole of China is awakened to the incapacities of the government, and the whole of China can only be awakened by the students." The audience listened intently for the most part but broke into applause and cheers periodically.

At the close of the speeches several short plays were presented. Each of them was a variation on the theme of government oppression, and the victims in the plays must have used several bottles of ketchup, or a suitable equivalent. The audience was responsive and approving. Between the plays the students joined in singing stirring songs. Some were directed, but others were spontaneous.

Finally the climax came as the students rose in a body and with upraised arms repeated an oath. "We students of the National Peking University, Tsinghua University, Yenching University, National Normal College, Franco-Chinese University, Nankai University, and Peiyang University, all with an iron will and determination take this oath and determine to protect our basic divine rights, safeguard our democratic student self-governing associations, and oppose the regulations for the organization of student self-governing associations newly promulgated by the Ministry of Education. From today on we will unite and fight together for our existence. If one school self-governing association suffers oppression all schools will concertedly arise and with determination resist until our divine rights are restored. We take this oath with deliberation."

A long procession then formed and marched around "Democratic Ground", singing songs and shouting slogans- "Oppose Oppression", "Protect the Student Self-Governing Association", "Stop Illegal Arrests and Cruel Acts". The demonstration then broke up, and the students returned to their respective schools.

This demonstration never left Pei Ta . During previous demonstrations, clashes with police and gendarmes had taken place on the city streets, and the students were now ordered to stay within the confines of the campus. During the meeting, clusters of uniformed, but unarmed, policemen filled the streets surrounding the university - just in case - but no disorder and no conflicts took place. Within the inner sanctum of the campus the students were unmolested.

At approximately the same date as the demonstration student delegations visited key officials in the city (but according to my information they didn't bother visiting the Mayor, because as one student said to me, "he couldn't do anything about it!"). By the end of the month, three students had been released and the other two had been turned over to the jurisdiction of the local civil courts by the Garrison Commander. It is difficult to say whether or not this was the result of student pressure, but it may have been.

The February 7 demonstration was merely the most recent of many student demonstrations which have taken place in Peiping, and elsewhere in China, during recent months and years. In fact, to give it perspective one must relate it to the whole background of the Chinese Student Movement. What is referred to as the Chinese Student Movement (a title which students themselves constantly use) is merely the history of collective action on the part of Chinese students, usually directed against the existing government authorities. At times this action has been fairly well organized. At other times it has been spontaneous and rather uncoordinated. Nonetheless, it has been a real force and influence, sometimes in the foreground and sometimes in the background, in China's history since the movement first began in 1919. In perhaps the majority of instances, Peiping has been the city where action was initiated (with PeiTa, Yenching, and Tsinghua Universities taking leading parts), and demonstrations have spread from Peiping to other parts of the country.

I will not attempt to present an analysis of the movement. I will, however, mention a few important dates which are milestones in its history. Chinese university students know these dates as well as an American schoolboy knows 1775, 1789, and 1812. In fact they not only know these dates but constantly refer to them in abbreviated form, such as "five-four" (fifth month, fourth day) for May 4, 1919.

The Chinese Student Movement was started, in a formal sense, on May 4, 1919. At that time Chinese students in Peiping rose in indignation against the Versailles settlement regarding Shantung Province and protested to the Chinese Government for its unwillingness or inability to protect China's national interests. Demonstrations swept the country. Closely associated with the movement which took form at that time was the cultural renaissance led by men such as Hu Shih.

On May 30, 1925, students protested loudly against the killing of a number of Chinese civilians in Shanghai by foreign police and troops. On December 9, 1935, they demonstrated against the government and demanded that it resist Japanese aggression and stop the civil war. On December 1, 1945, students in Kunming demonstrated against the government after the murder of two prominent liberal professors. The case of a U.S. Marine allegedly raping a Chinese girl in Peiping set off demonstrations on December 30, 1946, against the Nanking Government and against U.S. intervention in China. In the past year demonstrations have become increasingly numerous.

In Peiping these have included protests against widespread arrests in February, 1947, a demonstration with varied causes which developed into an "Anti-Civil War", "Anti-Hunger", and "Anti-Oppression" campaign in May-June 1947, a "Protect Civil Rights" movement in November, 1947, after a widely publicized student arrest in Hangchow, and the recent "Accusation" demonstration. These are only a few of the dates one could mention.

Throughout its history the Chinese Student Movement has been an active, vocal force through which students have exerted pressure upon existing political authority. Although armies have been a fundamental factor in Chinese politics since the Revolution of 1911, and students have had no armies, the Chinese Student Movement has been and still is able to exert some influence through the power of public opinion. It is difficult to evaluate its influence now, but it remains true that students are a group whose opinions still evoke a certain amount of deference on the part of the government and exert considerable influence among literate Chinese. I think it is probably true to say that the students are the most vocal opposition group within Nationalist China today.

A sort of equilibrium exists between the government with its political authority and its instruments of rule and coercion and the students with their sensitivity to all government control, their aggressive idealism, and their willingness to speak their piece in no uncertain terms when they feel that the occasion demands it. There is no doubt that students are subjected to illegal and arbitrary arrests, oppressive regulations and restrictions, and occasional bad mistreatment. There is also no doubt, however, that students are allowed more privileges and freedom than other groups in China. In fact, it seems to me possible that in certain cases the inflammatory statements and agitational activities of the students might provoke harsher and more stringent government suppression in some other countries if those countries were engaged in a civil war. It is true that some schools in China are strictly controlled by the government. It is also true that major universities such as Peking, Tsinghua, and Yenching enjoy a large degree of academic freedom. Undoubtedly one factor in this equilibrium between the government and the students is the force of public opinion abroad (especially in the U.S.) which sometimes indicates disapproval of restrictions on free expression of opinion and thereby bolsters the students' position. Many students are aware of this fact, and it influences their tactics.

It is possible at present to discern certain trends in student activities, opinions, and relations with the government which may be of importance for the future.

"We are stronger than we have ever been before", one student said to me recently, "and we have more self-confidence. We are beginning to get well organized."

Much of the past collective action of students has been based on informal liaison between individual students in different parts of the country, but it appears that informal relations are crystallizing into concrete organizational links. This process has accelerated since the end of the war. Student self-governing associations have sprung up in virtually all colleges and middle schools, city-wide federations of these bodies have been formed in the major cities, and some regional federations have appeared. Of particular importance are the two federations for North China and the Shanghai-Nanking-Soochow-Hangchow regions. In June of last year students met in Shanghai to form a national federation, but government opposition prevented its establishment.

The Pei Ta Student Self-Governing Association may be taken as an example of existing student bodies. It has now become an established university institution elected annually by universal student suffrage, and it controls almost all student activities (other than the academic curriculum, of course), acts as liaison between the students and the university administration, and mobilizes student opinion on political or other issues of general student interest.

Because Pei Ta is geographically split the association has five branches. The largest and most important of these is the Hsia Tan Branch which includes the Colleges of Public Affairs, Liberal Arts, and Science. For the university as a whole there is a Representative Assembly, composed of delegates from each class in each department, which meets regularly at least once each semester and may have special sessions. In addition, there is a 25-member Board of Directors, elected by the branch boards of directors (the branches also have assemblies). The Board of Directors, which holds regular meetings every two weeks, is the active executive body, and it elects the chief executive which is a triumvirate of three Directors rather than a single individual. The Board of Directors is organized into a secretariat and sections on general administration, academic activity, public service, amusement, and communications. These are the main functioning bodies.

Recently, however, an additional body has been formed, and it is regarded by Pei Ta students as one of the most important student organs. It is the Civil Rights Protection Committee, composed of seven members elected by the Board of Directors. It goes into action and becomes the focus of student interest whenever students are arrested or their civil rights are impinged upon in other ways. Naturally enough, law students are prominent in this organization.

These various organizations are recognized as the representative agencies and spokesmen for the students in Pei Ta. Above the Pei Ta association, however, is the North China Student Union. With the exception of a few academic institutions, which Pei Ta students claim are filled with "reactionaries" and are under the thumb of the Kuomintang Party, the major universities, colleges, and middle schools in Nationalist North China (which now, for all practical

purposes, means the cities of Peiping and Tientsin) each elect three representatives to the union. This group elects a Standing Committee which meets regularly about every two weeks and is said to have informal meetings more often. Although this body is not officially recognized by government authorities, it has received de facto recognition when its delegates and petitions have been received by the authorities. It is the organ which coordinates the student movement in the Peiping-Tientsin area.

These various organizations play an important role in student life, and they make possible concerted action on issues which arouse student opinion. They represent a consolidation of the Chinese Student Movement.

It is interesting to note that the major extra-curricular activities in PeiTa serve as valuable auxiliaries to the Student Self-Governing Association whenever student action is initiated. The two glee clubs handle mass singing. The two dramatic clubs produce effective political plays at most demonstration meetings. And the wall newspapers serve a mixture of news and propaganda to the students. These newspapers are an interesting phenomenon. There are over twenty altogether in the university, with such dramatic names as "The Storm", "The Torch", "The Torrent", and "The Yellow River". In the strictest sense they are not newspapers at all, for they are simply handwritten single copies pasted on the university walls for all to see, but they serve the purpose. About ten of them are published weekly, and the others irregularly. Each one is published by a newspaper society (the biggest one has over sixty members, but they average between ten and twenty), each of which has an attached reading society which organizes "collective reading", and some of which have small libraries containing magazines and books not carried in the university library. With the exception of three or four papers which are published by pro-Kuomintang students, the societies are organized into the Wall Newspaper Union which strongly supports the Student Self-Governing Association in its various activities.

"Almost all students are anti-government." This was an opinion expressed to me at a luncheon discussion with a group of professors from several Peiping universities. The majority of the professors whom I have personally talked with are themselves estranged from the present government (at least one to the point of being fearful of leaving his college campus), but this particular group of men was not strongly anti-government. One even holds a semi-official post in addition to his professorship. Some of their further remarks bear quoting. "There is a Leftist trend among students, but it is not well thought out or coherent. But the most brilliant students are Leftist, and they are the most popular ones also." "Students are extremely disillusioned. Almost no one has a solution any more. They don't think a coalition is possible. They don't think division of the country is a solution. They don't know what to think. They just want peace." "Student opinion is subdivided into innumerable factions of all political shades, but the overall organization

functions in a unified way during times of crisis." "Students don't accomplish much, but they do act as a sort of 'national conscience', and about seventy percent of the time they are right in their emotional reactions and stands."

While I was in Nanking U.S. Ambassador Leighton Stuart, who has close contacts with Chinese academic circles, said to me that good friends had told him that in Peiping "ninety to ninety-five percent of the students are opposed to Communism in China, and ninety percent are opposed to the present government", in short that student opinion is very much in the middle between the two extremes. Recently when talking with a close student friend of mine in PeiTa (a highly intelligent Senior who himself is both anti-government and anti-Communist), I asked him his opinion of the Communists' strength among PeiTa's students. "There are very few actual Communists", he answered, "but I would say that at least fifty percent are sympathetic with Communism - or at least the Chinese Communists. At least fifty percent!" "What does 'sympathetic' mean?" I asked. "Well, it means that they think the Chinese Communists are a better group than the present government." I continued asking questions. "Do any students think that a coalition is still possible?" "None that I know of. That used to be the students' hope, but no more." "Do the students think either side can win the civil war?" "Until recently they didn't, but a great many students now think the Communists will win." "From what you have said, do you mean that many or most students now feel that ~~the~~ a Communist regime would be better than a Kuomintang regime, that the Communists are winning anyway, and they deserve the students' sympathy?" "Yes, a great many if not most students feel that way, but they don't arrive at that position on any ideological basis."

I have not polled student opinion in Peiping. Consequently the opinions which I have heard may not have been numerous enough to be considered more than straws in the wind. Using Ambassador Stuart's statement as an indication of student opinion a few short months ago, however, what I have heard adds up to an increasing alienation of Peiping students from the Central Government and a definite shift to the Left in the sense that more students are becoming sympathetic with the Chinese Communist Party, as the only alternative to what they consider an intolerable present situation.

The political interest of students in Peiping (according to students themselves and others I have talked to) centers almost entirely on the one basic issue of the civil war and its outcome. They apparently take very little interest in immediate problems and possible solutions. Their lack of interest in Peiping local affairs can be explained at least partially by the fact that they come from all parts of the country and consequently aren't concerned with local politics in what is merely a temporary residence, but even the practical problems of national politics are apparently of only minor interest to them. This undoubtedly is natural to a certain degree, in view of their lack of political position, power, responsibility, and experience, but it is a characteristic which disturbs some of

their friends who would like to see them as a more constructive force in Nationalist China. Ambassador Stuart recently made an unusual public statement in which he appealed to "...the patriotic educated people to organize and study what the national problems are and arouse and instruct the people so that they may realize a democratic government. In so doing, the patriotic intellectuals can correct whatever distrust they have with the present government and in that way support it in its effort to bring peace to China."

Dr. Stuart's statement prompted a reply from Dr. Hollington Tong of the Government Information Service in which he said that "China is glad that it has....intellectual critics....But to assume from this that there is any mass opposition of the intelligent (sic) in China to the government is far fetched.... It is as inaccurate to assume that China is drifting toward the Left because many university students are repeating the familiar process of the young everywhere in criticizing the present as to assume that the United States is going Marxist because there is a strong socialist club at Harvard....Actually, the great body of China's intellectuals are now working devotedly and faithfully within the national government....they are the backbone of the government." I believe that much of what Hollington Tong says in his statement is true, but in my opinion he underestimates both the degree and possible significance of present student dissatisfaction and the degree to which many intellectuals such as students are inclined, consciously or unconsciously, to boycott current politics, and ignore immediate political problems, in Nationalist China.

Another tendency I have noted among students I have talked with is the tendency to think of China's civil war in purely domestic terms. They tend to ignore any possible connection with or orientation toward Russia on the part of the Chinese Communist Party. They like to think that China's present problems are nobody else's business, and they resent foreign interference or intervention. They assert that the Chinese people can solve their own problems. The sensitivity to any foreign action which they interpret as a compromise of China's national sovereignty dates, of course, from the beginning of the student movement. At present most students oppose any U.S. aid to China, and in the past two years they have protested several times over what they label U.S. intervention in China's domestic affairs. I have encountered absolutely no personal animosity toward individual Americans, but I have constantly met suspicion of the motives underlying U.S. policy toward China.

Although, as I have implied previously, there is a high degree of solidarity among students in the outstanding universities in Peiping, not all students conform to majority opinions. There are undoubtedly a few outright Communists, although most students I have talked with assert that they do not know any. "You can never identify any students who are Communists", one boy said to me. "If

they are (Communist) they can't expose themselves or they would be arrested." There is, however, a constant trickle of students who decide for various reasons to leave school and join the Communists in what they call their "Liberated Areas". This step is one which is difficult to make emotionally and psychologically, for it involves burning all the bridges behind one, but it is easy enough to accomplish; one merely has to walk to certain villages within a few miles of Peiping. The number of students composing this trickle is still very small, relatively speaking, however.

Another minority group among the students is the pro-Kuomintang group. Although their numerical strength is relatively small, they receive official support in various minor, indirect ways. They are extremely unpopular among the other students, however. This is partly due to the fact that some of them are employed by the local Kuomintang Party headquarters as informers to report on the activities and opinions of other students. Last year this group had enough influence and strength to attempt to break up an anti-government demonstration, but other students say they "wouldn't dare" now. The most unpopular man in Peiping among most students, incidentally, is the local Kuomintang chief, Wu. (The Garrison Commander, General Chen, runs a close second, but by contrast the President's Personal Representative, Li Tsung-jen, is generally given some credit as being "not too bad", which is really quite high praise from the disillusioned students.)

Although it would not be correct to say that the Central Government has completely alienated all student groups in Peiping, therefore, the trend definitely appears to be toward increasing alienation. If this process runs its course it may be a serious blow to China in the future. Although the importance of student opinion is sometimes over-rated, I believe, by observers who uncritically accept the students' unequivocal assertions that they "speak for the people", the importance of college-trained technicians and experts in a country such as China is obvious. If they become increasingly unwilling to support the government, or do so only grudgingly, the loss will be both the government's and the nation's.

What has caused the present acute disaffection of so many students? According to the students themselves it is government oppression, and that is all. One cannot help but believe, however, that other factors have contributed. A sense of disillusionment after ten years of war and a sense of hopelessness because the future seems so dark are undoubtedly contributing factors. My opinion is that the economic status of the students also contributes to their general frame of mind. Living conditions in government universities in Peiping are overcrowded and uncomfortable, and most students are barely making ends meet financially. Most students in government universities depend on government subsidies. The system for the three upper classes is a general subsidy system which was begun during the war, while the Freshmen are under a new subsidy

system on a scholarship basis. Part of the students receive a one-half subsidy, while others receive the full subsidy. Even the full subsidy is very small, however. Last month (it is periodically adjusted) it was 32 catties of flour (one catty is a little over a pound) and CNC 1,500,000 in cash (a little over U.S. \$5.00 at the prevailing black market exchange rates). Since room and tuition are free, this is used mainly for food, but it is a pittance even though the students' requirements are not large. Living on the brink of pauperism undoubtedly adds to the students' feeling of dissatisfaction.

Government oppression of students (or one could call it repression) is a major factor, however. In addition to certain controls and regulations which might seem justifiable in view of the civil war situation, a steady succession of arbitrary and illegal arrests, cases of violent treatment, and a few killings of students have been carried out by the government. It doesn't take many such incidents to inflame student opinion. The circumstances of many of these incidents indicates that they were intended to intimidate students and discourage them from expressing opposition to the government.

Government policies toward student groups are closely connected with the government's concern over any indications of disloyalty to the government in the civil war. During a conversation which I had last November 19 in Nanking, Chen Li-fu, Minister of Organization of the Kuomintang Party and one of the most powerful men in China, said to me, "Communists everywhere are like small nerve cells which are controlled and connected to a foreign brain," and "...if you don't uncover the real Communists you have disloyal people in your midst." He went on to say that, "It is extremely difficult to define who is a Communist. There are different degrees of Communism. There is a small inner circle of real Communists. Around them is a group that they consider seventy percent reliable. Around them is another considered about fifty percent reliable, then another which is thirty percent, and another which is ten percent, and so on. Only the inner circle knows who is what. To know who are the real Communist leaders you have to get people into the inner circle, and that is extremely difficult. This presents real problems....The problem is to uncover and deal with real Communists without making mistakes about people who are not....It is a great problem in student groups and so on."

Unfortunately, however, in following this sort of line the government seems to have attacked the problem of rooting out Communists without having solved the problem of discriminating between the ten percent Pinks and the hundred percent Reds. Expressions of dissatisfaction have been confused with professions of Marxism. I think it is fair to say that the results have been negative. Pressure from the outside has pushed the outer circles Chen Li-fu talked about closer to the center, and the orientation of many students has turned in the direction of the Chinese Communist Party more out of desperation than conviction.

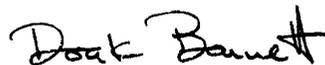
What do students in Peiping hope for in the future? The slogans they use are the slogans of liberal, parliamentary democracy. These

slogans undoubtedly mean different things to different persons, but this is what they mean to one student friend of mine. "The first thing we want and need is peace and effective constitutional government - the protection of civil rights under a rule of law. When that is achieved we can bring about the necessary economic revolution and attack the problems of agrarian reform and industrialization on the basis of a sort of socialist economy." This, in a rather small nutshell, sums up the hopes of most of the students whom I know in Peiping. Without being able to explain or defend all of their assumptions on the basis of facts, they tend to believe at present that there would be more chance of achieving these goals under the Communists than under the Kuomintang.

When it comes to constructive proposals as to what can be and should be done in China now, most students are blank. Coalition government was what they insisted on until recently, but now they throw up their hands and shrug their shoulders.

The history of the Chinese Student Movement in China shows that student dissatisfaction and criticism of the government do not necessarily indicate that a complete alienation has taken place between the government and the students. It is also well to remember that the students are only one group in China, and that student opinion is not identical with public opinion. Nonetheless, students form an important group, and their present dissatisfaction, which both grows out of and adds to the current morass of troubles and problems in China, appears to be serious enough, in Peiping at least, to contain implications which may be significant in the future.

Sincerely yours,



Doak Barnett