

were sufficiently fluent in the language and who had the funds, was entirely possible, as a practical matter, without official government permission.

Four of us, Burdsall, Emmons, Young and I, now became increasingly drawn together by similar views of the new situation in which we were finding ourselves. We joined with Dr. Al Akl in declining to proceed into the interior of China without the recognition by official Chinese Government permission; but unlike Akl and Thorne we had no impelling professional reasons to return immediately to the States. Indeed a letter just received from an old and close family friend of one of our group at home said: "We're all having the worst 'hard times' in human memory. Nobody has any money left to spare; your Dad and Mother are really hard up but hate to admit it, and there are no jobs at all for you to find even if you do come home now. If what you write is true, that living expenses for you at this time in China are only a fifth to a quarter of what they were here when you left, you and your parents are probably better off for you to stay in China for a while, especially if you have something worthwhile you can do there."

Burdsall, Emmons, and I, urged by Jack Young, on arrival in Peking had become students at the North China Union Language School where, in every bit of our spare time we were engaged in intensive drill in conversational Mandarin Chinese: *Kwan Hua*, literally translated, "official talk." Written Chinese, the classic ideographic characters, requires about five years to learn; this we were not attempting at all. But conversational *Kwan Hua*, the most widely used of the Chinese dialects, and by chance also the one used along the far western Tibetan border region, is no more than perhaps twice as difficult to learn as, say, conversational Spanish. Three to six months, depending upon the intensity of effort, can produce worthwhile results. To our drill in Mandarin the three of us had for some time now been turning our available energies. Jack Young himself, to whom of course the Chinese languages were a mother tongue, helped us with the special vocabulary which would be useful to the sort of expedition of our own which, as a possibility, was beginning to take shape in our minds.

Before long the inevitable occurred. Gene Lamb advised us of his definite decision to proceed with Mrs. Lamb, Major Logan, and the Explorers Club flag into the interior, inviting the six of us to accompany him. But, as by now expected, Dr. Akl and Thorne declined. The remaining four of us (Burdsall, Emmons, Jack Young and I) thereupon also said no, and sadly gave Akl and Thorne a final farewell dinner before they departed. Now entirely on our own in Peking we resumed the study of Mandarin.