

Pioneers of the European Studies

In this new section of the ECSA World-News, we are publishing the experience of persons who have significantly contributed to the founding of the European studies in different countries.



MURRAY FORSYTH,

First President of ECSA Hong Kong

“When I left Hong Kong in 1997 I felt that at least some progress, along three related paths, had been made towards implementing European Studies firmly on the far-off shore of China”

“It brought back pleasant memories of those years in the 'nineties when I and my colleagues at Hong Kong Baptist University worked hard to establish European Studies firmly as an academic discipline in Hong Kong. Here are some spontaneous remarks. [...]

The founding of the HK Association needs to be seen against the background of the undergraduate course in European Studies, the first of its kind in Hong Kong, which was founded when I was head of the Government and International Studies (GIS) Department at HKBU in 1995-1997. This course was an ambitious one. It included intensive language instruction, in either French or German, plus a year's study at an academic institution in Europe, for all those enrolled on it. It naturally required considerable long-distance organization to work effectively. I was fortunate to have in the GIS Department a group of very able colleagues - Chinese, French and German - who devoted their whole energies to making the course a success. We were also helped materially by the French, German and Swiss Consulates, and of course by the European Commission in Brussels, as

well as by its representative in Hong Kong. GIS became a European Documentation Centre.

The establishment of the Association was a natural concomitant of the course. It provided an opportunity for all those who specialized in some aspect of Europe in the many universities and colleges in Hong Kong to meet together, to exchange ideas, to invite and hear visiting speakers, and so on. As a member of the umbrella organization ECSA it facilitated communication between Hong Kong scholars and their counterparts in Europe.

One further development at this time also deserves mention. Professor Meissner, a distinguished colleague in the GIS Department, was keen to establish a journal devoted to 'East-West Dialogue.' I strongly favored his initiative and the first issue, edited by Meissner, duly appeared in June 1996. Hence when I left Hong Kong, regretfully, in the autumn of 1997, I felt that at least some progress, along three related paths, had been made towards implanting European Studies firmly on the far-off shore of China”