

Whampoa Military Academy

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Xu Xiangqian, a Shanxi native who had enrolled in Shanxi Provincial National Normal College (a paramilitary college fully funded by Yan Xishan [Yen Hsi-shan] the governor of Shanxi Province) from 1919 to 1921 and later unsuccessfully worked as a school teacher, would leave for Shanghai's preliminary Whampoa Academy exam with several pals in Feb 1924 under the help of his elder brother who had connection to some officer in Nationalist Army. After passing prelim exam in Shanghai, Shanxi gang were sponsored for further trip to Canton for final exam, and some folks expressed desire to sell themselves as 'zhu zai' (i.e. piggy coolie) for overseas work or to go to France for "diligent overseas studies" should they fail the final. At Canton, over a dozen Xu pals took the exam at Guangdong Advanced Normal College and were all admitted even though Xu Xiangqian stated that he scored zero on math exam. Similarly, examinees from neighboring Shenxi Province, with the referral letter from Yu Youren, were all admitted as well. Also passing the Shanghai prelim exam would be Hu Zongnan and Ling Guangya who rode the Japanese ship Songshan-wan for Canton. Heh Zhonghan and Jiang Fusheng, who missed the Shanghai exam, would hire a boat for chasing the Japanese ship. With the help of Hu and Ling, Heh and Jiang climbed up the ship, and the four became good friends since. Heh and Jiang were allowed to take final exam after writing a letter to Liao Zhongkai stating that they, with prior overseas studies in Russia, had given up a career as reporters for sake of joining military training at Whampoa. Chen Xizeng, i.e., the nephew of Chen Qimei, was admitted to Whampoa without a test. Xuan Xiafu, a Zhuji native of Zhejiang Province, was sent to Canton's Whampoa Academy by the CCP with about one dozen youths. (Xuan Xiafu returned from Japan in 1922, joined Yu Xiusong, Xuan Zhonghua & Yu Datong in revolutionary activity in Zhejiang, and enrolled in "socialist youth league" and "communist party" successively.) Chen Geng [1903-1961], who was sent to military academy under Sun Yat-sen's grand marshal office in Canton in Nov 1923, would take exam for Whampoa Academy under CCP instructions in April 1925. (Later on Oct 27th 1925, Chen Geng rescued Chiang Kai-shek on the battlefield for which he would be spared death and allowed to flee Nanking in 1933.) All the above folks became attendee of First Session of Whampoa Academy. The stories of Hu Zongnan & Xu Xiangqian would probably be enough to serve as a snapshot of CCP-KMT histories.



On May 5th, Whampoa Military Academy started its first session of 470 students, with Chiang Kai-shek acting as principal and Liao Zhongkai as KMT Commissar. (Partial of the 470 quotas, about 20, had been reserved for enrolling descendants of revolutionary martyrs without exam requirement, and another 120 were accepted without the requirement of a final exam.) Having included late comers from remote provinces, first session enjoyed altogether 500 students, with

499 of them graduated on Nov 30th 1924. Total applicants had exceeded 1200. Per Xu Xiangqian self account, initially, four columns were formed, with 9 platoons or 140 students inside each column. Later, in Aug, 2nd Session students formed the 5th column, and 148 students from Infantry Politics Department's Military Lecture Academy were incorporated into Whampoa as 6th column. Xu Xiangqian was enrolled in 1st column, and Hu Zongnan 4th column. 6th column students were graduated in Feb 1925. All Whampoa students collectively enrolled in KMT.

Classes started on June 2nd (June 6th?), but opening ceremony was not held till June 16th when Sun Yat-sen and his wife sailed to the island on Warship Jianggu. Sun Yat-sen made a speech lasting one hour, emphasizing the importance of inheriting the spirits of anti-Manchu revolutionaries. Chiang Kai-shek made a speech about sacrificing lives and observing disciplines.



At Whampoa Academy, five departments were established, with Dai Jitao acting as director of politics department. Director of teaching department would be Wang Boling, and He Yingqin acted as lecturer-in-chief. Curricula included revolutionary theories and military courses. Most of lecturers came from Baoding Cadet Academy, some graduated from Japan's military school, and Russian advisers also participated in teaching activity. Among Chiang Kai-shek's future "eight Buddha warriors" would be lecturers such as He Yingqin, Gu Zhutong, Qian Dajun, Jiang Dingwen, Zhang Zhizhong, Chen Cheng, Liu Zhi & Chen Jicheng. General Jia-lun was said to be assistant to Chiang Kai-shek in preparing the curriculum. Russian freight ships secretly sent over several batches of weapons under the cover of logs.

Students underwent strict training, with no slack for leaving the island. Li Zongren disputed the quality of Whampoa Academy by stating that politics courses overweighed the curriculum while training session lasted merely months. Xu Xiangqian recalled that Chiang Kai-shek personally called each and every student for a private talk inside of his office. Chiang Kai-shek would obtain his loyal followers called "Whampoa Clique". Chen Jieru memoirs stated that some senior KMT leaders proposed rebuking communist-turned or transcending-party members in July but Chiang Kai-shek defended the communists by making special permissions for the communists to organize "young militaryman united society" inside Whampoa Academy. Chiang Kai-shek made a public speech praising communists and Russians.

In Aug 1924, war between Zhi-xi and Feng-xi broke out in northern China. Duan Qirui colluded with Zhang Zuolin against Wu Peifu/Cao Kun. Sun Yat-sen, taking advantage of the strife, allied

with Duan & Zhang in fighting Zhi-xi faction. During a military meeting in Sept, Sun Yat-sen conferred the "deputy marshal" post as well as the post of commander-in-chief of Yunnan-Guizhou-Sichuan "jian [building] guo [country] jun [army]" onto Tang Jiyao. (Tang Jiyao declined the post of "deputy marshal" for disliking Hu Hanmin's "proxy marshal" title.) Sun Sun Yat-sen personally led his army to Shaoguan for campaigning against Jiangxi/Hunan provinces. First column of Whampoa Academy followed Sun Yat-sen to Shaoguan in Sept. While Sun Yat-sen was in Shaoguan, Canton's Foreign Merchant Corps, i.e., a military force organized by British for safeguarding imperial interests, would collude with Chen Jiongmings forces in Dongjiang [East River] for staging a rebellion. KMT records stated that Whampoa students [i.e., 1st column] re-routed back to Canton to defeat the merchant corps forces (??? propaganda in light of Chiang Kai-shek attempt at reigning in merchant guild).

Confrontation With Canton's Merchant Guilds

Chen Jieru memoirs stated that it would be "heavy taxation" that caused Canton's merchant guilds in threatening a "closing shops" strike. Chen Jieru wrote that both the merchants and the intellectuals of Canton hated Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek for harboring communism as well as retaining Yunnan-Guangxi provincial armies at their expenses. Hence, Canton's merchant guilds, under the leadership of Chen Lianbo [i.e., a broker at Hongkong-Shanghai Bank], made a purchase of 9000 rifles overseas for arming their members. At the order of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek confiscated 1000 guns from a Norwegian ship and more over, transferred the goods to Whampoa Island.

After futile protests as well as aborted mediation, Canton's merchant guilds declared "closing shops" strike. With mediation from Yunnan Province army commander, Sun Yat-sen, eager to go north for a campaign, agreed to return the guns in exchange for a fine of 1 million yuans, later reduced to 300000 Canton silver dollars. But, Chiang Kai-shek refused to give in. British consul intervened by writing a letter to Sun Yat-sen to the effect that British warships would attack KMT forces should Canton's merchant guilds be attacked. On Sept 9th 1924, Sun Yat-sen instructed Chiang Kai-shek in evacuating his Whampoa Academy students to Shaoguan by citing three threats: 1) British warships' possible bombardment; 2) Chen Jiongmings possible counterattack from Huizhou, and 3) Yunnan & Guangxi armies' breaking laws in Canton. Chen Jieru wrote that Sun Yat-sen's bodyguard column, a small aviation force, Xu Chongzhi's Yuejun [Guangdong Province army], and Tan Yankai's Hunan Province army followed Sun Yat-sen to Shaoguan, while Chiang Kai-shek, refusing to abandon his Whampoa citadel, consecutively wrote to Sun Yat-sen for reinforcements. Chen Jieru memoirs cited Sun Yat-sen's handwritten letter, with following sentences: "I [Sun Yat-sen] would never come back to the rescue of Canton ... I hope you [Chiang Kai-shek] immediately converge with me at Shaoguan ... bringing over all weapons, ammunitions and students... You [Chiang Kai-shek] should not hesitate further." Chiang Kai-shek, in bad temperament, wrote on Oct 1st that he would defend the island as the base of our party [KMT] and that he would possess a trained brigade of student soldiers within 3 months.

On Oct 23rd, in northern China, Feng Yuxiang [Feng Yü-hsiang], Hu Jingyi and Sun Yue staged a coup d'état, overthrew Cao Kun's presidency, renamed northern warlord army as 'National Army', and supported Duan Qirui as the marshal of the northern National Army. Feng Yuxiang, Hu Jingyi and Sun Yue re-organized their northwestern army into three corps. Xu Xiangqian and his Shanxi pals requested with Chiang Kai-shek for service under 2nd Corps of Northwestern National Army.