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CHINESE EDUCATIONAL COMMISSION TO THE UNITED STATES

A Government Experiment in Western Education

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THE decade between 1870 and 1880 was a significant one in the history of the development of modern China. At the beginning of this period the internal disturbances caused by the great T'ai-p'ing rebellion had subsided. Under the stress and strain of the rebellion Tseng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang emerged as the two most powerful provincial officials in the Chinese mandarinat. Both men were forward-looking and fully realized that the sheer necessities of national existence required the Chinese to replace their traditional disdain for the "barbarian" West with a desire to seek out and learn the secrets of the strength of the Western nations. Both of these great Chinese officials, however, conceived of this strength in the narrow sense of military and naval prowess. Their primary concern, therefore, was to learn from the West the technical knowledge upon which western military and naval power rested, in order that China might create an army and navy as a protection against the aggressive tendencies of the Occidental nations.

By 1870 Tseng Kuo-fan was very much occupied with carrying further the modernization of the army, which he had begun while suppressing the rebellion, and in establishing a modern navy. His interest in naval affairs also had arisen from his experiences in using steamships during the rebellion to move his troops about. He already had had several steamships constructed at arsenals in Anking, Foochow, and Kiangnan.¹

Tseng's experiments in building China's first steam vessels had made him realize that the strength of the armies and navies of the West rested upon a whole network of highly developed technical skills. His aim was to introduce these technical skills into China as rapidly as possible. Eventually he hoped to establish technical training schools in China, but in the meantime he determined to speed up the process by embarking on the revolu-

¹ See Gideon Chen, *Tseng Kuo-fan: pioneer promoter of the steamship in China* (Peiping: Yen-ching University, 1935), *passim*.

tionary procedure of sending to the various Western countries groups of young Chinese to receive training in such subjects as map making, coastal surveying, navigation, shipbuilding, the designing and manufacturing of machinery, the manufacture of arms and ammunition, etc.

In the autumn of 1870 Tseng was ready to take steps to get such a project underway. While at Tientsin settling the Tientsin massacre affair, he discussed his ideas with Ting Jih-ch'ang 丁日昌, governor of Kiangsu, who had been long interested in creating a Chinese navy and merchant marine and who had served as superintendent of the Foochow Arsenal. As a result of these discussions Tseng sent in a memorial dated November 10, 1870 (T'ung-chih 9:9, 16), in which he suggested that a number of intelligent youths be selected and sent to the various nations of the West to be trained in the technical arts.² He proposed that Ch'en Lan-pin,³ a minor official in the board of punishments, but one noted for his devotion to Chinese learning, be appointed chief commissioner of the Educational Mission, and that Yung Wing (Jung Hung),⁴ noted as the first Chinese to graduate from an American college, be appointed assistant commissioner in charge of the youths who were to be sent abroad.

In this memorial Tseng deplored China's lack of technical knowledge and pointed out the need to acquire such knowledge from the West as a primary prerequisite to the modernization of the army and the establishment of a navy. He cited the example of Russia under Peter the Great, which, when confronted with a similar lack of technical knowledge, learned from England and Holland the arts of shipbuilding. The training which Tseng seemed to have had in mind for the youths who were to be sent abroad was to be

² *Tseng Wen-cheng-kung chüan-chi: tsou kao* 曾文正公全集, 奏稿 [The collected public papers of Tseng Kuo-fan: memorials section] (鴻文書局 1888), ch. 30, pp. 3a-4a.

³ Ch'en Lan-pin 陳蘭彬 was a native of Kwangtung and *chin-shih* of 1853. Later he became an undersecretary in the board of punishments. In 1872 he took the first contingent of students to the United States. In 1875 he was appointed minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru. He was recalled in 1881. In 1882 he was appointed to the Tsungli Yamen, the bureau in charge of conducting foreign affairs. In 1884 he was retired.

⁴ Yung Wing or Jung Hung 容闳 (1828-1912) was one of the first pupils of the school of the Morrison Educational Society. In 1847 he came to the United States. He spent two years at Monson Academy, Monson, Mass. He then entered Yale College and was graduated in 1854. He returned to China and engaged in various business ventures. In 1864 he was commissioned by Tseng Kuo-fan to go abroad to purchase the machinery for what became the Kiangnan Arsenal. In 1870 he was called upon by Tseng to act as assistant commissioner to supervise the education of the students while they were abroad. In 1875 he was made co-minister to the United States with Ch'en Lan-pin. After the recall of the Mission, except for occasional trips to China, he lived in the United States. He died at Hartford, Conn., in 1912. See his autobiography, *My life in China and America* (New York, 1906).

strictly utilitarian, and his intention seemed to be to make of them master workmen in the various technical arts essential to the development of an army and navy along Western lines.

Two days after its receipt (T'ung-chih 9: 9, 18) Tseng's memorial received imperial sanction.⁵ In the next few months the details of the project were elaborated. Li Hung-chang, who in the meantime had been appointed governor-general of Chihli and as such had charge, under the general supervision of the Tsungli Yamen, of all matters pertaining to the relations with the Western nations, was brought into the project as cosponsor with Tseng. On June 26, 1871 (T'ung-chih 10: 5, 9), he and Tseng in a long letter to the Tsungli Yamen presented a detailed plan of the project. Even the yearly expenses were calculated and provisions made for regularly setting aside from the receipts of the Shanghai customs the necessary annual amounts.⁶ The substance of this letter was included in a memorial dated August 18, 1871 (T'ung-chih 10: 7, 3).⁷ A set of twelve regulations to govern the Chinese Educational Mission was attached to this memorial. The strictly utilitarian purpose of sending the youths abroad was again emphasized. They were to study military and naval sciences, mathematics, navigation, shipbuilding, and the manufacturing of arms and ammunition, in order, in the words of the memorial, "that the Chinese may become well-versed in the technical skills in which Westerners are proficient." Tseng and Li pointed out that in the West "those who concern themselves with military and naval sciences give their whole thought and energy to their studies and make of them life careers" and that "if China wished to emulate these foreign conceptions and to master foreign methods, the Chinese must begin to regard the military and naval professions in the same way." They added that "it was with this end in view that we have proposed that a number of highly intelligent youths be sent abroad to be trained in the technical arts."

In his original memorial Tseng Kuo-fan proposed only that the students be sent to "the various Western nations". In this memorial it was specifically suggested that the students be sent to the United States. The reason for the choice of the United States rather than one of the European countries seems

⁵ *Ta Ch'ing li-ch'ao shih-lu* 大清歷朝實錄 [The authentic chronicles of the Ch'ing dynasty, T'ung-chih period] (Tokyo, 1938), ch. 291, p. 3.

⁶ *Li Wen-chung-kung wai-pu han-kao* 李文忠公外部函稿 [Li Hung-chang's collected correspondence, section on foreign affairs] (蓮池書社印行 1902), ch. 1, pp. 17a-19b.

⁷ Tseng, *op. cit.*, ch. 30, pp. 13b-15b. Also in the *Ch'ou-pan i-wu shih-mo* 籌辦夷務始末 [Documents relating to barbarian (foreign) affairs: T'ung-chih period] (Peip'ing: Palace Museum, 1930), ch. 82, pp. 46b-52a.

to have been brought about because of the intimate knowledge Yung Wing possessed of American life and educational institutions⁸ and also because the reciprocal nature of the recently concluded Burlingame Treaty between the two countries specifically provided for mutual rights of residence and attendance at the public schools in the two countries.⁹ Tseng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang were keenly appreciative of the reciprocal nature of the Burlingame Treaty, and the choice of the United States was a marked way in which they could show that appreciation. The project was approved by the Tsungli Yamen and thereafter received the imperial consent on September 15, 1871.¹⁰

The plan, as finally worked out, provided that the students be sent in four annual contingents of thirty students, so that eventually there would be in America 120 young Chinese. The boys were to be between the ages of twelve and twenty.¹¹ They were to remain in America for fifteen years. Then they were to travel for two years in order to see in practice what they had learned in theory. Upon their return to China they were to be given regular official rank and were to be assigned to government service. It was estimated that the total cost of the project would be about 1,200,000 taels. In order to insure the regular remittance of funds each year a definite

⁸ Heretofore, writers on the Chinese Educational Mission, Chinese as well as Western, have relied for their information upon Yung Wing's autobiography, *My life in China and America*. The autobiography was not written until many years after the events took place, and in recalling these events Yung Wing's memory seems to have been somewhat hazy at many points. One hesitates to withhold full credit from him as the originator of the plan to send students to the United States. In his autobiography he states that after his return to China in 1858 he sought for many years an opportunity to broach the plan to some influential official, and that finally through Ting Jih-ch'ang, the governor of Kiangsu, he brought it, together with a proposal to establish the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company and one to develop mining along modern lines, to the attention of Tseng Kuo-fan. It may well be that Yung Wing did first propose the Chinese Educational Mission. At the time the plan was conceived he was only a minor official in the yamen or headquarters of Governor-general Tseng, and therefore the credit due him may not have been recorded. A careful search of Tseng's correspondence with Ting Jih-ch'ang has failed to reveal any references to the proposal to send students abroad prior to the actual presentation of the memorial proposing the plan. Yung Wing undoubtedly had such a project in mind, but Tseng Kuo-fan himself had been slowly working toward some such solution of China's technical backwardness. Yung Wing happened to be the right man at the right moment for Tseng's purposes, and their mutuality of interests brought them together.

⁹ The treaty was signed at Washington on July 28, 1868. Art. VII reads: "Citizens of the United States shall enjoy all the privileges of the public educational institutions under the control of the Government of China: and reciprocally Chinese subjects shall enjoy all the privileges of the public educational institutions under the control of the Government of the United States, which are enjoyed in the respective countries by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nations."

¹⁰ *Ch'ou-pan i-wu shih-mo* (T'ung-chih 10: 8, 1), ch. 83, pp. 1-2a.

¹¹ Later changed on the recommendation of Prince Kung to twelve to sixteen years.

amount was to be set aside from the imperial maritime customs receipts to cover the expenses of the mission.

Among the twelve regulations governing the mission the most important were: that in selecting the youths no distinction was to be made between Manchus and Chinese; that while the students were abroad, their education in the Chinese language and classics should not be neglected but be carried on concurrently with their Western education; and finally, to keep the students from forgetting their loyalty to the emperor while "enclosed by foreign learning," the students were to assemble at periodic intervals in order to hear the Sacred Edict read to them and to honor the emperor by performing the proper ceremonial obeisance in the direction of his palace.¹²

In the summer of 1871 a preparatory school was opened in Shanghai where candidates were to receive some preliminary training and could be examined as to their fitness for their long stay abroad. Few candidates offered themselves from the northern and Yangtse Valley provinces. The result was that Yung Wing had to go to Kwangtung and Kwangsi and literally comb the coastal cities for youths who had received some Western education in the government schools of Hongkong or the missionary schools along the coast. Because of this about 70 per cent of the students were from these two southern provinces.¹³ The first contingent left in 1872, and the three others followed in regular annual succession. Hartford, Connecticut, was chosen by Yung Wing as headquarters, and from there the boys were distributed among the small towns of the Connecticut Valley. Many families readily came forward to take the boys into their homes, and they were distributed by twos and threes among the best families of the various small towns. The families were well paid for their trouble, but there also seems to have been a genuine desire on their part to share in an experiment which held untold possibilities for the development of a modern China.¹⁴

¹² Prince Kung seems to have been responsible for these regulations requiring the students regularly to worship the emperor. See *Ch'ou-pan i-wu shih-mo* (T'ung-chih 11: 4, 7, May 13, 1872), ch. 86, pp. 13a-14b.

¹³ See Wen Ping-chung, *Tsui-hsien liu Mei t'ung-hsueh lu*, 溫秉忠, 最先留美同學錄 [Records concerning the first students sent to America] (Peking, 1924), *passim*, for a complete list of all the students, giving their names, ages, and place of origin, etc. Lists indicate that out of a total of 120 students, 83 were from Kwangtung.

¹⁴ Note of B. G. Northrop, secretary of the board of education of the state of Connecticut, dated New Haven, Oct. 1, 1872.

"The response to the call for homes and instruction for Chinese boys has been surprisingly prompt and cordial. One hundred and twenty-two families have offered to receive two each, so that homes are open for two hundred and forty-four, while, as yet, only thirty have arrived. The number, and especially the character, of the applicants show that this liberal and far-reaching plan of the Chinese government has enlisted the practical sympathy of philanthropists widely over this

By 1875 the last contingent arrived, and for the next six years the Chinese Educational Commission seemed, to all outward appearances, to be very successful. The young Chinese boys became acclimated to their new environment with remarkable ease. They rapidly acquired facility in the English language. They quickly discarded their picturesque Chinese gowns in favor of the more practical clothing of their American fellow students. They soon developed a passion for baseball and were eager and active participants in the daily activities of their American friends. They showed a high degree of scholarship and in general were favorites with their teachers and fellow students.

Unfortunately in 1881, just at the time when many of the boys had passed through high school and had embarked upon the technical training for which they had been sent, this experiment, so full of promise, was abruptly ended, and the students and teachers were all recalled home. Upon their return they were treated more like criminals, or at least like carriers of a contagious disease, rather than men possessed of knowledge which China sorely needed.

The plight of the students upon their return to China is most eloquently told in the following letter, which was written by one of them shortly after his return, to his friends in America:

Shanghai, China
January 28, 1882

My dear Mrs. Bartlett,

I feel well and strong enough now to write you a letter, though it may not be very interesting. I was prostrated with Shanghai fever for five weeks, and on my sick bed I often thought of writing to you, but the hand that could not lift a quill was not fit to pen a letter. I wonder whether you really wish to know our misfortunes ever since we stepped on the shores of our generous and native land. You will be astonished to learn the shabby and mean treatment we received at the hands of our paternal government. Perhaps you are already informed through some other source, but at any rate I will recount to you everything that has been done for our good (*sic*).

The first sight of Shanghai as we steamed up to the wharf in a steam launch as our "Japan" had to stop at Woo Sung, since it could not pass the sand bars at low tide—thrilled us thinking what a joyous welcome was waiting for us, and what a sea of familiar faces would soon surround us, and our country would soon extend her arms to embrace us in maternal kindness! But alas! Vain thoughts! The tall spires grew

country. A desire to aid in promoting the progress of the largest nation on the globe, with the hope that these ambitious boys, when disciplined and equipped by the best education which America can impart in a thorough course of fifteen years' study, will become the exponents of a higher civilization and the benefactors of their country, is the explanation of this general interest in their culture." United States, *Foreign relations, 1873-1874* (Washington, 1874), vol. 1, pp. 141-42.

taller, the indistinct buildings grew more distinct, and we grew wilder and more enthusiastic over our imaginary reception, while the launch glided over the placid and yellow waters of the Yang Tze until it touched the wharf, with a sudden jar, which awoke us from our Utopian dreams. True, a sea of faces was looking down on us, but no friendly recognition, no kindly smile greeted our forlorn band. Crowds of coolies, wheelbarrow and jinrickshaw men were shouting, gesticulating, and quarrelling for business. One solitary man came aboard to receive us—our postal manager, Mr. Luk is a fool of the first class, he has not even the average brain of a Chinaman. Instead of employing carriages or boats to convey us to our destined place, the Chinese Harbor Master's office, he packed us on wheel-barrows which have but one wheel and progress very slowly. And thus we were exposed to the gaping and jeering crowd who followed us and mocked our clothing, which was badly cut, and sewed together by the Chinese tailors, in San Francisco, and ill suited to the fashions and the dandyish and fast Shanghaiese. Some of the wheel-barrows had no pass to go through the French concession, and many of us had to get down and walk, carrying our bags in our hands, an almost inexcusable act of debasing oneself in the eyes of the so-called Chinese gentleman. After walking through the French settlement we entered the Chinese territory, and if you ever wish to find a paradise, and the infernal regions place side by side, you had better come here; the filth and fifty-seven different kinds of foul smells, and the muddy uneven slippery walk made of stones fairly sickened us. We trudged on cursing our fate, our cool reception, our stupid manager, and last, but not the least, our Chinese shoes which pinched our feet, and cramped our toes; until we came to the Harbor Master's house, a spacious building facing the river, comparatively clean and well ventilated. After roll [call] and a substantial supper, not elaborately prepared, we were dispatched with a detachment of Chinese marines acting as a guard over us to prevent our escaping from the grasp of our paternal government (?) to the "Knowledge Wishing Institution" inside the city behind the court of the Shanghai Taotai. Your Western imagination is too sublime to conceive a place so vile as this so-called institution; you may have read about Turkish prisons or Andersonville Horrors, but compared with this they must have been enviable places

Grey morn and chilly wind brought us from our happy wanderings to stern reality again and the day wore away in vain hope of getting release from our confinement. It was doubly unfortunate for us in being shut up just the time when the feast of the moon took place. There were many of us whose fathers, relatives and friends were awaiting us with wines and banquets in full preparation and longed to gaze upon and sit by the sides of their dear ones who had been so long away on the other hemisphere across the big, big sea. But such pleasures were denied them, we were to receive no liberty until we had made our "Kewtous" to the Shanghai Taotai. Accordingly, after four days's groaning and complaining we were summoned to hold audience with the highest official in Shanghai. In three bodies were we mustered with enough guards to keep a regiment in quiet subjection; we commenced our journey in the midst of crowds of spectators whose comments were far from being flattering, and marched through piles of dirt and filth which commanded the entrances of Taotai Yamen. . . .

After much waiting and unnecessary delay we were at last ushered in to the pres-

ence of his Excellency and we prostrated ourselves before his majestic presence; he however returned our salute and motioned us to stand out each according to his division in which he went to America. After he inquired of us our different accomplishments and the courses we pursued the "great Man" dismissed us allowing us to depart from the "Prison" at 10 a.m. and returning at 4 p.m. much to the dislike of the boys. Two days afterwards I boarded the English mail "Rosetta" and accompanied Mr. Yung Wei Chun to Hongkong.¹⁵

What were the reasons which caused Li Hung-chang to withdraw his support from the Mission when the students' education was only half-completed and likely to prove of little value to themselves or to the Chinese government? Several factors seem to have brought about the decision to terminate the Mission. In the first place, a marked change had taken place in the relations between China and the United States. The Mission was inaugurated in a glow of friendly feeling brought about by the reciprocal nature of the Burlingame Treaty, which had been signed in 1868. While Burlingame was the American minister in Peking, he had been largely responsible for a marked policy of co-operation with the Chinese authorities on the part of his diplomatic colleagues. Afterwards, when he was in the service of the Chinese government, his eloquent pleas for the co-operation of the American people and government in helping China to develop into a modern state met with sympathetic response. But despite the reciprocal nature of the Burlingame Treaty, the United States had not shown itself ready to treat the Chinese on a basis of equality. The influx of Chinese laborers into the Western states had been magnified into a national issue by political agitation. In consequence riots occurred in which Chinese were killed and their property destroyed.¹⁶ Yet the American government did little to repair this wrong, claiming that states' rights gave it no power to interfere. Finally, with little regard for the dignity of the Chinese government, the favorable provisions of the Burlingame Treaty permitting reciprocal rights of residence were arbitrarily abrogated by Congress.

All these highhanded proceedings offended Chinese officials and spoiled the good impression made by the Burlingame Treaty. These events also played into the hands of the conservative group in Peking and gave them arguments to oppose the attempts of Li Hung-chang to introduce Western

¹⁵ This letter, together with other material of a like nature on the Chinese Educational Commission, has been made available to the author through the kind generosity of Mr. Arthur G. Robinson, formerly of Tientsin, who for many years interested himself in the careers of the students subsequent to their return to China.

¹⁶ Notably in the Denver and Wyoming riots.

elements into Chinese civilization. Tseng Kuo-fan had died in 1872, just at the beginning of the Mission, and Li Hung-chang was not steadfast enough to stand up for it when it became politically inexpedient to do so. Furthermore, Li had been disappointed in his hope that some of the students, when ready, would be permitted to pass through the military and naval academies at West Point and Annapolis. When he found out that this would not be possible, he thereafter favored sending students to England, Germany, and France rather than continuing to send them to America.¹⁷

In addition to these general influences, there were more specific ones. The men who had been chosen to guide the project in America proved to be incapable of handling the delicate problem involved in exposing these young Chinese boys to influences of an alien culture and environment. Ch'en Lan-pin and Yung Wing differed from the very beginning as to the general policy to be pursued. Yung Wing was an ardent admirer of America and seems, correspondingly, to have held Chinese culture in low esteem. He very frankly desired to saturate the boys with Western viewpoints, and in consequence he neglected their Chinese education, which according to Tseng and Li's original plan was to parallel their Western training. He had early been converted to Christianity, and in 1852 he became an American citizen. In 1875 he married Miss Louise Kellogg, the daughter of one of Hartford's leading physicians. All this made him suspect in the eyes of the Chinese officials, and in fact he was regarded by them as being more American than Chinese. Ch'en Lan-pin, on the other hand, was a typical product of Chinese classical scholarship. He seems never to have had any appreciation of the importance of the Mission, if not actually regarding it with distaste. He was indecisive to the extreme and avoided responsibility as much as possible. He seems to have been chosen to head the Mission to quiet criticism from the conservative mandarinates rather than because of any qualities which would fit him for the task.

¹⁷ Yung Wing quite definitely states in his autobiography (pp. 207-208) that when in 1878 he requested that certain of the students be admitted to West Point and Annapolis, the curt refusal of the State Department was an important factor in the recall of the Mission. This refusal could hardly have been important in the eventual decision to withdraw the Mission, as in 1875 Li Hung-chang had inquired as to the possibility of Chinese being admitted to Annapolis and West Point and had been informed of the remote likelihood of Congress passing legislation which would permit foreigners to these two schools. See letter of Secretary of War William W. Belknap to the Secretary of State, State Department, Miscellaneous papers, Feb. 15, 1875. In this letter Belknap cites the refusal of Congress to authorize the admittance of six Japanese youths to the Military Academy and also its unfavorable action upon the recommendation of the President to admit four or six Argentinians to West Point. A copy of this letter was transmitted to B. P. Avery, American minister to China, to show to Li Hung-chang as a means of replying to his inquiry. (See Instructions, China, 1867-1878, National Archives, and U. S., *Foreign relations*, 1875, p. 227.)

Even had they wished to do so, the boys found the overwhelming pressures of the American environment too much to resist. They rapidly became Americanized, and it was undoubtedly true that any elements of Chinese culture they had brought with them were gradually fading away. They acted, talked, and began to think like American boys. What was worse from the conservative Chinese viewpoint, many of them became Christians. Yung Wing welcomed this metamorphosis, but Ch'en Lan-pin and the assistant commissioners, who were sent along with the specific duty of looking after the Chinese education of the boys, became greatly disturbed over it. They began to agitate for a recall of the Mission on the grounds that the boys had become so Westernized that they could be of little service to China.¹⁸

Li Hung-chang himself was beginning to lose faith in the Mission. In a letter to Ch'en Lan-pin, dated August 6, 1879 (Kuang-hsü 5: 6, 19), he expressed his fears that the students would not complete their work, and that this would certainly be so if the officials who were in charge continued to quarrel among themselves as to the conduct of the Mission. Li warned Ch'en Lan-pin that the unsatisfactory conduct of the Mission had become known among the officials and that he had received a great many letters criticizing Yung Wing and his preference for Western learning to the neglect of the Chinese education of the students. He pointed out that he had re-

¹⁸ Li Hung-chang's correspondence, *op. cit.* (section on correspondence with colleagues 朋僚函稿) ch. 21, p. 4.

Yung Wing lays the blame for the recall of the mission upon Wu Tze-teng 吳嘉善(子登) who was sent to America in 1878 to be in direct charge of the Mission at Hartford. Yung Wing says that Wu immediately became antagonistic to the Mission and began to send unfavorable reports about it to Li Hung-chang, and that it was these unfavorable reports that caused the recall of the Mission. (See his autobiography, *op. cit.*, pp. 201 ff.) Yung Wing also says that when he returned to China in 1881 and revealed to Li Hung-chang the falsity of Wu's accusations, Li was greatly chagrined and immediately dismissed Wu from office. Yung Wing seems to have allowed his personal differences with Wu to affect his judgment. Wu did attempt to get the students to pay more attention to their Chinese lessons and to Chinese politeness, but he advocated not that the Mission be suddenly abolished, but that it be gradually given up and that the students already in colleges and technical schools be allowed to finish their studies. Yung Wing's statement that Wu disappeared from public life because of Li's anger at his "false" reports is not correct. After the recall of the Mission, Wu Tze-teng was appointed minister to France, although he seems never to have taken up this post. (See *Ch'ing shih kao* 清史稿 [Draft history of the Ch'ing dynasty] (Mukden, 1937), ch. 507, p. 13a). Furthermore, Yung Wing's statement in regard to the curt refusal of the State Department to his request to admit some of the students to West Point and Annapolis seems to be without foundation. (See his autobiography, *op. cit.*, p. 207.) No record of any such application appears either in the National Archives (Notes, Chinese Legation, vol. 1) or in the records of the War Department. In view of the definite intimation made to Li Hung-chang in 1875 (see Note 17) that foreign students would not be admitted, it seems hardly likely that Yung Wing would be instructed to make such applications.

peatedly warned Yung Wing to stop such practices but that Yung Wing had taken no heed of such warnings. The expense of the Mission was also proving to be burdensome, and Li feared that no good result would come from this expenditure unless the conduct of the Mission were radically reformed.¹⁹

The Mission was continued for two more years, but Li Hung-chang was no longer wholeheartedly supporting it. On March 30, 1881, he addressed a letter to the Tsungli Yamen in which he discussed whether or not the Mission should be abolished.²⁰ Li admitted that the majority of the students went abroad at such an early age that it was unavoidable that they should have been corrupted by Western customs. The letter leaves little doubt that Li had come to the conclusion that it should be abolished and that he took this way to let the Tsungli Yamen know his views of the matter. He comments on the criticism which had been aroused by Yung Wing's partiality for Western learning and his neglect of the Chinese education of the boys, and that he, Li, had continually warned Yung Wing to stop such practices but without result. His attempts to get Ch'en Lan-pin and Yung Wing to work in harmony had also been unsuccessful. Li admitted that to terminate the Mission abruptly might leave a very bad impression in America, particularly in view of the fact that former President Grant on his visit to China had specifically requested that the boys be permitted to continue their studies. Finally, the expense of the Mission had been very great, and Li felt that the continuous flow of funds from China for its support was not good for the government. Li concluded his letter by leaving the final decision as to whether or not the Mission should be terminated up to the Tsungli Yamen, but without his positive support the Mission was doomed. In consequence, on June 8, 1881, the Tsungli Yamen ordered that the Mission be abolished and that the teachers and students should all return immediately to China.²¹

Thus ended one of the most promising moves the old imperial regime ever made to meet on its own initiative the problems raised by the impact of the aggressive West. If this initial venture had been successful and the plan of sending abroad annual contingents of students had become a permanent policy, a steady stream of young Chinese trained in the technical arts of the West would have infiltrated into the Chinese mandarin-bureaucracy and surely would have helped to make the transition from the old China to modern China easier than it has been. The plan undoubtedly erred in send-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Li Hung-chang's correspondence, *op. cit.* (Section on foreign affairs 外部函稿), ch. 25, pp. 6b-8a.

²¹ *Ta Ch'ing li-ch'ao shih-lu* (Kuang-hsü, 7: 5, 10).

ing the boys away too young and in keeping them abroad all through their most impressionable years. Thereafter, the Chinese government was careful to send abroad only mature students who had already passed through one of the several technical schools which Tseng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang established. But their number was a mere trickle in comparison with China's need for technically trained men.²²

The youth of the students and their consequent Westernization under the pressures of the American environment, together with a none-too-resolute purpose on the part of Li Hung-chang and an unfortunate choice of men to carry out the plan, seem to have been the chief causes of the failure of the Chinese Educational Mission.²³

²² In 1875 several students who had completed the course of training in shipbuilding and engine design at the Foochow Arsenal were sent to France for further study. In 1876 a group of seven military students were sent to Germany. In the same year a party of thirty students were sent to France and England for study in shipbuilding, navigation, naval discipline, etc. An additional ten were sent to these two countries in 1881. In 1890 the Chinese government inaugurated the system of attaching to its legations for observation and travel a number of students. In this year two each were assigned to England, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States, and in 1895 four more were assigned to the above European legations. In 1896 a party of thirteen students were the first government students to be sent to Japan. See Shu Hsin-ch'eng, *Chin-tai Chung-kuo liu-hsüeh shih* 舒新城:近代中國留學史 [A history of Chinese overseas students in modern times] (Shanghai, 1927), *passim*.

²³ In a later work the author hopes to trace the careers of the students of the Mission after they returned to China. Suffice it to say here that after a period of discouragement the majority of them found useful positions in the service of the government. Several of them rose to positions of authority and significance. Their value was particularly recognized after the Boxer crisis of 1900, when the Manchu regime launched a general reform movement.