2013\_2014 First met Ministry of State Security “Michael”

Michael is not his real name. I first met him in 2013 or 2014. I was at that time very surprised to find out that I was not allowed to teach part-time on weekends here in China. Most of the foreign teachers I knew at my full-time school at that time were teaching part-time on weekends. Before moving to China in February 2009 while living in South Korea I had met many foreign teachers that had previously taught in China and they all assured me teaching part time was permitted in China. That leniency was one of the reasons I moved to China to teach as compared to other countries.

To my knowledge I was the first person at my (full-time) school arrested for teaching part-part on weekends at a private language academy. There were at that time about thirty foreign teachers at my full-time school.

The arrest was rather dramatic. I was teaching a class at my full-time school and police officers came into the classroom and informed me I was to go with them. This was very confusing, embarrassing and a bit scary. “It must be some kind of misunderstanding,” I assured myself.

I was marched from the “GAC” side of campus (west side) to the administrative offices on the IB side of campus (the east side) escorted by quite a crowd of policemen. Then I was put in the back of a police car and driven to the police station. I had no idea what my offense was or why this was happening.

In the police station I was introduced to “Michael.” That is not his real name, as he is Chinese. Years later I found out he is apparently the Ānquán Bù officer in charge of all foreigners in Beijing.

国家安全部; Guójiā Ānquán Bù - 'State Security Ministry'), is the intelligence, security and secret police agency of the People's Republic of China (non-military area of interests), responsible for counter-intelligence, foreign intelligence and political security.

I was put in a holding cell with a metal chair in the center. The metal chair had a gate on the front that could be locked. I presumed this was for “harsh interrogations.” I still did not know what my offense was.

After some time, perhaps an hour, Michael appeared and took me to another cement room. I was questioned about my part-time teaching at a private language school on weekends called Hong Qiao not far from my full-time teaching job. I still did not know that was illegal.

I answered all questions honestly. Finally, Michael informed me that teaching outside my contracted job was illegal. I did not mention that most foreign teachers I knew were doing that.

I was quite relieved to find out this was the cause of the humiliating and scary arrest and march through my job’s campus, drive to the police station and long wait in the room with the metal chair.

I was questioned for several hours with several interruptions. Michael’s English was not very good, but he spoke enough English that I could get the gist of his questions. He wanted to know absolutely everything about Hong Qiao private language school, how I heard about it, how they paid me, identify every person that worked there and what their responsibilities were, and so on.

After this long interview another “interview” was scheduled for the next day. The second day’s interview was similar to the first, but they wanted more and more details, most of which I didn’t know the answers to.

This was apparently a very important case for Michael which quite amazed me. I answered all questions fully and completely to the best of my ability and cooperated as much as I could.

At the end of the second interview Michael informed me that what I had done was a severe violation of the law and if I did it again, I would be arrested, jailed, fined, and deported.

Because I had already been teaching at my full-time school for at least a few years I was very surprised at this. No other teacher had ever heard of this before. Other teachers teaching part-time off-campus jobs continued their off-campus teaching thinking my “case” was just some aberration.

However, over the next few years I found out that five or six other teachers were caught teaching part-time outside their contracted job and then deported. Why so few surprised me quite a lot also as most teachers continued teaching at their part time jobs outside of school. That however was not my concern.

I was curious however why I was the first teacher to be treated in such a manner. Again, years later I found out why.

At that time I thought of Michael as an ordinary policeman just doing his job. Perhaps I was just unlucky that was the first to be arrested and treated in such a manner for something I didn’t know was a crime.

I didn’t think he was a bad guy. It wasn’t until a UNHCR meeting July 16, 2019 that I started to become very suspicious of him.

At the UNHCR meeting I found out Michael is no ordinary policeman as I originally thought. Instead he appears to be the primary enforcer for the Guójiā Ānquán Bù in Beijing.

In subsequent months after that arrest (2013 or 2014) the owner of the private language school when I was teaching part-time on weekends 2010-2013 or 2014 repeatedly tried to get me to go back there and continue teaching. I repeatedly told him “No,” however for at least he year he continued calling me trying to persuade me to return. He also told me he had another foreigner teaching there. I asked about the police. He told me that the other foreign teacher was just a tourist and ran out the back door when the police arrived. I thought he was crazy or lying.

The owner of the Hong Qiao school also calls himself “Michael.”

It appears he faced no serious legal consequence for having hired me to work illegally for him, as compared to the very serious consequences for me should I continue.

Later I began to wonder if this was a form of entrapment. In any case I was not going to make that mistake again.

Questions: How well does Ministry of State Security (and or his associates) “Michael” know the owner of Hong Qiao School “Michael?” When and under what circumstances did they first meet? Why was I the first person at my school to endure such a humiliating experience when more than half the teachers were – and had been for many years (much longer than me) teaching off-campus?