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YENAN UNIVERSITY

Yenan University, known briefly as "Yenta" from an abbreviation of its Chinese name "Yenan Ta Hsueh", was visited by five foreign correspondents on July 1, 1944, during their tour of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region and the Shensi-Suiyuan Liberated Area. It is situated in several hundred loess caves dug in seven banks in the face of a bluff at the southern end of the city (Harrison Forman, correspondent of "The Times" of London and the "New York Herald Tribune" has very good photographs), with some of its departments located in the north suburb. The total number of students is over 2,000. They sleep four or five in a cave room, and every five caves have a study hall with books and newspapers where out-of-class work is carried on. An elected monitor and a tutor are attached to each such hall. Each department of the school has its general auditorium, club and library. Classrooms are in blocks of caves. The university is made partly self-supporting in food and clothing (all students receive rations and essential supplies such as two suits of summer clothing and a suit of winter clothing yearly) by the labor of students and staff on adjacent fields and in spinning, weaving and sewing workshops.

The following are notes of an interview between the foreign correspondents and Dean Tsou Yang of the university which took place during the visit. The facts it contains were confirmed and expanded in talks with other instructors and with large numbers of students with whom the correspondents constantly mixed while in Yenan - at dances and dramatic performances.

Interview Notes

The university was founded in 1941 and has since been expanded by three successive mergers with previously existing higher educational institutions in Yenan. In the first of these mergers it took in the Yenan Women's University, which ceased to exist as a separate entity, the North Shensi School of Public Affairs (Shenpei Kunghsueh or "Shenkung") and the Young Cadres School. In the second it incorporated the Lu Hsun Arts Academy, which retains its name but is organizationally the university's college of arts, and the Natural Science College, which was previously independent. In the third merger it incorporated the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia School of Administration which forms the foundation of the present College of Public Administration of the university.

Some of the constituent schools were formerly under the Communist Party while others were under the government. Now Yenan University is entirely a government institution, under the Department of Education of the democratically elected administration of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region. The Communist Party has its own educational institution - the Party School - also in Yenan. The old Anti-Japanese University is entirely under the Eighth Route Army as its Military Academy. Yenan University has no organizational connection with either.

The colleges of the university are divided into the following departments:

College of Administration: Departments of Economics and Finance, Administration, Justice and Education;

College of Natural Science: Departments of Chemistry, Agriculture and Engineering;

College of Arts (Lu Hsun Academy): Departments of Literature, Drama, Music and Graphic Arts.

The central administration of the university has departments of general affairs (including student-teacher production of crops and clothing); education; personnel (the registrar) and secretariat.

Medical School (China Medical University): The Medical School of the university is being merged with the China Medical University (also in Yen-an) operated jointly by the civil and military medical departments in connection with the International Peace Hospitals, many of whose staff serve as instructors, while students do their clinical courses and internship at one of the IPH branch hospitals. The Yen-an University Medical School concentrates mainly on the training of public health personnel.

Length of Courses: College of Administration - three years; College of Natural Science - three years; College of Arts - two years.

Curriculum: The curriculum is closely correlated with current, practical tasks.

Certain courses are common to all colleges and all departments. They are:

National Reconstruction: Including History, Analysis of the Current Situation, and Revolutionary Three People's Principles (treated correctly not as the ideology of one party but as carried out by Dr. Sun Yat-sen - a theory guiding the common effort of all progressive patriots, basing themselves on the unity of the two great parties - the Kuomintang and Communists, to mobilize maximum effort for the reconstruction of the country.) Since under present conditions students will work only in the Border Region (and Liberated Areas) chief emphasis is laid on problems of reconstruction within the Border Region.

Revolutionary Outlook: a) Relation of the individual to society; b) Solution of problems of daily life; c) Individual and group production; d) Ethics (attitude and method of living, study and labor. Weekly retrospect of activity. Study of ethical content of great world philosophies. Consideration of all actions in the light of the common benefit of the people); e) Systems of thought, with stress on the necessity of proceeding always from first-hand study of objective reality and unity of thought and action. Development of the inductive method from Bacon onward. Progress of the spirit of democracy and the spirit of science in the world and in China. Respect for knowledge. Scientific action. The advance of the scientific and democratic spirit in China considered historically, in the rise of the Chinese national-revolutionary movement. Sun Yat-sen. Marxism and Leninism in their application to China. The Kuomintang. The Communist Party.

The common courses take up a small portion of the classroom and study time in each college and department, the great majority of the time being taken up with the studies suitable to each one. "Reconstruction" for instance takes up six to eight three-hour lectures each three-month term, six to nine hours of study being allowed after each lecture.

Class Hours: Eighteen hours weekly, the remainder of the time being taken up by self-study in groups under tutorial guidance, and extra-curricular pursuits. Annual time is divided roughly into 20% lectures, 50% study, and 20% production.

Method of Instruction: Special stress is placed on discussion and research by the students themselves. Discussion plays an especially important part in work in the Colleges of Administration and Arts.

Practical work is demanded in every course, three months out of each total school year of 12 months (there is no vacation apart from this) being the minimum requirement for practice. In the College of Natural Science practical work takes half the total time. Field practice is stressed. Administration students go out to work in local governments. Students in the department of education organize winter schools (during the agricultural slack season) for adult peasants. Students of finance and economics receive temporary assignments to work in local banks and cooperatives. Students of law work in the courts. Students of drama do dramatic tours of the villages and organize local dramatic troupes between October and January.

Internal Organization: The internal organization of university life is democratic. Students in each block of five dormitories elect their own monitor and, through their elected representatives, discuss the plan of work and instruction, as well as defects in day to day work and possible improvements with the university teaching staff and administration. There is freedom of discussion in class and out.

Basic Attitudes: Dean Tsou Yang answered many questions put by American and British correspondents on the principles, practice, scope and aims of education in Yen-an University. A few of them are worth reproducing:

Q. What is the part played by the Communist Party in the university?

A. There are Communists and non-Communists both among our instructors and our students. Our university does not, however, belong to the party, nor does the party administer it. Nine hundred of our two thousand students are members of the party. Among the staff, we have non-Communist, as well as Communist, department heads and deans of colleges.

But the point of the question does not really lie in statistics but in the purpose for which the university was established. If we are not a party school why does the party support us, as it does. This is connected with the policy of the Chinese Communist Party - to build a new democratic China, a China of national unity under the revolutionary Three People's Principles of Sun Yat-sen. The party does not at present seek to introduce Communism in China. The problem is to fight Japanese and world Fascism and to lead our country from feudalism to democracy. Politically this means the stimulation of the people's self rule. Economically it means the raising of production to provide for the people's needs. Culturally it means to fight against our heritage of feudal backwardness - illiteracy, superstition and lack of elementary scientific and hygienic standards. What we need most today is the progressive, democratic, scientific outlook and this is what we seek to promote. We regard Marxism as an advanced development of this outlook. But the socialist tasks set by Marxist thought are not yet practical problems for us and will not be for a long time. That is why we base all our teaching on the immediate application of

democratic outlook and action to our own problems.

Q. What is the scope of free discussion in the university? Is every single major school of political and social thought taught and discussed comparatively, the student being left to make his own choice?

A. We proceed on the fundamental premise that every one of our students is agreed that we must pursue the democratic and scientific spirit. From there on, we have full free discussion. But it is true that we do not discuss the comparative merits of feudal and democratic society, or of Fascist and democratic society. We regard these questions as settled by history, and such discussion would be a waste of time which our students, who want to get on to full participation in practical tasks, would oppose. Ask any student if he would like to give school time to such comparative studies, and see what answer you get.

Everybody here wants to put an end to feudalism and Fascism. Everybody here wants to build Chinese democracy. What we study and discuss is how best to destroy feudalism and Fascism, and how best to promote the democratic growth of the Border Region and of China. In doing this we do not draw our facts and arguments from books only. We proceed from the facts and problems right under our noses, here in the Border Region and in the Liberated Areas. We participate in what is being done, and think what can be done. We do not ask the people to want what we want them to want, but go to them and learn their needs, and try to work with them to devise practical ways to satisfy those needs. That is why you will find no serious disunity between us and the people, or between ourselves. Our students come from the people and go back to the people. They come to us knowing the problems the people face and we try to send them back better equipped to help to solve them.

General Impressions

All the correspondents were struck by the fact that there is no war weariness traceable among the people in the Border Region and Liberated Areas or among the teachers and students of the university - in great contrast to other parts of China and despite the fact that these regions, subjected to a blockade and severe enemy pressure, have faced situations of much greater difficulty than other parts of China. Everyone here seems to have discovered new possibilities and vistas for individual and joint action. Students feel that, even in the course of their studies, they are participating in resistance and construction, and that immediately they leave the university they will participate more fully. In other parts of China there is much unused talent and the unemployed, starving intellectual is a commonplace. Here there is a never-satisfied demand for trained and educated personnel and we did not see anyone who felt that there was not an outlet for his talents and energies during the war, or that there would be none afterwards. All students we met were not only optimistic but in high spirits. Nowhere in China is there as much hard work, singing, dancing, dramatic activity and lively discussion as in Yen-an. Nowhere else in China did we see what we repeatedly saw in Yen-an - students trooping out of their colleges after many hours of hard study and hard manual work in the university fields and organizing impromptu folk dances in vacant lots and in the streets. Nowhere else is there so much laughter.