

CONFIDENTIAL

A REPORT

On The Exploratory Discussions of Possible Exchanges

with the

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

IIE

Tuesday, November 1, 1960

2:30 - 5 p.m.

The meeting was held at the Institute of International Education in New York and attended by Messrs. Searle Bates, Union Theological Seminary; Paul J. Braisted, President, Edward W. Hazen Foundation; William P. Fenn, General Secretary, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia; William L. Holland, Executive Secretary, American Institute of Pacific Relations; C. T. Hu, Teachers College, Columbia University; Hyman Kublin, Department of History, Brooklyn College; John M.H. Lindbeck, Center for East Asian Studies, Harvard University; C. Martin Wilbur, Director, East Asian Institute, Columbia University; Arthur F. Wright, Department of History, Yale University; and Miss Harriet C. Mills, Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University.

IIE staff present were Sims, Chairman; Myer, Feraru and Begun.

Basic assumptions regarding Sino-American relations accepted by all participants include the following: The posture of the Communist Chinese in world affairs remains truculent and aggressive and probably will for some time to come; a thorough attempt is now being made to eradicate all Western influence in Chinese higher education; relations between China and the Soviet Union are systematically being strengthened through cultural and educational cooperation. It was agreed, therefore, that any hope for development of a viable exchange program of interest to the Chinese in the immediate future was limited. Detailed discussion pinpointed the many obstacles blocking closer Sino-American relations and the extensive difficulties facing those who would attempt to negotiate or to effectuate an exchange program or other form of cultural intercourse.

The group discussed known facts concerning current Chinese exchange of persons programs with satellite and Western nations. Detailed descriptions were offered of restrictions imposed on the visiting foreign student in China, including segregated living quarters and separate dining areas. Similarly available information on Chinese student behavior abroad indicated clearly the puritanical nature of their work habits and their general self-imposed regimen. Information descriptive of Soviet experience with Chinese students testified to the overwhelming urge of the Chinese to achieve both personal perfection and maximum results from their stay in Soviet educational institutions.

The reasoning of the group lead to the conclusion that current exchange programs now in effect, not excluding the U.S.S.R., with Mainland China, are more likely to be reduced than expanded. This anticipated reduction will come as the Chinese develop and strengthen their educational system to meet national needs. This would appear to be especially so if present Chinese policies with the West are not altered to a more conciliatory course.

In re the question of relative gains and losses from a U.S. exchange program with China, the view was expressed that nothing was to be lost and everything might be gained insofar as the United States was concerned. The total estrangement between Mainland China and the United States is so absolute that barring the resumption of open conflict, the United States stands to gain from any workable program. An effective cultural exchange program would make a substantive contribution to easing tensions between the two nations. Barriers now in the way of Sino-American exchanges are formidable and unfortunately both sides have assumed extreme positions. To retreat from them suggests major concessions, if not surrender. Matched with Chinese hostility to the U.S. is the unreceptiveness of the American public, press, and government to any relations with Red China.

Any hope of reducing tensions appears to lie in the willingness of the Chinese to recognize their need to take advantage of American technology and experience in the non-political and the so-called "antiseptic" fields. Disciplines such as archeology, art, geology and advanced physical and technological sciences are now coming to the forefront. Chinese recognition of a need for outside assistance and advice is seen to be a requirement for improving their internal development.

If any or all of the barriers noted could be removed, then conceivably an atmosphere might develop which would permit discussions leading in turn to some form of cultural exchange under private (if not Government) sponsorship. The group discussed also the types of exchange programs which might be developed in part. The possibilities of exchanging periodicals, publications, and scientific data in the non-sensitive fields were discussed. Other possibilities included exchange visits by cultural and artistic groups as well as increased participation in international conferences as an additional means of making contact. The Twenty-fifth Conference of Orientalists held in Moscow during the summer of 1960 was originally planned to include Chinese representation, although no delegation from Peiping participated; this was now thought to be a rebuff to the Soviet Union if not to Western hopes for direct contact. Several groups have recently found it very difficult to make, resume or continue contact with their Chinese counterparts. Protestant Christian groups in Southeast Asia have attempted to maintain contacts developed over an extended period of time on the Mainland only to be rebuffed and to have their efforts end in despair. The possibility was stressed of expanding and developing an exchange of publications and scholarly books through, if possible, the good offices of French and Canadian contacts. Such material is in enormous demand on the Mainland.

The group, in evaluating China's needs in various fields, especially the scientific and technological, believed that priority and planning for a future course of action should be related to these disciplines. However, Chinese reluctance to join the specialized agencies of the United Nations, e.g. UNESCO, WHO, FHO, ILO, etc., tends to support a belief that for some time to come a closed-door policy will continue.

Any steps or plans made by those who hope to establish a program for United States-Chinese exchanges must be very flexible. Flexibility will permit immediate action in case of a sudden change in policy. The situation is unpredictable. Information now available supports the contention that China greatly needs outside technical assistance and that there is increasing recognition among influential Chinese that this need might well be satisfied through a limited exchange of information with non-socialist states. There was agreement that China's desire for increased knowledge and technical know-how in scientific disciplines was so great that the development of exchanges in some limited form, at least, might soon be possible.

CONCLUSION

Timing appears to be the most significant single factor with respect to Sino-American relations. The obstacles in the path of the cultural exchange program are many. China's truculent and aggressive attitude may continue for some time to come.

The Chinese in evaluating their economic development problems and in the quest for additional technical assistance may adopt an attitude or working relationship suggestive of a modus vivendi permitting limited exchange possibilities in "antiseptic" and kindred fields. When and under what pressure, external or internal, a change of policy is likely to occur cannot be accurately determined. Whatever the future holds in store for Sino-American relations, a flexible formula for developing a cultural exchange program may be the best means of piercing the bamboo curtain.