
Rotary Club, Shanghai, China
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Report for Period 1941-1945

After the outbreak of hostilities on 8th December, 1941, only one regular meeting was held – on Thursday December 11th. The proceedings were informal and no report was made out. There was a fair attendance, total 54, of all nationalities represented in the Club- including the two Japanese members.

Subsequently, no direct steps were taken by the occupying forces to suppress the Club, but in view of the fact that the authorities at an early date after the outbreak of hostilities prohibited the holding of meetings without permission it was evident, that it would not be possible for the Club to continue its normal activities, although the Japanese members were inclined to believe that no objections would be raised by the authorities. At a meeting on the 13th December, 1941, the Board of Directors decided, therefore, to go into recess for the time being “due to financial reasons and transportation difficulties”. It was considered desirable, however, that the Secretariat of the Club should be maintained.

The Board of Directors met again on several occasions during the first half of the year 1942, during which meetings various routine matters were dealt with, inter alia the distribution of renovated toys, which had been collected prior to the outbreak of hostilities but not delivered to the various Orphanages and Institutions, which the Rotary Club in Shanghai had been supplying with toys each Christmas for several years. The question of resuming normal activities, which would require establishing contact with the Japanese authorities, was considered during these meetings but decided against. Members, however, for a time maintained contact with each other through informal meetings in each others houses by rotation, a procedure which in the circumstances was found well suited for maintaining fellowship and for the promotion of goodwill and understanding between the many nationalities of which the membership of the Club is composed.

For economic reasons the Secretariat was removed from the Metropole Hotel to the Nanking Theatre, the Management of which represented by Rotarian T. J. Holt, very kindly placed office accommodation at the disposal of the Club free of charge.

When the Club's permanent Secretary was interned the office was closed and put in charge of Rotarian T. J. Holt, who has looked after all property and records belonging to the Club and has been able to return them completely intact at the end of hostilities. On one or two occasions enquiries were made by officials of the occupation forces as to the nature of the Rotary Club but these enquiries were rather easily passed off.

The Club funds - which at an early date had been converted into gold – were and are in the hands of the Hon. Treasurer, except for disbursements for salaries and office expenses incurred during the period the Secretariat was kept open.

A number of Allied Rotarians were repatriated in 1942 whilst the remaining American and British members of the Club during 1942/1943 were successively interned in the various Camps in and around Shanghai. The total number of

members repatriated was 19 (some went away from Camp in 1943), whilst those who remained in Camp to the end of the hostilities were distributed as follows: Haiphong Road Camp 5, Pootung 7, Yuyuen Road (later Eastern Area) 2, Ash Camp 3, Lungwha 1 and Chapei 9.

The other members of the Club maintained contact from time to time, but did not attempt to meet in any regular or formal manner as Rotarians.

Towards the end of 1944, when it was clear that the Internees in Shanghai camps had a very hard time owing to serious shortage of food, it was arranged to send each interned Rotarian and each member of his family a special Christmas parcel with greetings from "Thursday Tiffin friends", which gifts were much appreciated.

In August 1945 at the end of the hostilities the question of again taking up the activities of the Club was considered by the (last) President in consultation with various members, but owing to the difficulty of establishing contact with interned members and the abnormal situation prevailing at the time (both as regards finances, transportation and business in general) it was decided not to take immediate steps to call a meeting of the Board of Directors or endeavor to hold Club meetings.

On the initiative of President SUNG an informal get together arranged in the grounds of St. John's University on the afternoon of September 29th, when the majority of members interned locally had been set free. About 30 members of the Shanghai Club and some 10 Outport Rotarians spent a pleasant two hours together, and the returned Internees were greeted with particular enthusiasm by their fellow Rotarians.

On that occasion the question of resuming regular meetings was considered but the consensus of opinion of those present was to the effect, that the taking up of the normal activities of the Club would have to be deferred for some time owing to transportation difficulties and the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation for holding weekly Lunch meetings – the question of expenses being also of some importance in the prevailing circumstances.

In the course of the month of October all interned Rotarians were released – those from Haiphong Road, who had been sent to North China, were the last to arrive.

A meeting of the Club was called on November 9th. This meeting was held in the Bankers' Club and was well attended – too well for the accommodation available. There were present 44 members, 10 Outport Rotarians, 4 Overseas Rotarians and several guests, some of them former members of the Club. The members present expressed the opinion that steps should be taken to reestablish the Club vis-à-vis Rotary International as soon as possible, and that regular meetings should be resumed as soon as a suitable meeting place could be found. The last elected Board of Directors were requested to take the necessary steps in that direction.

At a meeting of that Board held on November 15th it was decided to enquire from Rotary International's special delegate in China, Vice-President of R.I. Dr. C.T. WANG, as to the steps it would be necessary to take in order again to regularize our position with Rotary International. Dr. Wang in reply gave certain direction and enquired *inter alia* whether the Club's Charter was still available, to what extent Club records had been kept up and whether Club and R.I. dues had been collected in the interval.

To the questions the replies were as follows:

The Club's Charter (No. 545) is intact. We have not collected any Club dues after 1st January, 1942. The R.I. per capita tax and subscription fees for the "Rotarian" were collected and remitted for the 2nd half of 1941, but since then no attempt has been made to collect R.I. dues and in any case it would have been impossible to remit them.

At the present moment there are some 72 of the members on the old Roster who are believed to be in Shanghai, but some 15 of those have not yet attended meetings. Some of them have been contacted and are found to have failed to attend because they thought they had lost their classification owing to inability to start their business again, whilst others had hesitated to rejoin the Club owing to temporary financial embarrassment due to the complete dislocation of their business and/or heavy personal losses of property and effects during the war and inability to obtain funds from abroad owing to normal banking facilities not yet being available.

In consideration of the difficulties facing many members the Board of Directors at a meeting held on the 29th November placed before the members of the Club a resolution to the effect

that for a period of six months all members, if they so wish, may remain members of the Club without review of their old classification.

which resolution was passed unanimously.

The Board felt that although some members will be unable to continue membership on the basis of their old classification, and some are doubtful as regards the outlook for the future, it would not seem reasonable in view of the uncertain and quite abnormal business situation prevailing in Shanghai, to start a general review of classifications and possibly deny membership to persons who might later on be fitted in. It is realized, of course, that this procedure is not strictly according to the letter of the R.I. Constitution and By-Laws, but it is felt that the maintenance of fellowship and contact in the present depressing situation is of paramount importance. It is well understood at the same time, that in the case of members who are definitely unable to retain membership they shall stand down and make room for new members to fill the vacant classifications.

Rotarians from Outports who are transferring their business to Shanghai will be taken care of by the Club as soon as possible, and in the meantime they are treated as Visiting Rotarians.

It is the view of the Board of Directors and Members that the Shanghai Rotary Club as such has not been dissolved – we have simply discontinued to meet. According to strict Rotary rules, we have, of course, ceased to exist as a Club in good standing when we failed to meet regularly and failed to correct R.I. dues and Club subscriptions for four years., but on the other has no feel that the Board of Directors of Rotary International must apply a special ruling as regards our Club, and other Clubs similarly situated, where a large majority of the old members were ready to resume meetings as soon as circumstances permitted after the end of hostilities.

On this assumption it has not been considered necessary to reconstitute the Club, and the activities as far as present circumstances permit have simply been taken up where left off in December 1941. On that basis members have passed the following resolution at the meeting on November 29th

that the Officers and Board of Directors elected in 1941, and whose activities were discontinued under force majeure in December of that year, shall

continue to function until the end of the present Rotary Year (30th June, 1946).

It was the desire of a majority of members present at the above meeting that weekly meetings should be resumed forthwith, but in deference to the wishes of a number of members who find that owing to transportation difficulties (our present meeting place is some distance from the business center of the town), and in some cases also account of expense, less frequent meetings are to be preferred, it was decided for the time being to meet every second Thursday only.

For the present it is not proposed to reopen the office or engage a paid Secretary, but this will be done as soon as circumstances will permit and in the meantime the present officers will carry on the necessary routine work.

It is confidently hoped that as from January 1st 1946, more or less normal activities shall be resumed such as the collection of R.I. dues (per capita tax and subscription to "Rotarian") and the necessary Club dues to meet current expense (in the meantime such expenses, except cost of Tiffins, will be met from funds in the hands of the Treasurer. At the same time the rules regarding regular attendance will be reinstated and enforced.

Owing to the high cost of printing the renewal of the publication of the Club's weekly paper "The Pagoda" will also have to await better times.

Some members who have left or are leaving for holidays abroad have been supplied with the usual Rotary Card of Introduction of six months' validity on the understanding that all R.I. dues will be paid on their return or by friends on their behalf.

Shanghai, 5th December, 1945.

Signed:

[signature]

[signature]

Wm. Z.L. Sung

President

E. S. Thellefsen,

Honorary Secretary