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CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM ON THE CHEELOO SITUATION

From a letter of Arthur W. March to Lloyd S. Ruland.

Chengtu, March 10, 1945.

Thank you very much for your informing letter of Dec. 18th which I have received in duplicate, one from Ted Romig and the other from Dr. Abbott. We have been having strenuous times here on the Hwa-Hsi-Pa Campus but hope that now the atmosphere has cleared a little and that Cheeloo will be able to operate. Yesterday afternoon we had a tea for presidents and officers, three from each institution represented here, and the standing committee of the Cheeloo Board of Directors. Dr. Dzo Ping-yi of the Union Theological Seminary and Dr. Wu Keh-ming, acting chairman of the Board, reported on the situation and its present arrangement with reference to the students of our and other institutions. All wished us well and some congratulated us on the return to order.

We have been much worried over the complicity of the problem. We all felt there were unseen forces operating which were deliberately creating disturbance as their chief objective.

On the surface was a list of some thirteen charges against President Tang. The first and most difficult was that he was taking some of the rice issued to students, teachers and employees, for his personal gain. The Government issues a limited quantity of rice per head to public and some private institutions to be bought at a Government price or in some cases, free. Detailed application forms must be submitted by any institution desiring this and inspectors are sent to investigate the needs of all applied for. When approved, the institution sends to the Rice Distribution center and purchases the stipulated amounts. Realizing that this was open to charges of mis-use, Cheeloo has been particularly careful to cross-check all rice so handled. I was appointed by the Board to audit these accounts and found everything in good order. This was again done by a representative of the Ministry of Education in Chungking. The students, however, refused to take our word for this and insisted there had been mismanagement.

Another charge was that the President had been arbitrary and harsh in disciplining the students. They claimed he hired students to spy on the schoolmates and report to him, that he was a tool of the Kuo-min-Tang and sent here by the Government to keep up with all that was going on on the Campus. As the propaganda increased in bitterness, students who had tried to remain neutral joined the strikers, and people in the city reading the daily papers felt that much of what was said might be true if it was not really so.

Another factor was ill-feeling among certain members of the faculty because associates of earlier years had not had their contracts renewed at the beginning of the present school year. I understand there had been a good deal of scandal in the administration under the former president, and Dr. Tang had been invited to come in and clean up - both finances and personnel. He brought in some very fine men, scholars and Christians. The others seem to have encouraged the students to create disturbance so the president would have to resign.

A third factor is determination on the part of a clique in the Alumni, to get their revenge on the University for discharging one of their number for gross mis-handling of the University responsibility and finances. He had sued the institution and lost his case.

Besides these, local and national politics have probably been involved. A number of indications point in these directions but we have no conclusive evidence.

As the complexity of the problems grew more evident, the Standing Committee of the Board of Directors and the other members available here felt a full meeting was imperative. Communication with Chungking is difficult; letters had not been delivered and telegrams delayed. Finally we succeeded in putting through a telephone call. The Chinese New Year intervened and buses were not available. When the three Chungking representatives and Mrs. Price arrived, we spent over a week in all-day sessions.

On two alternative propositions the Board split almost equally. We asked the opinion of two representatives of the Ministry that had been sent here to counsel us, as well as that of the Governor who has always been a staunch friend of the University. Both advocated a more conciliatory procedure. With this position of the official authorities, we felt it definitely unwise to stand four-square as Westerners are prone to do.

Dr. Dzo Ping-yi had taken very little part in the discussions at the beginning but later came out strongly for the parental attitude toward immature children in a home. We must lay aside all sense of offended dignity, of retributive penalties, or legal procedure. We must consider only the real interests of the offending students. How could we deal constructively, remedially with them?

Professional educators felt this was undermining discipline and the insurrection would only be likely to spread to other universities. Control of students would be impossible under these circumstances. However, he calmly pressed his point and showed us how it was remedial and constructive and presented an appeal to the best there was in the excited groups. He offered to be the mediator and speak directly to the leaders. The internal administrators were to remain in the background while he and the other members of the Standing Committee tried to put the Institution back on the track again. He had a meeting with the teaching faculty as well as with the students, presenting his point of view. Later we had a tea for the presidents, deans of studies, and deans of discipline of each of the five universities and explained the situation to all of them. Friday and Saturday the students have been paying fees and Monday and Tuesday we register for classes. Work regularly is to begin on Wednesday.

I told Dr. Dzo that if this plan worked and all the bodies returned to work normally, he should write it up in some educational journal. He preached Sunday morning at the Union Service on the Campus and used this experience as an illustration of applying Christian principles to life - "Take my yoke upon you" - one point was the nature of the yoke.

POSTSCRIPT. In re-reading, I notice I have said nothing about the administration in Cheeloo. The Board accepted President Tang's resignation as from August 1st, and gave him leave of absence until the end of July, asking him to go to America to represent the Institution in conferences. Here, pending the arrival of a successor, an administrative committee consisting of the Dean of Studies, the Dean of Science, the Dean of Medicine, the Dean of Discipline and the Comptroller carry on the responsibilities of the Executive. I was asked to be Comptroller and Dr. Tang gave me his official seals. This makes me the chairman of this administrative committee. The four men are fine spirited Christians and very strong personalities. (One somewhat super-annuated.) I am hoping the new man will be found soon and relieve me of this responsibility. My chief qualifications seem to be that I know nothing of Cheeloo's problems and traditions, and can face the present with a more or less open mind.

Cheeloo University
Chengtu

12th March, 1945

Mr. Carl A. Evans
Associated Boards
150, Fifth Ave.
New York City

Mr. Noel B. Slater
China Colleges
55, New Bond St.,
London

Dear Mr. Evans and Mr. Slater,

On Saturday I sent the following cable: DLT CARL EVANS 150 FIFTH AVE NEW YORK
CHEELOO STRIKE NEGOTIATED TANG GOING STATES POSTWAR PLANNING DEANS COMPTROLLER
ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE BOARD SEEKING PRESIDENTS SUCCESSOR MARCH COMPTROLLER RELAY
LONDON.

The copy of the minutes of the Board of Directors which I enclose will explain this cable and I will now add a few notes regarding the whole situation which may help you to understand the very complicated problem with which the Board was faced. Probably no one is fully satisfied with the actions taken, and we are not at all sure that we are out of the wood yet, but at least we are now registering students for the spring term, a little more than two weeks later than the other institutions.

On March 9th we had a tea for presidents and officers, three from each institution represented on the campus, together with the Standing Committee of the Cheeloo Board of Directors. Dr. Tseo Ping-yi of the Union Theological Seminary (who is Mr. T.H. Sun's alternate representing the Church of Christ in China on the Cheeloo Board), who is chairman of the Standing Committee and Mr. Wu Keh-ming, acting chairman of the Board during the meetings, reported on the situation and the present arrangements with reference to their effect on the students of our own and other institutions. All wished us well and some congratulated us on the return to order.

We have been much worried over the complexity of the whole problem. We all felt that there were unseen forces operating which were deliberately creating disturbance as their chief objective for purposes of their own.

The obvious trouble was a list of some thirteen charges against President Tang, some of them very petty. The first and most serious was that he was taking some of the rice issued to students, teachers and employees for his personal gain. The Government issues a limited quantity of rice per head to government and some private institutions at a low price, fixed by the Government. Detailed application forms have to be presented by any institution desiring this rice and inspectors are sent to investigate the bona fides of all applications. When approved, the institution sends to the rice distribution centre and purchases the stipulated amounts. Realising that this was open to charges of misuse, Cheeloo has been particularly careful to cross-check all rice so handled. I was appointed by the Board to audit these accounts and found everything in good order. This was again done by a representative of the Ministry of Education sent from Chungking. The students, however, refused to take our word for this and insisted there had been mismanagement.

Another charge was that the President had been arbitrary and harsh in disciplining the students. They claimed he hired students to spy on their schoolmates and report to him, that he was a tool of the Kuo Min Tang and sent here by the Government to keep up with all that was going on on the campus. As the propaganda increased in bitterness, students who had tried to remain neutral joined the strikers and people in the city reading the daily papers felt that some of these things might be true even if they were not really so.

Another factor was ill-feeling among certain members of the faculty because associates of earlier years had not had their contracts renewed at the beginning of the present school year. I understand there had been a good deal of scandal in the administration under the former president, and Dr. Tang had been invited to come in and clear up, both finances and personnel. He brought in some very fine men, scholars and Christians. The others seem to have encouraged the students to create disturbances so that the president would have to resign.

A third factor is determination on the part of a clique in the alumni, to get their revenge on the University for discharging one of their number for gross mishandling of the University responsibility and finances. He had sued the institution and lost his case. This happened before the present administration.

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Besides the factors just enumerated, local and national politics have been involved. A number of indications point in these directions but we have no conclusive evidence.

As the complexity of the problem grew more evident, the Standing Committee of the Board of Directors and the other members available here felt a full meeting of the Board was imperative. Communication with Chungking is difficult; letters had not been delivered, and telegrams were delayed. Finally we succeeded in putting through a telephone call. The Chinese New Year intervened and buses were not available. When the three Chungking representatives and Mrs. Price arrived we spent over a week in all-day sessions.

On two alternative propositions the Board split almost equally. We asked the opinion of two representatives of the Ministry of Education who had been sent here to counsel us, as well as that of the Governor, who has been a staunch friend of the University. Both advocated the more conciliatory procedure vis-a-vis the students and anti-groups. With this position of the official authorities we felt it definitely unwise to stand foursquare as Westerners are prone to do, even though in this case the division was not entirely western versus Chinese on the Board.

Dr. Tseo Ping-yi had taken very little part in the discussions at the beginning but later came out strongly for the parental attitude toward immature children in a home. We must lay aside all sense of offended dignity, of retributive penalties, or legal procedure. We must consider only the real interests of the offending students and think only how we could deal constructively, remedially with them. Professional educators felt this was undermining discipline and the insurrection would be likely to spread to other universities. Control of students would be impossible under these circumstances. However he pressed his point and offered to be the mediator and speak directly to the leaders. The internal administrators were to remain in the background while he and the other members of the Standing Committee tried to put the Institution back on the track again. He had a meeting with the teaching faculty as well as with the students, presenting his point of view.

On Friday and Saturday the students were paying fees and on Monday and Tuesday this week are registering for classes. Regular work is to begin on Wednesday. This is chiefly as regards the Arts and Science schools: the medical students who took little active part (as a body) in the strike went to work when the other universities began, and the one or two exams which were missed owing to strike action have already been completed.

As shown in the minutes, the Board accepted President Tang's resignation as from August 1st and gave him leave of absence until the end of July, asking him to go to America to represent Cheeloo in post-war planning conferences. Here, pending the finding of his successor, the administrative committee appointed by the Board is carrying responsibility. I was asked to be Comptroller and Dr. Tang gave me his official seals, and I am Chairman of the administrative committee. The four men are fine-spirited Christians and very strong personalities (one somewhat superannuated). I am hoping a new president will be found soon and relieve me of this responsibility; for which my chief qualification seems to be that I know nothing of Cheeloo's problems and traditions and can face the present with a more or less open mind. President Tang is now in Chungking making arrangements for his trip abroad.

We hope that things can go on peacefully till the end of the term, and will keep you informed of the progress of events.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A. W. March,
Comptroller & Chairman of Admin. Com.

AWM/GMH



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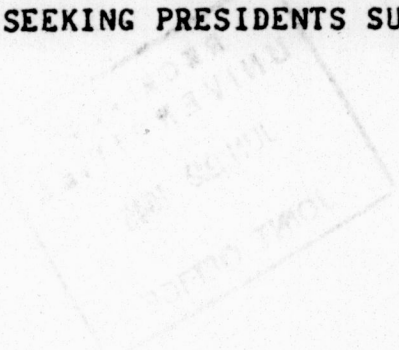
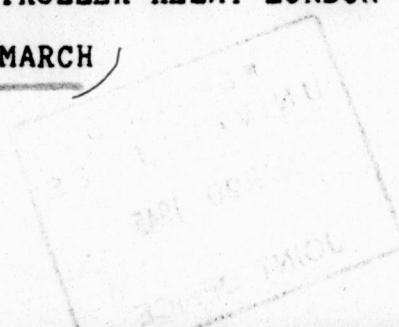
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