



Fostering curiosity

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Consul General of France in Shanghai Axel Cruau threw a party recently to welcome a visiting delegation from the Paris Institute of Political Studies and present an award to this year's student recipients of the Jérôme Lohez 9/11 Scholarship fund.

Cruau said during his welcoming speech that international education exchange programs such as the Jérôme Lohez 9/11 Scholarship Foundation can help to promote not only the values of France but also universal values, something that came under threat during the recent terrorist attacks in Paris.

"What those terrorists wanted to do by indiscriminately attacking French people is to bring hatred between the French. Because they hate the idea that people can live together and can live free and equal. They hate people being together and enjoying life," Cruau told the Global Times.

The Jérôme Lohez 9/11 Scholarship Foundation is a charitable organization launched in 2005 in honor of Jérôme Robert Lohez, a French citizen who died in the North Tower of the New York City World Trade Center during the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US in 2001.

Encouraging communication

Its scholarship's founder, the widow Dening Lohez, established the organization in her late husband's name and memory in the hopes that it would promote educational and cultural exchanges between the US, France and China. "It all started with a private cause. My husband died at the age of 30. I started the foundation so that he would live on in my memory," Lohez told the Global Times.

A trip to the Middle East following her husband's death gave her the inspiration to realize the social significance of such a foundation. "I traveled to the Middle East in the hopes of finding the true Islamic doctrine - to see what makes terrorists kill."

"This foundation will hopefully encourage more young people to go out and see the world, go to foreign countries and step into each other's shoes," Lohez said. "Then it will be easier for them to communicate with each other."

Lohez has been running the foundation for over a decade, providing scholarship awards every year to five multinational graduate students studying for a dual degree so as to enable them to study in one another's homelands.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris, Lohez said her concern about cross-cultural understanding has been renewed. "It made me rethink my foundation's mission and meaning. What does international education exchange mean? I think it means to foster curiosity so that students can search for common values. My foundation has many reasons to continue to exist," she said.

"What Lohez is doing is fabulous because she encourages students to really work for a better world," remarked Cruau.

A deeper understanding

To date 36 students have benefited from the scholarship. In China, Zhang Yaning from Fudan University was a recent recipient. Zhang said it helped him to complete his studies successfully and encouraged him to make every effort to go on to the intercultural exchange between China and France.

"Before I went to Sciences Po (an alternative name for the Paris Institute of Political Studies), I only had a general impression of the European Union. The professors there gave us (exchange students) a well-rounded introduction to Europe, which has given me a deeper understanding of the recent refugee crises and terrorist attacks," said Zhang, who studied for a dual degree in Global Affairs in Europe and Asia and recently completed his study at Sciences Po.

According to representatives of Sciences Po, over 400 Chinese students are currently studying at the university, ranking third among its foreign students after the US and Germany.

"I think we all want to live together in peace and harmony and we also want to give each other a chance," said Cruau. "Exchange student programs are really important because they strengthen those values all over the world - the values of living together and respecting our differences."



Consul General of France in Shanghai Axel Cruau gives a welcoming speech at the reception.



Two student recipients of this year's Jérôme Lohez 9/11 Scholarship

Photos: Qi Xija/GT