
THE AMERICAN IN TAIWAN

•An American in Taiwan•

Being an American and having lived in Taiwan for over two years, one often hears comments about the American and his image in Taiwan. Various comments on the part of the people of Taiwan have left this observer with the impression that there is an understanding gap between the two national groups. It is not my intent to preach to the people of Taiwan so that they understand the Americans better. For too few Americans come with the realization that they are guests which in the normal course of events, demands an amount of accommodation to the manners and sensibilities of the host. Rather my only attempt is to try to provide insight into the multi-faced American life that is behind the appearance of the American in Taiwan. And as the American inevitably learns more about his own culture than cross-national contacts, perhaps this perspective on American life will provide self-insight for the people of Taiwan who read it. There will be no attempt to place value judgments on either way of life.

One sees many levels of American life here. A stroll down Chung-shan North Road provides the observant passer-by with quite an eyeful. There are glimpses of elderly and middle-aged tourists and businessman buying everything in sight. Americans seem to have a mania for collecting things and prices in Taiwan being well under what they are in home, tempts the middle-class couple to take advantage of the opportunity to acquire more.

The insatiable quest to have things could be related to many causes in American life. In the early part of the century there was the Great Depression which removed finan-

cial security for most Americans. The deprivation suffered by most of the present older generation of Americans, and Middle-Agers (with memories of an impoverished period during childhood) caused a greater value to be placed on material things. When the nadir was over and the country reached financial equilibrium again, many Americans sought securities in amassing wealth or its semblance in material goods. This rush to have things was bolstered by the free enterprise system which developed on the wings of competition. Simultaneous to growth in productivity, the mass communications network branched out considerably, giving new channels for advertising to the businessman. Consequently, every product had a good chance to sell itself and skillful advertisers wielded the power of persuasion, further whetting the appetite of the social class conscious American. Quantity of goods is often equated with social prestige, the competitive American continues to fill up his shopping bag. He appears to need and demand a lot materially in order to be happy.

Another flagrant observation is manner of dress. The elderly wife of the businessman is often seen in the latest style pant suit. Women beyond their middle age sport styles and colors, hairdos and mannerisms that are reminiscent of teen-ager. It is hard to be old in America, and most Americans seem to want to hide old age. Our cultural myths pander to youth, beauty, physical strength and material productivity. Once a human being pales beyond the possibility of attaining the avowed cultural values, fear insecurity and a creeping feeling of uselessness threatens

the psyche. Feelings and fears are, perhaps disguised and superficially escaped in this pretension of youth. The fuggy side burned old men, their flamboyant clothes, the exotic hairdos and caked made-up masking wrinkled faces are perhaps part of the frantic attempt to identify with a predominant cultural value—Youth.

The Youth of America are another scene altogether. They are literally products of a changing society, brought up in an educational system that stresses the ability to cope with change. Their history is permeated with a frontier mentality rather than an emphasis on tradition. Induced with the spirit of democracy they demand that their voices be heard. They pride themselves on not being hung up on tradition and the adolescent stage seems iconoclastic at times. They have little patience with the shibboleths of politicians and studying history with a critical eye, they do not hesitate to pinpoint fallacies or incongruities in American democratic theory and practice. In short, they are out to exert their influence on changing established institutions. Impatient and impractical at times, they feel a sense of frustration which

has, at times reverted to violence. But an idealistic and growing sense of social responsibility as opposed to the rugged individualism of their forebears often motivates their action. Freedom is the touchstone of American youth. Any institution that does not meet the test is subject to their criticism. The mentality is reflected in the carefree appearance, the loose fitting, free-flowing clothes, the long hair, the sometimes apparent lack of restraint. But behind the appearance is the latest change in American life, a change of consciousness that has called the old values and ways into question and which seeks a greater freedom for man. Now the outward style cuts across all age groups in American life today. Perhaps this is indicative of the quest for freedom and individualities in all men and not just a passing reflection of the rebelliousness of youth.

This is merely a brief summary of currents of history and thought that continue to shape American life. It is by no means complete, but perhaps affords some insight into the dynamism behind the "APPARENT" American.

～外系來稿～

畢業感言

•王鼎華•

抱着滿懷希望進了大學，轉瞬間又將離去，心中有無限依依之感。在幾年當中，我看見不少純潔敏銳的心靈被麻木了，但是我知道，只要大家有着一股熱忱與意志，總有一天，整個校園將充滿有生命力的幼苗，欣欣向榮。

我希望低年級的同學，多與老師、學長接觸。從他們的指導下，你將可知道一個問題前有多少十字路口。觀察他們選擇的方法及原理，作為日後自己的參考。我保證，用這種態度學習的話，講得通俗一點，在大學裏面所碰到的都是橡皮釘子，碰不死人的。

其次希望每一個同學都能够培養出討論的風氣。從討論中激發出智慧及知識的火花！討論範圍愈廣愈好，從課本開始進而討論到人生的真實

面。於是你會知道：你的眼睛，除唸書之外，還可欣賞異性；你的耳朵，除聽課之外，還可以聽音樂；你的手，除了寫考卷之外，還可種花栽樹；你的口，除了分析問題之外，還可以談情說愛……增加你的各種基本認識，充分完成你的人格。

我更有一點熱衷的盼望，就是我們每一位同學，學習如何對本系及老師要求改革，不要再沉默了！這裏提出一個建議，願同學們能够力爭，爭取課程作適度的調整，使我們有充份的課餘時間，作一些有意義的思維與活動。

以上三點是我在三年半當中所體會到的感想，正如骨梗在喉，不吐不快。最後，我要許下一個允諾：在能力範圍內，無論何時何地，我會盡身為學長的責任。