

Analysis on the Contribution of SPEC in the Counter-Japanese War and Liberation War

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the contribution of SPEC (Sichuan Provincial Education College) in the Counter-Japanese War and the Liberation War. During Counter-Japanese War, SPEC launched a series of activities which centered on the theme of war, and wartime features were also strongly embodied in its teaching management. SPEC took advantage of the summer vacation to organize students to propagate the spirit of war of resistance in rural areas and carried out teaching activities which centered on the theme of war. During Liberation War, SPEC held the January 25th Demonstration, thus pushing forward Chongqing's democratic movement. It protested against the US military atrocities, revealed the US and Chiang Kai-Shek's plot, fought against hunger, civil war and persecution, fought for food and clothing as well as survival in the campaign known as the April 21th Movement, and launched campaigns to protect its campus and welcomed the advent of liberation. In conclusion, SPEC has made due contribution to accelerating the downfall of the Kuomintang government and laying solid foundation for a new China.

Key words: SPEC; Counter-Japanese War; Liberation war; Contribution

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INTRODUCTION

SPEC, formerly known as SRCC (Sichuan Rural Construction College), lasted from August 1936 to 1950. SPEC has nearly went through the whole period of Counter-Japanese War and Liberation War, therefore SPEC has made due contribution to the victory of these wars.

1. THE CONTRIBUTION OF SPEC IN COUNTER-JAPANESE WAR

The full-scale counter-Japanese war broke out a year from the foundation of SPEC. The devastating bombing launched by Japanese damaged Chongqing city, where the sky was overcast, the alarm kept ringing and people led a misery life, a woeful spectacle was witnessed everywhere, let alone colleges. SPEC, however, survived firmly to fight in the war rather than be frightened by the intensive bombing campaign launched by the Japanese. SPEC not only taught lessons concerning counter-Japanese war in class, but also organized military training for students and made them get into the society, the urban and rural areas to propagate and encourage the spirit of war of resistance in the extremely tough environment.

1.1 Teaching Management Strongly Embodies Wartime Features

According to SPEC's archives, since the second semester in 1937, SPEC's teaching management strongly embodied wartime features,¹ which could be described from the following five aspects:

(a) Intensifying the curriculum related to war

¹ Detailed scheme of the implementation of wartime Sichuan provincial education college in the next period in the 26th year. *Sichuan Provincial Education College Archives*, Fonds 0122, Dir. 1, Vol. 88.

i) SPEC decreased the course time for five subjects including ethics, education psychology, youth psychology, organic chemistry and meteorology, added wartime special education to student's curriculum to meet urgent needs, and paid special attention to arousing national awareness, stimulating the spirit of war of resistance, and developing necessary skills both practical and intellectual like self-defense in wartime.

ii) Contents in each subject improved

Subjects of Language. Both Chinese and English textbooks selected contents with features national heroes' words, deeds and biography, poems and stories that could arouse patriotism, papers novels which reflected current event, etc..

Subjects of Social Science. All social disciplines, such as sociology, law, the general theory, theory of rural construction, educational history, history of Chinese culture and viewpoints of the party, as well as the textbooks and teaching activities all centered on national heroes, national battle, revolution history, diplomatic history and status quo of military geography, national political, economic, commercial and industrial conditions, etc. in various countries in the world.

Subject of Nature and Agriculture. For example, common sense on subjects like chemistry, agronomic science, animal and plant physiology, animal husbandry, attached great importance to enhancing physical and chemical knowledge for military use, structure of military supplies and gas masks, and intellectual skills in agriculture which could stimulate productivity in wartime to support the military force.

Subject of Surveying. Surveying subject included not only basic knowledge about measurement, but also statistics about military surveying, live shooting and events concerning the military and war.

SPEC put equal emphasis on mental and physical training. In sport training, "SPEC tried to militarize teenagers' P. E. class in hopes to build them up."

SPEC supplied the teaching material related to war and focused on the study of wartime issues and their solutions. Based on the rule 1 and rule 2, SPEC tried its best to gather and compile teaching material.

(b) Enhancing faculties' research and practice of wartime tasks

Faculties led students to participate in the research and practice of real wartime tasks. Research: i) SPEC set up stronghold and service team for the counter-Japanese war. The faculties were appointed as trainer in each item of the service work in view of their own strength. ii) Faculties organized counter-Japanese seminars to discuss the means and steps to implement their work. Training: i) In addition to the events of public education and public training collaboratively organized by local government offices and the pilot areas established in the college under the guidance of research and experiment department, SPEC also cooperated with the third administrative

supervision area to construct the countryside so as to educate the public, train the public, organize the public, and meanwhile to guide the public in the endeavors that could increase productivity and facilitate the preparatory work for the war of resistance. ii) SPEC originally had its other research divisions which conducted research on exclusive special education. Apart from the above-mentioned work, SPEC set a new rural education research division to gather teaching material related to the war and compile supplementary readings, such as *Public Readings in Wartime*, *Supplementary Textbook in Wartime for Pupils* and various other materials catering to special teaching as well as wartime needs.

(c) Strengthening wartime service work training for students

This was respectively directed by SPEC's Student Living Guidance Committee, drillmaster and faculties in charge of the internship.

(d) Intensifying the military training for students

The training tasks were executed by the drillmaster of SPEC.

(e) Step up the popularization of wartime public education and compulsory education.

1.2 SPEC Organized Students to Go Deep Into Rural Area to Propagate the Spirit of War of Resistance

SPEC took advantage of the summer vacation to organize its students to spread the spirit of war of resistance in the rural areas. Rural Service Guidance Committee was specifically set up in the college to guide the work of the rural service team during the summer vacation. The service team served regions ranged from the areas where Han Chinese and the ethnic minorities lived together, to four counties including Leipo, Mabian, Pingshan and Ebian where mountains were enormous and traffic was unavailable, and other counties like Jiading, Jiajiang, Emei, etc.. More regions were covered by students who were in cadastral department of the service team, which reached more than 40 counties. As their main tasks, students used various means and methods to propagate the spirit of war of resistance, which included making public speech, designing wall newspaper, performing drama and dancing. SPEC's faculties also volunteered to take part in the related work. In spite of the self-funded long journey, students "were not daunted by difficulties, not affected by the short period of time or stopped for the lack of funds."² Instead, with great enthusiasm, they constantly talked with farmers and consolidated their faith in winning the war of resistance and earned their understanding and support of the war of resistance, thus "informing those who had been ignorant, correcting those

² Working report of SPEC's summer rural service team of residence management department. *Sichuan Provincial Education College Archives*, Fonds 0122, Dir. 1, Vol. 170.

who had been wrong, and strengthening the conviction of those who had been doubtful and mobilizing those who had been indifferent”.³ Based on each detailed fact of Japanese’s invasion, students explained to the public the cause and effect of the enemy’s invasion, the status quo of the war of resistance, the comparison between the military power of two countries and our prospects of the war so that the public could be aware of the significance of the war of resistance, especially how the war concerned them and the fact that the interests of the nation and their own were closely linked together. The students revealed the evil deeds of the enemies to arouse people’s national hatred, spread heroic deeds of soldiers and people to encourage people’s bravery in fighting against the Japanese, utilize the spirit of staying united in times of trouble to strengthen national unity and enlighten people’s national awareness. They also revealed the deceptive and over-stated propaganda organized by the enemy to fight against traitors and correct people’s wrong ideas and perceptions. Thus, the public could stay united and get mobilized under the guidance of right theory of the war of resistance. What’s more, the service team also taught the public common sense on hygiene, how to avoid air raid and toxic gas, the obligation people had to perform military service, instructed the public concrete methods to fight against enemies. Therefore, everyone could take part in the war proactively as a member of certain group and shoulder their share of tasks according to their situations and capabilities.

1.3 Organizing Courses Related to the War

During wartime, SPEC increased course time related to war, analyzed various strategies in the war, intensified the wartime training for students and teachers. Consequently, the faculties and students were all the more united. Teachers taught for the war of resistance, students learnt for the war of resistance. Students’ enthusiastic propaganda of the war of resistance mainly took place in Sichuan province, which promoted the further development of Counter-Japanese and national salvation movement in all other regions that they set foot on and exerted positive impact on winning the war. The national awareness of people in Sichuan was strengthened, many of which devoted to increasing productivity in hopes to support Chinese soldiers in front line with some directly taking part in the war against Japanese imperialism aggression.

2. THE CONTRIBUTION SPEC HAS MADE IN LIBERATION WAR

The full-scale civil war broke out after the victory of the Counter-Japanese War. A new revolution was launched all

over the country which called tremendous attention. The students and faculties of SPEC proactively took part in the revolution to push it into a new height and they made contribution to the victory of the war at a certain cost. In addition, SPEC was in the auxiliary capital Chongqing, the influence of which was strengthened.

2.1 Organizing the “January 25th” Grand Demonstration (the Demonstration Took Place on January 25th, 1946) to Push Forward the Postwar Chongqing Democratic Movement

SPEC, along with students from other colleges, organized the “January 25th” Grand Demonstration, which pushed the postwar Chongqing democratic movement into a new height. Before the opening ceremony of Chongqing Political Consultative Conference, students in Chongqing organized the “January 25th” Grand Demonstration and Hong Baoshu, elected by students in SPEC as representative to join the patriotic demonstration union to organize the demonstration with the aim to ensure the successful convening of the conference. The demonstration promoted the successful convening of the conference, and won support of all citizens in Chongqing and public opinion. It became the first climax of postwar democratic movement in Chongqing. *Xinhua Daily* published a long close-up paper *Democratic Marching* and a current affair comment *Students Parade*, highly evaluated the significance of the parade. After the closing ceremony of Chongqing Political Consultative Conference, Kuomintang assassinated Li Gongpu and Guo Moruo, which led students from SPEC and other schools to participate in countering spy’s ruthless persecution. It immensely stimulated the determination to fight among victims and numerous patriots’.

2.2 Protesting Against the Atrocities of American Army to Expose Chiang Kai-Shek’s Plot

In the end of 1946, an incident that an American soldier raped a female student Shen Chong in Beijing University led to the climax of counter-atrocity movements in a national-wide scale. In 1947, Chongqing students went on “6th January” demonstration⁴ (The demonstration took place on January 6th, 1947). Students and faculties in SPEC were in great anger, and went on strike and staged a demonstration, with clear-cut slogan banner held in hand. What’s more, SPEC founded a college-level organization the Back-up Group for Protest Against US Military Atrocities. Dean of SPEC Yan Xin addressed to the journalist in *Xinhua Daily* and express outrage at US Military Atrocities. SPEC also founded a leading organization—Chongqing counter-US Military Atrocities Students Union along with other colleges to counter atrocities in Chongqing. The organization guided students

³ Ibid.

⁴ Chongqing Students Union Letter to Protest against American Army’s Atrocity. *Sichuan Provincial Education College Archives*, Fonds 0122, Dir.1, Vol. 642.

to continue to strike hold a demonstration to achieve the goal that “all the American soldiers must withdraw from China.”⁵ At that time, there were more than 350 people involved in the demonstration, even two grey-haired professors Song Mouou and Zhang Shengzang were among the crowd. They appealed “American Soldiers get out of China”, pushing the patriotic movement into a new height. The overwhelming national resistance against atrocity put American imperialism under great pressure which led to the conviction of the rapist Pierson Williams, suggesting the preliminary victory against US Military Atrocities. Students adhered to struggle and launched extensive campaigns to propagate ideas. SPEC played a key role in deepening propaganda, and elected core members like Chen Xuan. They demonstrated the conspiracy of American Army and Chiang Kai-Shek and how they launched the civil war in the form of performing plays, dancing, cartoons, reciting poems, making public speeches, and a variety of other folk arts. It was popular among the public.

2.3 Participating in the Counter-Hunger, Counter-Civil War and Counter-Persecution Movements

In 1947, SPEC participated in the counter-hunger, counter-civil war, and counter-prosecution movements initiated by students in Ningxia, Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin and finally emerged into a national revolution storm. Kuomintang beat and injured students involved in the demonstration of Nanjing and Tianjin, in the event known as May 20th Tragedy. It aroused students’ strong indignation across the country and led students in Chongqing to set up the “Chongqing Students Joint Committee Against Hunger, Civil War and Persecution” and organize students’ strike and demonstration to keep in line with students in Northern China. In order to put down the revolution, Kuomintang carried out a nationwide arrest on June 1st, known as June 1st Arrest, in which 15 people were arrested, including teaching assistant Huang Hezhong and students Zeng Shaomian, Yi Zhongkang from SPEC.⁶ Under the pressure of public opinion, all of them were rescued except for Yi Zhongkang with the help of various means and channels. Yi Zhongkang suffered a lot before being killed in Zhazi Cave. He sacrificed his precious life for the revolution before the liberation. Since June 1st Arrest, Communist Party of China (CPC) Chongqing municipality decided to set up a secret peripheral party organization gathering key members of students movement, and establish Six One Association as a way to commemorate the profound hatred of June 1st Arrest. At that time, more than 30 people joined the association led by Hong baoshu, Xu Huaichun, Wang Jianmin, etc.. They launched activities

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Chongqing garrison headquarters arrested college staff and students including Huang Hezhong, Li Ming, etc.. *Sichuan Provincial Education College Archives*. Fonds 0122, Dir. 5, Vol.72

within the association and regarded it as a stronghold to strengthen revolutionary forces, with the progressive force increasing and creating favorable condition for future student movement.

2.4 Participating in April 21st Movement of Striving for Food and Clothing as Well as Survival

The April 21st movement in 1949 was the students movement in the largest scale. It started from the strike of teachers in pursuit of food and clothing and students’ supporting teachers through bazaar. Professors in SPEC “could hardly cover their daily expense because of the low salary”,⁷ so they went on strike twice in March.⁸ Students in SPEC, upholding the big banner of SPEC’s bazaar team, did propaganda and held a bazaar “volunteering to sell newspaper and polish leather shoes in the street” (He, 1994, p.224) despite of the rain so as to save money for their hungry teachers and faculties. The students gained support and sympathy widely in the society. Along with representative students in Chongqing University and four other public schools, SPEC held joint conference in the College of Science in Chongqing University, founding a committee to strive for food and clothing for faculties and students, held collective demonstration in the city and they presented petitions to organizations like headquarters of pacification and municipal government. More than 500 students from SPEC took part in this demonstration. They appealed that “government should ensure our food”, “government should ensure our education, “to survive is our least request.” Professor Zhang Shengzang, marching at the head of the line, puts it, “to sustain the thousand-year Chinese culture, we had to express our basic needs for food” (Huang, 1993). Kuomintang’s persecution of students involved in the demonstration, known as Four One Tragedy (He, 1994, p.224), accelerated the transformation of stages of students movement from counter-hunger, striving for food and clothing to counter-prosecution and striving for survival. At that time, students in Chongqing held a memorial service for the victims on April 1st. Professor Chen Jianheng, Former Dean in SPEC, also attended the memorial service and made a speech to support students’ fight against injustice. “The spirit of students who died on April 1st shall live forever.” Later on, student representatives from more than 40 colleges, including SPEC and Chongqing University, founded the Chongqing Students Union of Striving for Survival. Presidium consisted of representatives elected from 11 different schools and SPEC’s representative Yuan

⁷ Chongqing police station’s account and application for the identification and confirmation of the strike situation in Sichuan provincial education college archives. *Sichuan Provincial Education College Archives*, Fonds 0122, Dir. 1, Vol. 665.

⁸ Conference invitation letter for professors in Sichuan provincial education institute. *Sichuan Provincial Education College Archives*, Fonds 0122, Dir. 1, Vol.732.

Defu was elected as vice president. On April 21st, students held a demonstration across the whole city and presented petitions to southwest executive official government. Despite they were faced with the surrounding armed forces, guns, bayonets and hoses, they are not afraid at all, marching and striding with high spirits. At last, the demonstration ended up with student's victory. They underwent the test and suffering, which created more favorable conditions to welcome the liberation.

2.5 Launching the Campaign for Protecting the Campus and Welcome the Liberation

In the eve of liberation of Chongqing, according to the instruction from the CPC Chongqing municipality, the party branch secretary Xu Huaichun in SPEC led the staff and students to protect the property in college and prevent the enemies' slaughter and damage before their withdraw, finally ensuring the safety of the campus and welcoming the liberation of Chongqing. SPEC remained as it was and came into possession of the people and laid solid

foundation for its reconstruction into Southwest Normal University and Southwest Agricultural Department.

Progressive teachers and students in SPEC have expressed opposition to the corruptive governance of the Kuomintang government through staging multiple demonstrations, which pushed forward Chinese democratic progression and made contribution to the downfall of the Kuomintang government and the foundation of new China.

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