



Letters from Home



HOW NEW CHINA LOOKS TO HER STUDENTS WHO HAVE STUDIED ABROAD

(Letters written from China by Chinese students who returned late in 1949 and early in 1950 from their studies in England to their fellow students still studying abroad.)

CONTENTS

1. "Progress in Manchuria"
2. "Future Developments in China Assured"
3. "How A Returned Student Finds His Job"
4. "Life of A Returned Student in Peking"
5. "A New Leaf in Life"
6. "A Returned Student Eye-Witness Account"
7. "Advice to Students Doing Social Work"
8. "Life Experience Changes Outlook"
9. "Study of the Budget"
10. "Educational Conference in Chekiang University"
11. "An Old Returned Student Becomes a New Man"
12. "No More Frustration in the Future" - Editorial

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LETTERS FROM HOME

How New China Looks To Her Students Who Have Studied Abroad

1. Progress in Manchuria Fully Convinces Returned Student of Our Bright Future

(The following letter as received by Mr. Tsai, Y.P. from Mr. Wang, Y.J. formerly of London Local Union is noteworthy. It is Mr. Wang's personal impression of Manchuria after his extensive travel.)

Dear Y.P.

Since my return to Peking from England, I have sent you three letters, including one from Mukden. At that time I had little understanding of the situations in Manchuria, for I was then quite a stranger. In the last three weeks, I traveled through the whole South and North Manchuria and visited all the big towns and industrial areas. There fore I am able to tell you more about Manchuria in this letter.

Having visited the whole Manchria, I came to know that the progress of Manchuria is being made at a very rapid speed. Now I am deeply convinced that the prospect of New China is boundless. The progress of the industries of Anshan and Fushen is beyond our former prediction. The production of these industries is expected to reach its pre-war level in the next three years and no doubt this will be achieved. The industrial exhibition held at Dairen is quite comparable, in its scope, with those at Earls Court and Olympia in London. There are altogether 17 exhibition halls. Considering that the exhibition was open to the public after only four or five months' preparation work, it is obvious that our national reconstruction can be fulfilled in a shorter space of time than the ordinary estimation.

In all big towns such as Mukden and Harbin, new social orders have been established. Bad habits and pessimism have disappeared among the people's life. Instead new spirits and morals have come into play. Everywhere unemployment is extremely low. So long as one is willing to learn and to work, one will have no trouble in finding a job. The simplification of social life and the abolition of class distinction make a good many worldly worries unnecessary. In short, the progress made in Manchuria has totally convinced me that the future of our Fatherland is bright and that the reconstruction work will be carried out within a reasonably short period of time. The learning and working spirit of the comrades and the common folks there is far better than we expected.

Factories in Manchuria are short of technicians. I hope you will come back at an early date to participate in the building-up of New China. Administrative organizations there are also in need of staff. For the benefit of our country, I ask you to share the responsibilities of encouraging fellow-students to return as soon as possible. New China needs you all !

Yours etc. Y.J. Dated November 14th 1949

2. Future Developments in New China Assured

(the following is a letter received by Mr. K.C. Yen of Manchester Local Union, from his friend in Peking.)

Dear K.C.

I arrived here not long after the liberation of Nanking. The past several months of life in the New China has brought me a clear vision that the future of our nation is boundlessly bright. The reactionary forces, which for years prevented our nation from going forward, have been wiped out wherever the People's Army reached; the liberation of the whole China is in sight. Since the common efforts of the masses of the people have replaced the reactionary forces, future developments in the New China are not only feasible but also ensured.

Since liberation, industrial workers have increased production; farmers have gradually obtained their own land; intellectuals have been granted working opportunities; school graduates no longer worry about unemployment, which was the common feeling in the old days; and in general, the living of the mass has been improved. Following the advance of the People's Army, the repair of railway lines were soon started. The cultural, social and scientific workers from all China, one after another, gathered together in Peking and were engaged in discussing various matters of building up a New China.

The Construction work in the new China needs urgently a large number number of scientists and engineers; overseas Chinese students are welcome to participate in this great task. Hoping you can come back as soon as you finish your study.

Peking Aug. 9, 1949

3. How A Returned Student Finds His Job

(The following letter is addressed to Mr. Yang, Sin-mei and other London members by Mr. Yang, En-fu after his arrival in Peking. Mr. Yang, E.F. was a British Council Scholar doing nutrition. Together with many others he left for China in July last year. -- Editor)

After our arrival in Hongkong, Peng, Yu-sin and Yu, Wen-hua left us to take jobs in Lin-nan and Hua-si Universities respectively.

In Tientsin, Wang, M.H., Hu, Tsi-ming, Yao, Tsung and Chiu, Y.H. also left us for Shanghai.

Together with Huang, H.M., Wu, C.Y., Sah, Si-djun, Chui, Che-fou, Fang, C.C., Wang, T.L., and others, I went to Peking. Of course, I went to my home direct, while the others became the guests of the Preparatory Committee of the Congress of Scientific Workers. Board and lodging were given free. The Committee also undertook to arrange jobs for us.

Within a few days, Prof. Ting, Tsang, one of the Committee members, told me that I and another returned student doing bacteriology could go to work in the Ministry of Health. As I was also offered quite a few other choices, e.g. Chiu-po-en Institute of Medicine, one of the best in Liberated Areas, and also Chekiang University I really could not make up my mind at that time.

When at last I informed the Ministry that I intended to go to Hangchow, a high ranking officer came to my home and asked me to reconsider the position. He suggested that I take up a research post in the Institute of Nutrition under the Ministry of Health. Incidentally, he knew that the director of the Institute is a good friend of mine. As I am always inclined to do research, what can be the better offer? Particularly when one considers in the light that the Institute is in possession of quite adequate research facilities. But on the other hand, my intention to go south was equally strong, because I long entertained the hope of residing in the most beautiful city of Hangchow. However, it was really impossible for me to refuse my visitor because he was so sincere in his request. He understood me perfectly, gave me all freedom to do my work, and promised me the highest pay. (Later, I was indeed given the same salary as the director of the Institute.) I am so sorry that I could not go to serve in Chekiang University. I would have gone there, had its letter of confirmation, which also offered me very good prospect, come to me a few days earlier.

From this personal experience you would see how our country is in urgent need of trained persons. I am a man without much merit. Yet, I am so well received everywhere simply because I have been working in my field for a good many years. There are many fellow-students studying abroad who are much better qualified than I. They will be heartily welcomed to take part in the reconstruction of our Motherland.

Fang becomes a professor in the Engineering College of Peking University while Wu, C.Y. serves in the College of Foreign Languages. On the day I started to work, others joined North China University to take the benefit of a short course on politics.

I would like now to answer a few specific questions which we were not at all clear while in London.

(1) Regarding Political Belief:

I heard the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Health once said that a liberal policy is being pursued with regard to the employment of cadres in our Ministry. Every capable man is welcomed to take part in our work so long as he abides by the law and is not reactionary. Therefore, with the exception of only one person, all medical workers have been employed.

I have mentioned before that some of our returned members are taking a short course on politics in the North China University. I ought to say a few words about it. Actually the course is very much like our group discussions held constantly in London. It is nothing like those 'training courses' under KMT. It has been instituted because our life habits, working style and the way of thinking might be quite different from those with whom we are going to work. The short period of intensive study will be helpful. In every organisation, there are now political study groups. We study important documents of the Government. People of the same group usually are of the same cultural level. It is just like chatting with your personal friends.

I go to hear speeches on politics whenever I have time. I find them interesting. They are helpful in many respects. For example, there is a statement that the working people now take the leading role in the Government. So called 'working people' include salary-earners as well, such as you and I.

(2) Regarding Pay:

At present, university professors get the highest pay in the society. In Peking, assistant professors get a minimum of the equivalent of 780 pounds of millet. Professors may get as much as 1,450 pounds. The exact figures are being decided upon by his colleagues on the basis of (a) personality, (b) training and past experiences, and (c) capability, including published works and merits. Take my case as an example: I worked for a short while before a meeting was convened. I was to state my training and experiences, and was asked a few questions. People suggested three different rates of pay. A discussion followed. Finally everything was settled by a vote.

As meat, vegetables, fuel etc. are all very cheap in Peking and people are now living a simple life with modest clothings and few social engagements, one finds life quite easy.

(3) General Impression:

There has been great improvement in many respects. I have not known a single case of corruption. As another example, I know perfectly well that the Government has done its best to combat plague in Chahar. Preventive measures are also being taken in Peking. Of course, there are occasional cases of low efficiency. But to take into account that such a vast area has been liberated within this year, some temporary dislocation is really inevitable.

I have been very busy working. I shall start my research problem soon. At the same time, I am supervising four or five research workers.

I hope you will come back soon, especially those doing science and medicine. Don't bother too much about academic degrees. They are worth very little now.

Yours etc. E.F. Peking, November 11, 1949

4. Life of a Returned Student in Peking

(The following letter was written by Mr. Lu, T.S. formerly of Wolverhampton, who went back in September, last year.--Editor)

We, about ten students, arrived at Tientsin on Nov. 8, 1949. After staying there for four days at the City Government's Reception Center we came to Peking where we were accommodated at the Reception Center provided by the Scientific Worker's Committee. Most of us have divided our jobs, Messrs. Li, Chang-fu and

Shen, C.C. to the University of Dairen, Tschu, K.K. to the China Research Institute of Science, Chung, H.S. to the North China Steel Co., while Hsu, Li-chang and I reported to work 10 days ago to the Ministry of Heavy Industries. I am very much interested in my present job.

I am exceedingly happy and excited now. It is not surprising to find that everyone is working with great enthusiasm and everything is on its good way. I would like to mention particularly the prohibition of prostitution in Peking. Two weeks ago, only one day after the passing of the above resolution in the City Council, it was carried out. The girls were sent to schools. Of course those who profited by this shameful business would hate the Government, but an immensely bigger number of people are grateful for it.

The returned students can always find jobs in universities, research institutes, factories or government offices. Besides the old academic centres, Darien and Tai-yuan are regarded as the new centre for academic works, and teaching staff are badly needed there.

As for industries, the production record in Manchuria is going up all the time. North China is also settled down. Those in other parts of our country are building up rapidly. We need far more technicians for planning and designing. You could imagine how interesting your job is when you design something today and build it to-morrow. We work hard and we feel very much interested.

We are working in a manner of honesty and sincerity. Everyone is willing to listen to other's advices and accepts them for good. We are working $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day including $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours' learning period, and 6 days a week. During the learning period people are doing subjects like technical training, theories of Marxism, Russian language and studies of world situation, according to individual needs. We feel much younger again while keeping on learning.

My monthly pay is the equivalent of 1,000 pounds of millet, with free accommodations, (including the fire). Converted into English money, it is roughly 18 pounds. This seems low, but is in reality more than enough, because full board in Peking costs only 1.16.0 pounds a month and cigarettes are sold at 5d per 20! A cotton uniform is about 2 pounds.

I really feel proud that I can now do something for my country. After years and years of war, we finally stand on our feet now. There is nothing so obvious that this success is due to the great leadership of our Government.....

Yours etc. T.S. Peking, Dec. 11, 1949

5. A New Leaf In Life

(The following letter was written by Mr. Lien, M.H., formerly of New Castle, who went back to China in 1948 and later went to the 'old liberated areas' before Peking liberation.)

I am delighted to see that China is now marching on a correct road -- a road which will certainly lead us to a state of security and prosperity. All of us are trying hard and marching together towards this end. This is, in fact, only a matter of course, as history always progresses in accordance with the wish of the people.

I am now improving -- trying to forget the old and to learn the new. My wife and myself have turned over a new leaf in life. Those who have experienced this 'turning over' may get so excited as to cry, to laugh and even to shout and to sing.

My wife and I are now working together. This might be an impossible case, if we were still under the rule of the reactionary Kuomintang, for she is not a university graduate, and moreover is going to have a baby. All the female colleagues here are performing their duties very well. It is also of interest to mention that according to a newspaper here, in Darien there are girls working on lathes, and driving locomotives too. This is indeed a remarkable offspring of this new society. True, it is only through hard work that one can get the real freedom.

6. A Returned Student Eye-Witness Account

(Mr. Hu, Chi-min who returned in July last year gave a detailed account of some of his experiences in Tientsin and Shanghai. It was addressed to Mr. Hsu, K.N. of London.)

Dear K.N.

I left Hong Kong on the 4th of Sept., arrived at Tientsin on the 11th. The so-called blockade on the Eight Long-Hill Isles has been non-existent ever since the liberation. The passage between Tientsin and Hongkong is smooth and unobstructed.

As soon as one arrived at Tientsin, one felt that everything was entirely different from what one had seen so far. Passengers disembarked, according to the official list, in orderly groups. The porters at the pier formed themselves into teams to carry the passengers' luggage, without the hitherto well-known phenomenon of striving for work with one another. The charge was paid to the Customs Officials. No tip was asked for. The inspection of luggages at the Customs House was carried out very thoroughly. All new clothing materials, cameras, watches, fountain pens, typewriters, medicines and radios were dutiable. But poor students like us, who, after the journey from Hongkong, had scarcely any money left, could appeal to Customs officials for reduction of part of the duties, making it satisfactory to both sides. Our group of returned students from the U.K., another group of returned students from the U.S.A., and students returning from Hongkong, were received by the Tientsin Reception Centre. We stayed at a mansion formerly belonging to a traitor. After three days, I travelled on a South-bound Peking-Shanghai Through train. It ran in good time. After such a long journey, the train arrived in Shanghai (Northern Station), differing only by ten minutes from the scheduled time. Everything was well-organized at the station, as at the Tientsin Pier, in sharp contrast to what we had know before.

In Tientsin and Shanghai, I could see only few luxurious saloon cars and rickshaws. Trams, buses and bicycles were the chief means of transportation. The four big department stores at Nanking Road now concentrated on everyday necessity goods. Occasionally there were some luxury goods, which, although slashed down to half-price, still attracted no customer. Many tailoring shops along the former 'Av. Joffre' were offering gents' suits at 5 pounds or 6 pounds each. But business was still poor. Ta-San-Yuen, Sin-Ya and other famous restaurants managed to keep their business going by serving low-priced luncheons and suppers. The future for them was insecure, with closing-down threatening every moment. All the staffs were learning new trades, in order to be prepared in case the closing-down did come.

In Shanghai, I stayed at my brother's for one week. He worked in the Bank of China. There the old staff were learning politics while new staff were learning business details. Everybody was very busy. Very often, one had to work 12-hour days. Old and new staffs got on in good and friendly terms. Here I'd like to tell you an exemple of carefulness and efficiency which the People's Liberation Armies have always shown: Two months before the liberation of Amoy, the Bank of China had already drawn up plans for the resumption to accept remittance of money from overseas Fukienese. No wonder the taking over of every city was carried out in such good order and high efficiency.

Yours etc. Chi-min Hangchow, October 24, 1949

7. Advice to Students Doing Social Work

(An Ex-British Council Scholar related his new conception. The writer is Mr. Wu, C.Y. formerly of Liverpool who left for China last Autumn. This is a letter to Oxford members.)

North China University is opening a course on Politics. Some of our returned members, including Wang, T.L., Huang, H.M. (our chairman of last year), and Sah, S.J. take the course. I did not go as I was not very well at that time. There are

more than a hundred students altogether, mostly returned students from overseas and university lecturers. There are also a few ex-Kuomintang officials who held a liberal view. The students get up at 5 in the morning, wash with cold water, take some physical exercise and then start to learn by way of group discussion and classes. They take meal twice a day at 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. From 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. it is free. The course lasts 3 to 6 months. After the conclusion of the course, those who have already had jobs, return to their original posts, while those without are offered jobs through the arrangement of the University. An Oxford Ph.D. degree counts very little now, as a mere academic qualification does not find you a job. The important thing is to acquire a new conception. In my opinion, our fellow-students in England and America who are doing such courses as history, philosophy, economics, politics and law would do well to study now dialectical materialism in order to effect a change in fundamental conception. Those who take economics should spend more time on the practical side of this subject, such as accounting and statistical methods. The study of international law might still prove useful. But subjects like KMT-Six-Laws are entirely a waste, as they are perfectly reactionary in character. It is now the age when the proletariat is fighting for freedom. All social and cultural institutions which uphold bourgeoisie hegemony cannot be allowed.

Marx was really the first person in the world who discovered laws of development of human societies. From a study of human history, the final success of the proletarian revolution is not to be questioned. The choice before us intellectually is one between (1) following the current and joining the proletarian revolution and (2) going against the current and fighting for the interests of the moribund bourgeoisie. I have become deeply conscious of this question only since my return to China. I beg you not to label me as a man who changes abruptly for personal gains. I emphatically assert, upon my honor, that I am accepting this new conception through a real understanding.

The bloody rule of Kuomintang is over. It is high time that you come back to join in the task of reconstruction. Manchuria is very prosperous. The USSR has helped us in numerous ways to solve our technical problems. We are naturally standing together, as we are all for the interests of the proletarians.

Wang, T.L. and I myself are both teaching in the College of Foreign Language. This College is sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are about 1,000 students. They will be new cadres of diplomatic affairs. For the moment, Russian and English are the only languages taught. Further courses will be opened shortly.

Yours etc., Wu, C.Y. Peking, Oct. 27, 1949

8. Life Experience Changes Outlook

(Letter from a Chiao-Tung University graduate)

This is the first time I write to you after Shanghai Liberation. The notorious atrocity of KMT on the eve of liberation is resented by all. At that time, people were looking forward to liberation just like peasants are hoping for a heavy rain during a drought.

Due to Kuomintang propaganda, people did not have faith in the Chinese Communist Party. We were told that the Communist Party allowed people the possession of no more than three shirts, that family members were compelled to separate and were denied the right to see and to hear from each other; that dictatorship would be practised and people would lose all freedom and so on and so forth. But since the liberation of Peking, papers in Shanghai began to report the excellent discipline of the Liberation Army and the way it received the universal support. Later we also listened to Peking broadcast. When all these information were put together we began to realize that the Chinese Communist Party was definitely not like what KMT tried to deceive us.

Now after half a year's life experience in liberated Shanghai, I can say with confidence that I see no fault in its policy, it is one for the benefit of my country and my people. The leaders are selflessly working for the good of our people. These facts have already won over my heart, and I am all for the New Government. Although there are also minor mistakes due to lack of experience and short of cadres but it is quite excusable, as China is such a vast continent and the expansion of the liberated areas have been so rapid. They are being corrected very earnestly. The Government is extremely responsible in the development of production. Not only the public engineering works in Shanghai, but also private concerns have now a full book of order.

I am eager to learn and to gain a correct way of thinking. I am not sure of the best way I shall pursue. I think I shall start on historic materialism.....
Yours F.P. Shanghai, Nov. 22, 1949

9. Study of the Budget

(Letter from Mr. Lu, T.S. to Manchester members)

Did you have a nice New Year Day? It was a wonderful one in Peking. Lanterns and coloured banners were everywhere. In our Ministry (of Heavy Industries), in different departments and in dormitories as well, social parties were held. We who returned from overseas were especially excited to see this display of cheerfulness in our Fatherland.

With the advance of the New Year, we perceive a new vision. The War of Liberation is now close to its successful end. Everybody is looking forward to the glorious fulfillment of the task of reconstruction. Recently people all over the country are studying the Budget of this year. Everyone feels that it is grand to have such a big proportion of our annual expenditure (23.9%) allotted for heavy industry investment, while the military expenses is being kept at a low level. When we come to the revenue side, we find food is still the biggest single item of income. So we realize how much the peasants have shouldered and are still shouldering the national burden. They offer not only the man-power, but also the finance. We are fortunate in the sense that we have received a higher technical education. But this has been possible only under the condition that the masses have been laboring all the time. We really feel grateful to them. Through the study, everyone also begins to realize the importance of developing industry in order to help the peasants in their production work. Cities ought to take a bigger share of burden so as to relieve the financial difficulties of villages.

This morning, a 'Tide' of 'buying Victory Bonds' shakes our Ministry. It is really a grand experience. I was always a bit skeptical before when people were talking about the enthusiasm displayed on such occasions. I am now fully aware of such spirits as not only have I seen such an occasion today, but I myself have also taken a part in it. A few days ago, newspapers were exhorting public functionaries and teachers not to buy too many units of the bond, as their income is anyway quite limited. The Head in our Ministry also stressed on this point when speaking to us in a public occasion. So, we are only expected to buy according to our ability. But strange to say, this morning everyone proves only too eager to buy, and to buy to his fullest possibility. After the first round, Li-chang's (our returned member) 65 units in 3 months was the highest. Many challenged his position. So the high figure began to soar to 70, 75, 76, 80 successively until there are now two persons buying 85 units, and one buying 80. I score the fourth with 64. I am greatly moved by such spirits. The glorious future of our beloved country seems even more reassuring to me.

Peking is bustling with life. Since the end of last year, we are having all sorts of national production meetings, such as Iron and Steel Conference, the Non-ferrous Conference, the Chemical Industries Conference, the Electrical Industries,

Conference, and the Railway Conference. In the coming month, a Mechanical Industries Conference will be convened.

In our Ministry, there are as many as twenty different departments, bureaus and offices. We are, however, not short of business, but are really short of staff. 'To promote cadres' now becomes a current saying.

I shall go back home to Shanghai to see my people during the New Year of the old calendar. It is now only a matter of 3 or 4 days to travel to and from. Railway communication is very convenient on most lines now.

Yours etc. Lu, T.S. Peking, Jan. 9, 1950

10. Educational Conference in Chekiang University

(Mr. Hu, T.M. continue to report condition in Hangchow to Mr. Hsu, K.M.)

In the previous letter, I told you something about Shanghai. I stayed there one week only. I am now in Hangchow. I carried with me about 150 kg. of luggage from Tientsin to Shanghai. The whole journey costed me the equivalent of about 20 pounds.

Maybe you are interested in the income of government functionaries and teachers at home. Members of the Communist Party who serve in military or political circles are paid by provision system, which could only afford a minimum standard of life of one or two persons. Only some high officers such as a regiment commander could get enough pay to afford his whole family of several members. However, the majority of civil servants are under salary system. Their pay is by the so-called commercial units, which is connected to the cost of living. Each unit is equivalent of one sheng of rice, one foot of cloth (2.8 ft. wide), one ounce of vegetable oil and one catty of salt. (The last element is different in different cities. So in Shanghai, coal briquette is chosen as one element instead of salt.) Assistants in Chekiang University are paid from 100 to 130 units. Others are paid by the following scale: Lecturers, 140-180; Assistant Professors, 170-200; and Professors, 200-280 units. Such are typical cases in Hangchow but are probably also indicative of conditions in other places. The cost of food for one person is about 20 units monthly. We get quite good meals. Our pay at the time being is sufficient to afford a family of five. There is no worry for a professor to sustain his family for a decent living. Another good news is that the education fee for children is very low indeed. Personally, I can now save 70% of my income. In the first month, I bought one set of mattress and bedding for myself and also a Chinese long gown to keep myself warm. Recently I deposited the surplus of my money in the People's Bank.

When I arrived in Hangchow, there was a ceremony to commemorate the inauguration of the People's Republic of China. 70,000 people marched in the streets with bright torches. On the West Lake, many boats formed a five cornered red star. There is a fresh movement of political self-education everywhere in this city. Every one is eager to learn by his own accord. The subjects of self-education are different for different groups of people. We are beginning to discuss the Common Program in all its details. It may take us half a year to study profoundly this important document!

Due to the repair scheme in the University, we did not start this term until last week. Before the start, we had a ten days' educational conference. During this conference, the following topics had been discussed: New educational methods and attitudes, report of education scheme by the authority in the Education Dept. of the Military Control Commission; report of the educational situation in old liberated areas; report of life in North-East University; the relation and inter-connection between politics and technical development; the question of group study; the co-ordination of theory and practice; the defects and merits of the old education.

tional system; the relation between teachers and students etc. It is regrettable to mention that although each of us who do physics know perfectly well the important connection between physics and industry, yet none of us had bent on the study of applied physics before. We are conscious that the syllabus as it is, may not be adequate to meet the requirements of our students. But we failed to put forward a concrete program to improve the position, save two minor suggestions of more experiments and discussions. We even failed to produce a concrete scheme for research work. As a matter of fact, I feel we are largely restricted by the past traditional system of education. We may be able to fulfill some assignments by following the lead of some other people in a passive manner. But to actively plan a new scheme of teaching or to reform the old, need something more. I think the only way to improve the condition is to learn, learn and learn again.

My work now is to teach quantum mechanics and physical mathematics. It is hard work for me because I have to prepare all my lecture sheets beforehand. In order to help my students to thoroughly understand the lectures, I often introduce treatments from classical physics....I am also learning Russian at my spare time.....

Yours etc., Hu, T.M. Hangchow, November 6, '49'

11. An Old Returned Student Becomes a New Man

(Letter from Mr. Pei, Shen -- original name Lien, M.H. who was a Boxer scholar of the 9th group and studied in Newcastle-on-Tyne)

The time now is a quarter to seven on my watch, only three quarters of an hour is available for writing. We (my wife Wang, Yung-hwa and I) go to work at half past seven in the morning. Our life is far from being leisurely now, though not terribly busy. In the past I thought that it would be splendid to have much spare time to do my own things. I could then listen to my favorite music, study matters that interest me most, or chat with my intimate friends. This thought, the thought always held by those who exploit other people, rarely bothers me now. This might indicate that my life is undergoing a reform. I wanted to do my own things and put people's things aside, why so? It was purely ignorant of me. I felt very happy that I can get rid of this idea now. One day when the standard of our people's life is generally raised, everybody will have leisure and chance to enjoy life. That day hasn't come yet. I couldn't be "a gentleman of leisure", while my people are working very hard.

In the past, we were fond of talking "truth, goodness and beauty". My opinion towards these has changed. Sure, we ought to talk "truth, goodness and beauty". But the question is, from what standpoint do we view these matters? There are "truth, goodness and beauty" for those who exploit people; and there are also "truth, goodness and beauty" for the laboring masses. As one of the petty bourgeoisie, I have enough to eat and have received university education and my relatives and friends were fairly well off. Naturally, I inclined to view things from an angle different from that of the laboring people. When I became aware of my mistake and wanted to alter my view, I had to start learning. Change of one's view takes a long time. I am glad I am still young. I have time and courage to learn and to work. Now I want to observe and study things from the standpoint of the proletariat. It is my new belief that labouring people are the creators of greatness and are the only force through which a better world can be built. They perfectly understand "truth, goodness and beauty"!

Some things happen when we consider "sentiment". The sentiment of petty bourgeoisie is different from the passion of proletariat. When we first came in contact with workers, we often had a feeling that they are blunt, cold and not sentimental. But when we came to understand them, we soon discovered that their passion is even more true and reliable. Till now, I have not had a complete understanding of the passion of the workers. I only come to deny the worth of the sentiment of the petty bourgeoisie. In the past, I looked for sentiment because I was isolated

and weak. If I joined a big community, I would be strong and would no longer need sentiment. What I looked for would then be a quite different thing. What's it? Well, may I give its name as "Forget Myself".

True, I kept dreaming of an ideal society for a long long time! This was due to my economical background. I didn't belong to a community of solidarity as the proletariat do. Nor had I the wealth and power of capitalists. What could I do in this realistic world? I couldn't do anything but dream. The ideal society which I dreamed of, of course, suited me; but it may not suit all. What more, that ideal society is baseless and unfounded. That ideal society is nothing but once a beautiful dream of my own. I am very happy to see our country being on the right road to an ideal society. Our people are going forward steadily along that road. What a contrast between dreaming of an ideal society myself and joining the people in the struggle for an ideal society!

Hitherto, I have only told you that my life is undergoing a fundamental reform -- getting rid of old ideas and learning new ones. I also want to tell you that my wife and I have gained "emancipation" now. Indeed, all Chinese people, men and women, have gained emancipation; China has stood up at last. Thinking of one's emancipation, one could cry, laugh and even shout. Our emancipation is inseparable from the fate of our nation and our people. We have full chance to work and to learn! We are liberated! We are emancipated! Chang, Hou-ying and my wife are also fully aware of our emancipation. Indeed, all women workers have realized the meaning of emancipation! They work as good as any man. Newspapers said there were women working on lathes and even driving locomotives! It is grand news. Women can't gain true liberty without laboring.

I am sorry I had to leave this letter unfinished yesterday. Allow me to continue writing now.

"We must belong to one side or the other; there is no middle way." How true is this saying! It is a fact that this world is now divided into two sides. I didn't belong to the other side. I should come to this side long ago. Though I am still not yet a proletarian, I have already surrendered myself to the proletariat. I have given up the standpoint of petty bourgeoisie. To say "surrender" does not in the least make me feel disgraceful or unnatural. I am telling you the truth. In the past I regarded myself as non-political. In fact, I still wanted to be a man of fairly high position. Just because that was impossible, I couldn't but remain non-political. I was disappointed when I returned from England to the Tsienshan, two colleagues left for the liberated area. This gave me additional courage. With the help of some friend, my wife and I finally steamed for the liberated area at the end of November 1948. There was nothing romantic on the way. When we touched the liberated area, I felt much at home. Later on, facts proved that this first feeling of mine was correct.

When we were waiting for jobs there, news came that Peking was liberated (in December 1948). The Department of Industry wanted us to go back to Peking to help take-over. But we declined, because we were very romantic at that time. We wanted to see the 'old liberated areas'! So I got the opportunity to work at a Fong-fong Colliery for a period of six months. To me, that period of learning was very helpful indeed. It steeled and tempered my will. I went there full of romantic ideas. I returned cleansed of that erroneous view. Revolution is not romantic!

My job at Fongfong was to run the power plant and repair the turbine. I also taught the workers there arithmetic and simple mechanism, which I consider to be my proudest contribution. It was also my biggest chance, because I was thus able to come into close contact with the workers. I learned much from them. The chief of the power plant is especially worth mentioning. He is an old comrade of the Communist Party. Though he had hardly any school education, he managed the plant extremely well. Through this man, a real individual, a good representative of the

masses (a hero), I came to fully realize the greatness of the strength of a party and the strength of the people. Hence, I came to a conclusion: If I work as an individual, I could do nothing; but if I join the people and work as one of them, I will be able to accomplish achievements.

I am now working in the Ministry of Heavy Industries. When we first went to the liberated area, we had to change our names. So I became Pei Shen and my wife Meng, Ying. We adopted these names by chance. I did not realize that I should become a man with the surname of Pei. But I am not going to change back. When you write to me, make sure to address me by the new name, so that I shall be able to receive your letters.

The schedule of our daily life is: Getting up at about 6:00a.m., Reading 7:00 to 8:00 a.m., Working hours 8:00 - 12:00 a.m., and 1:30 - 5:30 p.m., Group Discussion 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. You will see the reason why I have so little time left for writing letters. Many cadres in government departments are paid by provision system i.e., clothing, food, accommodation, travelling and daily expenses are supplied by the government. In our Ministry, however, salary system is adopted. As both my wife and I are working and we have not had a baby yet, we are very well off in material life. We can have surplus money to help others. Spiritual life is splendid!

China is on her way to industrialization. At present, the most difficult problem is a shortage of skilled men. I hope you will definitely come back next year. I suggest you make more visits to factories and buy as many books as you can afford. You may also suggest government offices to buy those books which you think are useful.

There are plenty of opportunities to work now, teaching or working in industries. Though there are still people who want to stick to old traditions, they cannot do so very long. In the engineering field, those incapable, corrupt elements will surely go down one day; those who are capable will be undoubtedly appointed to important work. Even those who are still suspicious of the new government, of the Communist Party, are allowed to work in government offices, so long as they are loyal to their duties. We have to intensify our learning now, otherwise we will be left behind. In the past, we like to stay in universities. This was because universities were comparatively cleaner than the outside. This consideration is no longer necessary now.

Next I advise you not to suspect New China. Red China is of course different from old China. To understand her, we have to reform our ideas. Taking myself as an example. I received western education from early days. I admired western democracies. I even at times disliked my own country. These were my great mistakes. These mistakes were due to: (1) my past education, which was of the comprador type and (2) China was a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country. Hereafter, we must study western civilization with discrimination, absorbing only the progressive elements of it.....

Yours etc., Pei, Shen - Peking, October 22, 1949

12. No More Frustration in the Future

For us intellectuals, we have everything to gain in this new society and nothing to lose except our shackles. Under the old order, the big families have virtually monopolized the political, economical as well as cultural structures of the whole country. No plan has been designed that is not for their selfish interests. Our scientists could neither elevate the national well-being by making science to serve the interests of men, nor perform some worthy research in the hope that their creative efforts might one day be useful to the next generation. Our artists were not allowed to develop their talents to serve the majority. Instead, they were shamelessly ordered to do everything merely for the benefit of the rotten ruling class. Our engineers were in no better position. They wandered about and ended

their pitiable adventures at non-technical posts, while their specialized knowledge was largely wasted. It has therefore long been recognized that we have no future if our people are not free. At a very early stage of our national struggle, i.e., the glorious revolutionary movement of May 4, in 1919, we Chinese intellectuals have solemnly joined force with the main current -- the mighty legions led by the working population. From that day on, the Chinese intellectuals have always been on the forefront of the fight. Many have joined the direct armed struggle. Many have gone deep into the countless starving villages to help carry out the land reform in order to uproot feudalism at its cell. Many have fought heroically on the cultural front where the fighting had been particularly severe and dangerous. Our young students have also contributed their share by organizing innumerable patriotic student movements which have greatly exposed the cynical nature of the tottering regime and stirred up the national conscience. All these have directly or indirectly helped bring the ultimate downfall of the Kuomintang rule. The splendid victory is therefore a common victory shared also by us intellectuals.

The proclamation of the People's Republic is the first fine fruit of our century-long struggle. It marks the beginning of a new era. From now on, our main task is to reconstruct our great fatherland and to raise the living standard of our people to an ever higher level. We are glad that there will be no more frustration in the future. We rejoice that we are destined to conquer difficulties and to win.

In the meantime, we must not slacken our efforts. Rather, we must redouble our exertion to give the reactionary remnant the last blow. We must also be constantly on the watch to defend our precious newly won victory from the intrigues of enemies both within and without. There are still battles ahead! But we are confident that we will once again win!

Let us celebrate this great news! Fellow members. Work harder in honour of our new Republic! The future is ours!

- Editorial

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The Committee For A Democratic Far Eastern Policy makes available these personal letters from students who returned to China after studying abroad; we believe they will help toward an understanding and appreciation of the process, development and attitudes in the new China.

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