

Chapter Fifteen

The death of a virtuous man (1941-1942)

In September 1940, the Japanese forces occupied Indochina, blockading the railway into Yunnan Province. Dr Chung was suffering from illness and therefore moved from Haiphong together with Mrs Chung for convalescence in Hong Kong. They stayed temporarily at the Luk Kwok Hotel, and then the Lingnan branch school accommodated them temporarily, following which they moved to a flat in Happy Valley for a long-term stay. Auntie Eight, their long-time reliable maid, returned to help them again. Finally, the couple moved to a ground-floor flat on Blue Pool Road, and a large number of alumni collectively furnished them with a refrigerator. Because Dr Chung's health was weak and he had many ailments, he seldom ventured out. If he happened to go somewhere, he needed to arrange for a taxicab rather than going on foot. On one occasion he wrote to Chan Fu-cheung, a former student who was the owner-manager of the Luk Kwok Hotel, concerning the veteran revolutionary Chiu Sze-pak, formerly the chief justice of the

high court of Guangdong, who was in arrears in paying his rent. Dr Chung asked Mr Chan to be lenient with Chiu, rather than forcing him to leave, because Chiu would later receive remittances from overseas. Dr Chung's letter was full of sympathy, clearly showing in his words.

In 1941, Dr Chung was seventy-five years of age. The Lingnan Alumni Association of Hong Kong proposed to celebrate his birthday. Dr Chung was reluctant to agree, but wished to take the opportunity to create a meaningful event at this momentous occasion. Therefore he nodded. At the same time, he reflected on how to launch a fund-raising campaign with the target of raising a million Hong Kong dollars. He drafted a list of members for the fund-raising committee, and personally drafted a simple appeal, so as to mobilize the energies of the entire group to carry out the task, enabling Lingnan University to receive these funds and consolidate its endeavour. The fund-raising began with one million dollars, and continuously attracted donations, boosting the campaign to a higher level of success. This was Dr Chung's bold proposal for the school, and a matter of his constant concern. (See Chapter Ten for the record of a conversation between Dr Chung and Tang Tso-yum.) It was Dr Chung's intention that alumni in Hong Kong, the mainland, and overseas, numbering between ten and twenty thousand persons, should each make the commitment to contribute two hundred *yuan*. Then the fund-raising campaign had already drawn in more than this amount, as funds poured from the donors, totaling a large sum. Thus the target was doubled and redoubled.

Dr Chung then directed General Secretary Tsang Chiu-sam to first send a circular letter to all alumni chapters around the world, asking them to hold celebrations on the same day, and to launch similar fund raising efforts.

Dr Chung served as Chairman of the fundraising movement, personally composing brief appeals that he were accessible to readers. Yeung Wah-yat gathered together the words of one of Dr Chung's appeals to keep as a souvenir. The words were as follows:

Seventy-five years flow by, yet I have never celebrated a birthday.
Now I have become an outdated fellow, reluctant to serve as
Chairman.
Celebrating my birthday on behalf of a foundation for the alma
mater,
We rely on mobilizing you all, as success will be easy if everyone
pitches in.

Our thousands of efforts, rally three households to overthrow Qin
rule.
Now from our fallen campus, staff and students have withdrawn
to safety,
Success still comes when we heed the call of the Red and Gray.
Looking forward to the revival of our former enterprise, our vow
can never fail.

On the evening of that day, September 7, 1941, the Lingnan Alumni General Association held a banquet at the Hong Kong Hotel in honour of Lingnan University President Emeritus Dr Chung's seventy-fifth year. The hall was splendidly decorated, with red and gray banners hanging on the four sides, and in the centre was an embroidered portrait of Dr Chung made of feathers, along with a bronze bust of his likeness. On the right and left of the table were hanging couplets reading, "For a teacher of thousands of students, congratulations on a life of a thousand autumns," and a tall birthday cake was displayed on a table. At 7 o'clock in the evening, the guests thronged into the hall. Legislative Yuan President Sun Fo, Chairman of the Lingnan Board of Directors, passing through Hong Kong on business, attended together with his wife. President Lei Ying-lam and others also arrived one after the other. When the honoured birthday figure and his wife entered the room, the entire group stood to welcome them to their seats. Chairman Kwok Lam-but announced that the party had begun. The Alma Mater song was sung. Chairman Sun Fo, President Lei Ying-lam, and student president Y. W. Lee each addressed the gathering in turn. When the dinner was served to a seating of several hundred guests, they all began to crowd around Dr Chung and Mrs Chung, holding cups to make toasts to their health. Next, Dr Chung held a knife to make the first slice of the birthday cake, and cake was distributed to every guest. At the end Mrs Chung offered a vote of thanks, and the whole gathering raised a thunderous cheer.

During the party, Dr Chung wished great success to every alumnus, and the Million-Dollar fund-raising committee announced its formal establishment. Dr Chung was the chairman of the committee, and the deputy chairmen were Y. M. Lin, Benson Fong, Kam Nai-kwong, Y. C. Loke, Lei Ying-lam, and Szeto Wai. The one hundred and forty-two committee members included Wu Kai-yin, Chan Yue-yui, Yeung Wah-yat, Lei Ping-chiu, Lee Wai-choi, Wong Wing-on, Tso Iu, Lee Shao-cheong, Leung Ting-ngok, Ng Pak-shing, Kwok Lam-but, Choi Wai-hung, Woo Haw, Ko Ting-che, Cheng Chiu-bun, Mui King-chow, Kan Kaom Tsing, Lam Chik-suen, Tam Woo, Chan Lap-bun, Tang Tso-yum. A treasury committee for the funds had also been set up, Kan Kaom Tsing serving as chairman, and Sinn Ping-hay as deputy chairman. There was also a promotion team, along with a planning section.

When the Million-Dollar fundraising campaign had begun, the intention was to conclude the campaign within three months within Hong Kong and within nine months overseas. Unfortunately, the situation worsened, turning against China. Japan became allied with the Axis powers, and waged war on a larger scale, deploying its powerful army, navy and airforce to attack the United States and Great Britain, and setting up an “East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere.” On December 8, 1941, the Pacific War broke out, as Japanese forces bombed Hong Kong and Pearl Harbor on the same day. Defended with a minimal force, Hong Kong was forced to surrender on Christmas Day. In the course of

the fighting, our eyes were filled with scenes of devastation; subjected to the cruel violence of the Japanese army, the people of Hong Kong lived in a constant state of terror.

Dr Chung found himself in hostile surroundings, and his heart pounded with fear. His heart trouble became critical, and he sought medical help at the nearby Consortium Hospital. He remained there until January 7, 1942, when he silently passed away. His loyal maid Auntie Eight hurriedly sent a message to Chan Yue-yui, principal of the Lingnan branch school, and Mr Chan hurried to the hospital. He found Mrs Chung alone watching Dr Chung's body. It was a heart-wrenching sight. Shortly afterward Chan Fu-cheong also arrived. Mrs Chung said,

“I entrust the funeral arrangements solely to the two of you, to handle as quickly as possible. Everything should be done swiftly and flexibly.” After the two gentlemen received their instructions, they decided on the spot to schedule the visitation for that afternoon. The burial would take place the following day. The body rested temporarily in the morgue of the Tung Wah Hospital, and together with alumnus Hung Ko-wong they went to a coffin business in Queen's Road East and purchased a six-hundred dollar coffin. But the shop owner refused to honour their five-hundred dollar banknote, insisting on devaluing the note by forty percent. They were told that there were Japanese soldiers' posts all along their route, and that they would be unable to get through without

passes. Hearing this, the three men were uncertain how to proceed. The next day, while waiting to begin the funeral procession, they were truly at a loss. Fortunately, Kwok Chuen came to pay his respects, accompanied by a Japanese Lieutenant Colonel Daishi. They then made a request to the Japanese officer that he write out an “interim permit” and stamp it with his personal seal. Thus they were assured of being able to proceed. With alumnus Hung in the lead, followed by Chan Yue-yui and Auntie Eight (Mrs Chung had gone ahead in the hospital’s ambulance), they reached the junction of Garden Road, and after their document had been examined by the Japanese military police squad posted there, the soldiers immediately saluted. In the same manner they passed several other Japanese checkpoints and finally reached the morgue.

Dr Chung verbally delivered his will and testament during his dying hours. Remaining deeply concerned about Lingnan affairs, he expressed regrets concerning the yet-to-be established Union Theological College and the yet-to-be consolidated College of Medicine, along with the new dormitory for the affiliated middle school. He delivered his will and testament on December 16, with Hung Kwan serving as a witness. Dr Chung spoke as described above.

On January 7, 1943, the Lingnan Alumni Association of Kweilin held a memorial service to commemorate the first anniversary of Dr Chung’s death, and sent notification to cities behind the lines in the war of

resistance and to alumni chapters in various centres overseas about organizing meetings on the same day to commemorate their sagely teacher and reflect their feelings of respect. At this time, Dr Chung's widow Fan-ting had returned to Free China and was residing in Kweilin. Various Lingnan alumni, including Y. M. Lin, Yeung Wah-yat, Chow Man-kong, Lee Cheuk-po, Ho Yam-tong, Ho Yuk-ying, Yip Yuk-leung, Ko Ting-tse, Wong Kai-yuan, Yue Kwok-ting, and Chan Ying-hung were all serving in Free China. The event was held in the hall of the Union Hostel. White streamers filled the scene and bouquets of fresh flowers filled the room. The long procession of those who came to pay their respects wound through the street.

The war of resistance ended in victory in 1945, but Dr Chung did not live to see this. Following demobilization, Lingnan University expanded actively, but Dr Chung was unable to see this either. Alas!

Lingnan University and its alumni deeply inherited Dr Chung's benevolence, and dearly remembered his wisdom. Thus on January 7, 1947, they welcomed the return to Guangzhou of his remains, which were laid to rest in a solemn interment ceremony at Swasey Place at Lingnan, next to the tomb of Leung Fat. This was a realization of Dr Chung's wishes while he was alive.