VanWyk, Gordon J and Bertha V Oral History Interview: Old China Hands Oral History Project

Julie Van Wyk

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Preface

Interviewees: Rev. Gordon J. and Mrs. Bertha V. Van Wyk

Interview I: August 10, 1977
The Van Wyk's cottage at Lake Nojiri, Japan

Interviewer: Miss Julie Van Wyk
B.A. Hope College
VAN WYK, REV. GORDON J. AND MRS. BERTHA V.
BIографICAL SKETCH AND SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Gordon James Van Wyk was born in Maurice, Iowa, on August 4, 1919. He is the son of John C. and Amelia Menning Van Wyk, and spent his early years in Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin where his father had pastorates in various Reformed Churches. Gordon Van Wyk graduated from high school in Muskegon, Michigan in 1936, and in 1937 entered Hope College where he earned his B.A. in English and philosophy in 1941. Upon graduation from college Gordon Van wyk attended Western Theological Seminary, and received his B.D. from that institution in 1944.

Bertha Jeannette Vis was born on June 10, 1920, in Morrison, Illinois, to Jean Abraham and Bertha Van Kolken Vis. Her father was also a minister of the Reformed Church in America, and she spent most of her childhood in Sheldon, Iowa, where Rev. Vis had a church for many years. In 1937, after graduating from high school in Sheldon, Bertha Vis entered Hope College. She received her B.A. in English and elementary education from Hope in 1941, and then taught school for three years in Scottville and South Haven, Michigan.

On June 8, 1944, Gordon Van Wyk and Bertha Vis were married, and in preparation for the mission work they hoped to do in China, they went to Berkeley, California, to study Chinese at the Peking School of Chinese Language. After completing a year of language study at the University of California, the Van Wyks went to Yale University, where Mr. Van Wyk earned his master's degree in history, and Mrs. Van Wyk earned her master's degree in Chinese.
In January of 1947, the Van Wyks arrived in Foochow, China, where they served for four years on the campus of Fukien Christian University. Mr. Van Wyk taught U.S. History, Bible and English, was chairman of the Religious Life Committee, and directed the brass band. Mrs. Van Wyk taught English Literature and directed the choir.

The Communists took over Foochow in August, 1949, but the Van Wyks were allowed to continue their activities at the university until June, 1950, when the suggestion was made that they leave China, as the situation in Taiwan and Korea had hardened the Communists' attitude toward America.

The Van Wyks left China in November, 1950, and returned to the United States for two years of study and preaching assignments. In 1953 they went out to Japan as missionaries and began teaching at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo, where they continue to teach today.

As it was impossible to conduct an interview with the Van Wyks, Julie Van Wyk sent questions to them and asked them to respond on tape. Although we regret not having been able to conduct the interview in person, the Van Wyks responded candidly to the questions and the interview was a far greater success than we ever could have hoped for.

The Van Wyks were in a unique position in China as far as the Reformed Church missionaries go, because they were the only R.C.A. missionaries to be located north of Amoy in the Foochow area. Their position on a university campus enabled them to become more aware of political tensions in China at the time of the Communist takeover, and in the interview they express their
observations of how Chiang Kai-shek had lost the support of the Chinese people and his ability to lead China out of turmoil. Other highlights include descriptions of the wild inflation in the last years of the Nationalist regime, the preparation of Chinese fishing boats for an attack on Taiwan, the Van Wyks' interactions with Communist soldiers, and their exit from China in late 1950.
QUESTION: How did you decide to become a missionary to China?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, first of all I suppose I should say that I chose to be born into the right family, my parents having been missionaries in India for a very, very short time. Because of my father's illness they had to come back within a year and a half or two years. Since I had my beginnings in India, although I was actually born in America, I grew up in an environment where missions was very much a part of the life of the family, and we had other relatives who were missionaries, and our home constantly had missionaries coming to visit us, and I just grew up in an environment where being a missionary was one of the very live options.

But I would have to go on to say that I did not think of missions as being my vocation. Thanks to a number of influences that came to bear upon me during my college days, I was convinced that I wanted to work on a Christian college campus. But I wasn't very much concerned about the location. And I was as willing to work overseas as in America. And in fact rather more interested in working overseas because I felt that the challenge there was greater. So even during college days I was in correspondence with the Arabian mission, and had thought I was going to go there, and then actually I was appointed to go to India to serve in Voorhees College. And after graduation from college I was on my way to India, actually, driving across the states when we had an auto accident, and that kept me from going there, and so I went
on to seminary. And it was during seminary days—and as a matter of fact, I did have a call to a church, but I was not really interested in serving in a church situation. I was very eager to serve on a Christian college campus, and it was at that time, then, that the possibility of going to Fukien Christian University opened up. And so it wasn't first of all that I decided to become a missionary. It was rather that I felt my vocation was on a Christian college campus, and the geographical consideration was second. What about you, Birdie?

MRS. VAN WYK: Well, on my own I don't think I ever would have even thought of becoming a missionary. I was very happy with life in the states, but when I began to know you and realized what your aims were for the future, and by the time I felt that I belonged with you, I was fully ready to go any place you might have chosen. And I should add that I'm not sorry for it. It's been a wonderful life.

MR. VAN WYK: All right. Why don't you answer the second question?

QUESTION: What preparation did you have before you went?

MRS. VAN WYK: Together we went to the University of California and spent a year at the Peking School of Chinese Language, studying Chinese. The second year we went to Yale and did further work.

MR. VAN WYK: Oh, you don't have to be that hesitant. Birdie received her master's degree in Chinese Studies at Yale. Thanks to the request of Fukien Christian University I got my degree in history. And it was in the history department that I came across
intellectual history. The aspect of intellectual history opened up before me, and then I found all the things which I had been doing back in college and in seminary—that is, my interest in philosophy, my interest in history, my interest in religion and Puritanism—all these things were gathered up in this field of intellectual history, and especially in the field of colonial and puritan history of America.

QUESTION: Why was the study of Mandarin important to your work in Foochow?

MR. VAN WYK: This is one of the problems, that we were living in an area in Foochow in which Mandarin was not the standard dialect. But the Province of Fukien from which Fukien Christian University drew its students is an area which is characterized by a great number of dialects. I think that we counted at one time there were nineteen dialect groups on the campus. In fact this served as the focal point of student activities, rather than clubs. The clubs were the dialect area clubs. And the one thing that united the campus was the Mandarin language, and so that was the necessary thing for us to study. But this meant that in a sense, apart from the campus activities, classroom and chapel and faculty meetings, worship, and things of this sort, we were living in an area where we really could not very well communicate with the people on the street. When we went to town, most people had some knowledge of Mandarin, but Foochow dialect, which our children picked up very quickly, we never studied.

QUESTION: What were your first impressions of China?
MR. VAN WYK: Birdie?

MRS. VAN WYK: Well, I have two. One from the ship in Shanghai Harbor. It was the first time in my life that I had ever seen so many patches. Patches upon patches upon patches. Everyone dressed in Ai-kuo Pu, in Love-country cloth of varying shades of fading blue. Clothes that had no right to be holding together anymore were being worn.

MR. VAN WYK: Recall that this is immediately after the war. This was late December of 1946.

MRS. VAN WYK: My second impression comes from the place we stayed those few days in Shanghai in the hospital on maybe about the fourth or fifth floor, and it was of a sea of tile roofs jam-packed together, hardly with variation, and with no breathing space in between.

MR. VAN WYK: Then I recall that we wanted to try out our newly-learned Mandarin language on the streets in Shanghai, but everybody there speaks Ningpo Hua, Ningpo dialect, and, well, we were able to navigate a bit with our Mandarin, but we were shocked to find how ill-prepared we were, actually, for meeting people who were speaking these many dialects. And then, of course, we got on a coastal steamer—what were we on it? Two nights, maybe?

MRS. VAN WYK: At least that, yes.

MR. VAN WYK: ...going down from Shanghai down to Foochow. It was jam-packed full. There we learned the term "yellow fish", people who had no reservations and so forth, but were packed in
the hallways.

MRS. VAN WYK: They were lying on the deck.

MR. VAN WYK: And lying on the decks, and everybody seasick, and it was a total mess. We spent a pretty ugly time with our one little girl, half a year old. And we stayed in our cabin with a strange man in with us, and very seldom got out of that during that trip down.

MRS. VAN WYK: I remember surrendering the aluminum kettle containing the baby's bottles down into the hold of the ship to have the bottles sterilized and getting it back up and thinking, "Well, there's no use trying to get any boiled water to make the formula. I'll just use the water the bottles were boiled in."

QUESTION: Did you have any problems in adjusting to servants, climate, customs?

MR. VAN WYK: If I may just say something, it strikes me as looking back on those four years, that the high days were the sunshiny days after long periods of rain. And it often happened that on a sunshiny day mail also came. But it seems to me that we lived from sunshiny day to sunshiny day. Now, that doesn't mean that it was raining all the time, but yes, my memory is of a lot of rain, and how wonderful the sunshiny days were.

MRS. VAN WYK: What you're probably also remembering is the fact that we were never warm there in the winter because all we had was a little oil drum for a stove, and so the sunshiny days in the winter in Foochow were really quite warm if you got out on
the hillside. So we were just being like everybody else—happy with the sun because we could get warm.

MR. VAN WYK: The question of servants—we were lucky to pick up a man who was referred to us by other missionaries, Bua-hung, who brought with him his wife and two children. What were they? Maybe seven and nine years old? Eight and ten? Something like this, and they were thrown in as part of the bargain. He was the one whom we hired. He didn't claim to know Mandarin, but he said, "Just see if I can understand you," and we made do. And he was a man who had operated amongst the missionary community, so we were very much beholden to him during those four years. And we had a fine relationship with him and with his wife and kiddies.

MRS. VAN WYK: But the question asked about problems in adjusting to them, and I certainly had a terrific problem adjusting to having his wife there, because she wanted to be an amah to Sue, and Sue, between six months and a year, was my first baby, and I definitely wanted to be her mother. And I remember the time when the bedroom with two doors in it, Bei-sau was standing outside of one doorway listening, and I was on the other side of the same bedroom hoping Sue would go to sleep and stop crying, and Bei-sau was hoping that I wouldn't be there so she could walk in. And her procedure was to hit the mattress and keep banging it until Sue went to sleep. And it was so hard to tell her without being able to speak Foochow that Sue was not to be babied or pampered that way. My hardest adjustment was over the baby.
MR. VAN WYK: And I recall that we immediately recognized that we didn't know how to use servants in the way in which old-time missionaries had used them. I recall some woman, some old-time missionary, coming down to the house and asking, "How do you communicate? How do you call your amah at night when the baby cries?" The servants were living two floors down. We were up on the second floor, English friends were on the first floor, and the servants were in the basement. And this elderly missionary just took it for granted that if we heard the baby cry during the night, why, we would ring for the amah to come upstairs and take care of the baby. And we didn't plan at all to have her be taking care of the baby during the night.

QUESTION: What were your living arrangements in China?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, I've already started to refer to this. It was a large, large house. I think probably in other times it had been a single home.

MRS. VAN WYK: I think so. A large brick residence on the side of a hill.

MR. VAN WYK: And divided now into two apartments, upstairs and downstairs, and a wonderful English family who had some previous experience in China were living on the first floor. And we were very much indebted to them for all that we learned from them. They were living on the first floor, and we were on the second floor, and the servants down in the basement. All the woodwork had been ripped out during the war, and the university had patched it up as best they could, but we were totally without running
water, totally without electricity all during 1947. I think it was in the summer of 1948 that the university got a generator from the American army, and we had light from six o'clock to ten o'clock. At five minutes to ten in the evening, the lights would dip and that was a signal to either get to bed or to light your lamps. And that's all the electricity we had during the rest of that four-year period.

MRS. VAN WYK: We were also overrun with rats the first few months because the building had been used as a dormitory just before we got there, and the students must have kept food out in their rooms. And I remember a rat getting into Sue's baby buggy at night, and chewing away completely the neck strap of a little woolen bonnet she had because the neck strap had been spit upon. Do you remember that?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. Actually, you said a baby buggy. We also had a--what was it?

MRS. VAN WYK: A kiddy coop.

MR. VAN WYK: Kiddy coop, which was like a large screen box. I don't think they're used anymore. But it had screen on all the sides, and that was very important that it was also screened over the top. And the baby was quite safe in there as long as the baby didn't lean up against the screen during the night and get bitten by mosquitoes through the screen.

QUESTION: Did you work closely with missionaries of other churches? Did this give rise to any particular problems?
MRS. VAN WYK: First of all, we were dependent upon them.

MR. VAN WYK: We had a wonderful relationship.

MRS. VAN WYK: We were so far away from our Amoy mission that...

MR. VAN WYK: Two hundred miles north.

MRS. VAN WYK: ...we needed to use the treasurer of one of the missions right there in Foochow. And it was right after the war, and there was quite a bit of surplus army food that was available and could be bought, and each one of the missions when they had an opportunity to get something would share with us, so we kind of belonged to—you might as well list the missions.

MR. VAN WYK: In Foochow there were three missions: the Congregational Church—the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions—the Methodist Church, and the Anglican Church. They all cooperated in Fukien Christian University, plus the Reformed Church. But as we say, the Amoy mission was two hundred miles away, and so we were orphans in that area. And as Birdie says, all three were very thoughtful of us, and we were included in their various mission gatherings, except that when it came to mission meeting time and they struggled with difficult problems, we were excused. So we just enjoyed the food and the blessings of this kind of fellowship, and never got involved really in the business of these missions. After a while the Reformed Church found it was easier to remit our salary directly from New York to Boston, and then out to the American Board treasurer, rather than sending it down to Amoy and then having it sent up to us. Because by the time that money came up to us from Amoy, what with the galloping
inflation, our salary would have lost a great deal of its value. QUESTION: Did this give rise to any particular problems?

MR. VAN WYK: I don't recall problems. We didn't exactly agree necessarily with the theology or the viewpoint of some of these people of other missions, but we soon came to appreciate them, that they had very different attitudes at times, but we mainly had an attitude of appreciation for all we learned from them, and we became increasingly happy for our own tradition with its strengths. But we also saw some of its weaknesses in terms of the viewpoint of these other people with whom we worked. No, we had a wonderful time with them.

QUESTION: Did you find there were disagreements between older and younger missionaries over mission policies or relations with the Chinese?

MR. VAN WYK: I've already referred to the attitude of the older missionaries towards servants. They took the servants very much more in stride than we were able to. We never used our servants to the fullest advantage the way some of these other people did. We were too uneasy with the use of servants. That's one thing. Over mission policies? Well, without mentioning names, I think that there was quite a difference between the postwar group of us. We privately rated the older missionaries on those that had good relationships with the Chinese, those that we thought were not imperialistic, and some who we thought still carried a colonial attitude from the past. And, yes, I think there were some disagreements, but nothing that really bothered us. Some we really
appreciated for the way in which they carried on their missionary work. But here again, we were quite far away from the Amoy mission. I think in the course of those four years, I went down one time to a mission meeting, and another time Birdie and the two babies and I went down. We flew down for a mission meeting. And that's as close contact as we had with the Amoy people, except through correspondence and occasionally . . . Oh, yes, during the summer.

MRS. VAN WYK: We had two visits.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. They came up during the summer because right behind the university was the hill on which the foreigners had their summer cottages. And when the Amoy people came up they were at a disadvantage because they didn't have Foochow dialect. Well, neither did we, but we had more than they did. And they were dependent upon our servants to handle their supplies and so forth when they flew up from Amoy to Foochow to spend the summer, or spend a few weeks up on the mountain right behind the university.

QUESTION: What was the connection between the R.C.A. and Fukien Christian University?

MR. VAN WYK: Dr. Poppen was a member of the board, and I can only recall that during those four years I think he only came up for a board meeting once, perhaps. Except for the summer visitors, we had almost no connection with the people from Amoy. We lived quite distant in many ways from the regular functioning of the mission, the sometimes oppressive relationships that some missionaries talked about in relation to their mission. We were quite
free from that close relationship.

QUESTION: Were you the first R.C.A. missionaries to be sent there?

MR. VAN WYK: I don't think the R.C.A. had ever had anybody on that campus in prewar years.

MRS. VAN WYK: No, but it had been a part of that institution all the time, and there were a lot of Amoy students on campus who were sent there on the recommendation of Amoy missionaries. And they definitely wanted a family on campus.

QUESTION: You mentioned that the Amoy mission sent students there. Does this "sent" mean that they received scholarships, or were encouraged to go?

MR. VAN WYK: They certainly were encouraged to go. There was another university in Amoy which was secular, which was a government university, and that certainly attracted these people, but as far as a Christian university was concerned, there were thirteen Christian universities in China, and the only one close to Amoy would have been Fukien Christian University. There was another one in Swatow, but I don't think I ever heard of people from Amoy going up to Swatow or going up to Shanghai, or certainly not going up as far as Peking or Tientsin.

QUESTION: What were your responsibilities at F.C.U.?

MR. VAN WYK: Actually, I have to admit that it is rather vague in my mind exactly what title, even what courses I taught. I recall some odds and ends of courses, but certainly I was nothing
much more than a lecturer in history. And I taught some English, and taught it very badly, having no conception of how to teach English as a foreign language at that point. I did a Bible course, and you taught some English. You say you taught *Les Miserables*, but that was a reading course. It wasn't taught as a literary history course. Yes, we were young and new, and we were flunkies, I think, as far as the academic side of our responsibilities. I recall that after the Communists came I thought it would be smart to offer a course in the history of revolutions, but somehow or another, somebody or events led me to thing that maybe that wasn't the smartest of all things to teach at that point.

But we had extra-curricular activities. Birdie had the choir, which was mainly made up of Amoy people, with a few people from other groups. And the meetings were conducted completely in Amoy dialect, and then they would tell the . . .

MRS. VAN WYK: The business part.

MR. VAN WYK: . . . and they would tell the foreigners—that is, the Foochow or Swatow, or other people—what they had just decided, and whom they had just elected as president of the group. I had the brass band. The band had a number of very, very ancient instruments. It was not the greatest of all bands.

MRS. VAN WYK: I remember when you needed to go to town to play, that the students didn't feel like carrying their instruments down to the launch. They called a coolie to carry their instruments, whereas you were busy carrying your own and other people's music stands. (laughter)
MR. VAN WYK: While you're saying that, I do recall the freshman arriving at Fukien Christian University with his mother behind him carrying his suitcases and bedding rolls on the ends of a tang stick across her shoulders, while the new, young college student walked ahead.

We were very closely related to the Student Christian Association, had a Bible fellowship named the Wei-k'ai--my name was Wen Wei-k'ai, Wei-k'ai being the given name. But then their custom is to use the given name for the Bible fellowship. So it was the Wei-k'ai Bible Fellowship. And that was a very real warm fellowship. I can recall several meetings that were exceptional, and they still stand out in my mind. And then I became chairman of the Religious Life Committee. Mr. Wilkinson, the Anglican who lived downstairs, was the chaplain of the campus, and he and I worked very, very closely together, and saw eye to eye on many matters, as over against our Methodist and Congregational friends who were inclined to the liberal side theologically. And Mr. Wilkinson and I were very close, and with him as chaplain, and with me as Religious Life chairman, why we had things (laughter)--we were able to control religious life, much to the discomfiture of the other foreigners on the campus.

QUESTION: What was the background of the students at F.C.U.?

MR. VAN WYK: They were mainly rural students. I don't remember anything specially about that.

MRS. VAN WYK: Oh, I remember a son of a Shanghai businessman who had a birthday party at our house. Do you remember that occasion?
MR. VAN WYK: Yes.

MRS. VAN WYK: We served a duck or a chicken or something like that. We served a regular foreign-style meal, and then when he asked was there more, why, yes, but we had more of the same thing. And he, I guess, had been looking forward to several different courses in a Chinese manner. (laughter) Our kitchen just didn't serve things that way. It was kind of a surprise to him.

QUESTION: Did they come from mission schools?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. Especially from Talmage College down in Changchow in the Amoy area, and from other mission schools around in the Foochow area. Because Fukien Province is landlocked it didn't draw from other parts of China, except you just said somebody from Shanghai—or I remember the Tsais, whose father was an Amoy pastor, but who had become a secretary in the United Church of Christ in China up in Shanghai. So they came from a different part, although they were actually Amoy people. So for the most part, it was a Fukien Province student body.

QUESTION: Can you estimate what percent of the student body was Christian?

MR. VAN WYK: Right now, and I can't find any figures, and I'm just guessing that it was—well, it was certainly higher than it is here in Japan. I'm guessing that it was maybe ten percent, but that may be too high.

QUESTION: Did you have many Christian organizations on campus?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, the campus church. We tried as much as possible
not to let it be a student church, but open to the coolies, and to the faculty, and well, even to the village, but none of the villagers came, as far as I know, but we tried to make it different from daily chapel. And there was an active Student Christian Association which in time became radicalized a bit. But I remember with my Bible class, as the time of the turnover, we spent long periods talking about our attitude toward the new day, and asking whether a Christian was only called upon to be negative, to be against anything and everything the Communists were doing, and we resolved to try to show that we also were for the new day as far as social work, attitude toward the rural people, and for the positive side of the revolution. And at one time we decided that we would go to work in the rice paddies. The Communists were busy enlisting people to kill rice-borer moths, and so we went out into the rice paddies, took off our shoes and stockings, and went wading up to above our knees, probably. Later for which, I'm very proud, I received a citation as a labor hero, but I also received the chastisement of my brother because he said I was courting disaster and that I might have picked up a liver fluke which would have had grave consequences if I had been infected by that.

QUESTION: What did the Christian organizations do?

MR. VAN WYK: As far as our Bible Fellowship, it was mainly a Bible study fellowship. We didn't do any evangelism or service work apart from that work in the rice fields. Certainly not before the Communists came we didn't do anything.

QUESTION: Was there any tension between the Christian organizations?
MR. VAN WYK: The Student Christian Association was just about the only Christian organization on the campus, that and the church, and we tried to make a distinction between the two. But we were not bothered by, as I recall—maybe we had one fundamentalist group that was critical of the Student Christian Association. There is something in the back of my mind which tells me that there was such a group around for a time. Certainly, after the Communists came in there was a tendency toward, not charismatic, but pentecostal-type expressions. Everybody praying at the same time out loud, and Christin life took a very strange turn just before and during the time of the Communists. And it was sort of an escapist Christianity, where the main thing to be looked forward to was release from this life and going to heaven. And it was not a healthy form of Christianity at all.

QUESTION: Was there any tension between the Christians and the non-Christians?

MR. VAN WYK: I don't think the Christians were criticized at all. I remember that chapel period was sacrosanct. You didn't have to go to chapel, but you couldn't do anything else during the chapel service, until the Communists came, at which time we no longer were able to have that period designated exclusively for chapel. And so for the first time we were faced with competition because the Communists were organizing song services downstairs right below the chapel, and our chapel program was faced with a real challenge to try to make our program as interesting or more interesting than the very lively song sessions which were going on downstairs under the auspices of the Communists.
QUESTION: Was the Y.M.C.A. active?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. It was a joint Y.M. and Y.W. It was an S.C.A.--Student Christian Association—and it had good relationship to the missionaries.

QUESTION: Was there any interest in politics among the students?

MR. VAN WYK: I don't recall anything, until . . .

MRS. VAN WYK: Except that about a year before the Communists came into our part of the country the police certainly felt that there was political action among the students. Remember several times they came to the campus to arrest students for carrying on communist activities. We never knew whether they really were or not.

MR. VAN WYK: But I have such a feeling that we were very young and new and naive, and didn't really know what the points of tension were.

MRS. VAN WYK: Probably so.

MR. VAN WYK: And we know that in those five sememster that we were there before the Communists came, that two or three of those semesters we never had final exams. The school closed up and chased the students off the campus in order to prevent the government from sending in their troops. But I'm very vague as to just what the problem was. However, after the Communists came in, then we had increased student agitation, and again, thanks to the Communists, the students were encouraged to criticize—
criticize each other and criticize the faculty—and everyday we went over onto the main campus and looked on the wallboards to see who was the newest object of criticism, because they would write long dissertations exposing the whole of a man's life and the nature of his lectures, and the nature of his exams, and every time he had goofed in one way or another. And they would just destroy a man by what they put on the wallboards. I remember the way David Cheng got it one time when the students turned against him.

QUESTION: Was there an active student council?

MR. VAN WYK: There was at the time, it seems to me, but I can't give any details on that.

QUESTION: Were there any student strikes?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, student agitation there must have been, but I can't give details, and that's why we closed up and sent the students off the campus to prevent police raids.

QUESTION: What were the issues?

MR. VAN WYK: It's all summed up—just anti-Kuomintang, anti-Chiang Kai-shek. And there was a lot to be criticized: the tremendous inflation, and the big contrast between the rich, the landlords, and the poor, all the corruption of which the Kuomintang was guilty. This was the object of the criticism of the students.

QUESTION: Did the students side with either the Communists or the
Nationalists?

MR. VAN WYK: We heard almost no pro-Communist talk before the Communists came. But the moment the Communists were there, everybody began to hsueh-hsi, to study.

MRS. VAN WYK: We also began to find out which ones of the students or faculty had been working with the Communists beforehand, after they came. But we didn't know it ahead of time.

MR. VAN WYK: No, we weren't really sure of that.

QUESTION: How did the students' political interests change after the Communist takeover?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, everybody lined up and were very, very active with this hsueh-hsi which was demanded of everybody, to study the new doctrines. And of course, some were more eager than others to prove themselves converts to the new teaching.

QUESTION: Were most of the teachers and administrators at F.C.U. Chinese?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. Certainly most of them, and they had a Chinese administration, too, but we had on the campus Dr. and Mrs. Scott, Miss Asher was the treasurer and the assistant to the president, and the Overholts. Mr. Overholt was in charge of the farm and the agricultural—he wasn't dean, though—but he was in charge of the farm, and he brought in the cows, and he carried on a great deal there. And the Wilkinsons—and he was college pastor and taught chemistry, and we. So there were five families. And
Miss Thomas. So we had a large number of foreigners. Dr. and Mrs. Scott, Mr. and Mrs. Overholt, the Van Wyks, that's eight, Miss Asher, nine, and Miss Thomas, ten. And Miss ... the little old lady, eleven. There were eleven foreigners there at the peak. And Albert—no, he was up in town. So, at least there were ten foreigners on the campus at that time.

MRS. VAN WYK: But they did not run the campus or manage it. The foreigners that had been there longest, like Dr. Scott, were certainly referred to when decisions were made, but they did not run the school.

QUESTION: What was their educational background? Was it sufficient?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. Such a man as Theodore Chen, who was president most of the time that we were there, is now—maybe he's retired—but he's been a professor also at University of Southern California and is a recognized administrator. We thought that the men were very highly educated and were well-equipped. They were good administrators. We have no kick about that. Another man, the dean of the agricultural department, served on the World Health Organization. Oh, there was no problem there. We had some top-notch scholars. We had a great number of Ph. D.'s around, men who had studied in America. We have high respect for the people with whom we worked.

QUESTION: How did the foreigners get along with the Chinese faculty?
MR. VAN WYK: Well, just wonderfully. The bulk of us lived on
the campus . . .

MRS. VAN WYK: We lived in the same housing. There was no distinc-
tion. If we had gone home on furlough, a Chinese family could
have moved into our apartment and taken our place. If we should
come back from a furlough we wouldn't have been able to choose
where we would live. We would just be put into an empty slot.

MR. VAN WYK: That might not have been true of Miss Thomas's house
which she built herself. But for the rest of us there was no real
distinction. It was wonderful living right alongside the Chinese
faculty the way we did. A much closer relationship with the
Chinese than we ever have had with the Japanese here.

QUESTION: Did you have much interaction outside of school with
the Chinese faculty and students?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. In and out of their homes. We knew the families
so very well, so much better than we do here. We had them in our
homes and we were in their homes, and it was an easy relation-
ship.

QUESTION: Were politics discusses much among the people with
whom you came in contact?

MR. VAN WYK: Certainly it was not healthy to discuss politics in
the days before the turnover. And after the turnover there was
no interest in really discussing politics. Everybody was afraid
of everybody. The Christian faculty were very uneasy about
Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Kai-shek and his wife were Christian and
so forth, so they would like to have supported him. And at one
time, of course, Chiang Kai-shek was a great revolutionary leader
himself and introduced a wonderful new way of life with his New
Life Movement. But the Japanese War just completely crippled him
and made it impossible for him to carry out his goals. And then
while he was fighting the Japanese, the Communists were nibbling
away at his rear. And when he turned to attack them, then he was
criticized by the world for busying himself with fighting the
Communists when his real enemy was the Japanese. So if he turned
back to the Japanese then the Communists got busy again. So he
was in an impossible situation. He was also, of course, under-
mined by the terrible corruption within his own government.

QUESTION: Do you have any idea whether your Chinese associates
respected Chiang Kai-shek, or how they felt about the Nationalists?

MR. VAN WYK: There was little or no support for the Nationalists.
He had lost the mandate of heaven.

QUESTION: How did they feel about America's aid to Chiang Kai-
shek?

MR. VAN WYK: I think basically they were appreciative of all the
aid that had been given, but by the time we got there Chiang had
lost his hold and it was time for him to go. The problem was
that there was no third party. The alternatives were Chiang or
the Communists, and that was an awfully difficult choice to make.

QUESTION: How were you affected by inflation?

MR. VAN WYK: I haven't double checked these figures, but it
goes something like this, that when we arrived in Shanghai in the first days of 1947--this was all new to me about this exchanging dollars and so forth--so the figure in my mind is either one dollar brought seventeen hundred or thirty-seven hundred yuan. By the time we got down on the campus a few weeks later, I was amazed to find that it had soared to five thousand to one. It wasn't very long after that it became ten thousand and then twenty thousand to one, and finally that currency disappeared out the window at twelve million to one, after which Chiang Kai-shek started over again and issued a new gin-yuan, gold yuan, and tried to enlist the people's support to hold the line on this. He started this at four to one. The same week my Chinese teacher offered six to one. I said, "No sir. It behooves us Christians, and certainly us foreigners to stand behind Chiang Kai-shek in this attempt to hold the line." I would not take his offer of six to one, until a couple of weeks later it was ten to one, and then twenty to one, and that finally disappeared out the window at millions to one. At one time, the largest piece of paper currency that was in circulation was worth three cents. The very largest denomination. No one bothered to count the bundles of paper money that were tied up in string.

MRS. VAN WYK: Finally there was the period when there was no money that was usable, and so we had a rice account, and whenever we had to pay somebody for what we bought, we just wrote a note saying, "Please give this man so many pounds of rice."

MR. VAN WYK: That's very interesting to see just how a monetary system developed because in the very beginning when the yuan, the
money, lost its value, we actually carried a little bit of rice to the barber shop. I actually carried that. But that became too much monkey business to carry rice wherever you went. Instead I gave the barber a note to go to my rice account and he could get a catty of rice for my haircut. And so the rice merchant became a banker.

MRS. VAN WYK: And then sometimes the rice that the university stored was a little bit smelly, or moldy, and then the people in the neighborhood did not want to receive a chit on that particular month's rice. (laughter)

MR. VAN WYK: And then the next stage was silver dollars. And suddenly all these old Mex. dollars, great big wheels of silver, great big things. There must have been a dozen different kinds of Mexican dollars in circulation: the big face, the little face, the big boat, the little boat, and other figures that were on these Mexican dollars which dated from fifty years before. But they also were of varying values because of the amount of lead or other things which were mixed in with the silver. So you could hear people banging them on tables or on counters to hear whether they rang. Or you would hold them lightly between your fingers and blow on them and then put them to your ear to see if they rang, and thus discover whether or not it was a good dollar or not. After that we actually went into pure gold. And everybody was wearing bands of pure gold around their fingers. It's very flexible; it's bendable, and we had golden bands on our fingers. We had golden chunks hidden behind the piano and above doors, and we had it hidden all over the house, because that was the only
thing that we could use. So we went through various stages.

QUESTION: Do you know if they placed any blame for inflation on either the Nationalists or the Communists?

MR. VAN WYK: The general charge was that just Chiang Kai-shek could not handle the currency, that he was out of control. The situation was out of control and he could do nothing about it; therefore it was time for him to leave.

QUESTION: How was the morale and discipline of the Nationalist soldiers you saw, as compared to the Communist soldiers?

MRS. VAN WYK: The discipline must not have been very good. I remember one period before the turnover when you joined faculty men carrying guns walking around the campus at night because we feared marauding Nationalist soldiers.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. I don't know that our faculty was going to be able to turn back the Communist invasion, but we weren't trying to hold back the revolution. We were only afraid of what these Kuomintang soldiers might be doing as they were fleeing. They had lost all morale, and they became a very dangerous element around. And then you recall that we were finally liberated—we were up on the mountain right behind the university, and the word had come that we should get back to the university as soon as possible. And everybody from the mountain started to go down early, early in the morning, but they very quickly started coming back because they were running into retreating Nationalist soldiers who were shooting wildly in the fog at anything that was moving.
So we waited for two more days and then finally came down when the word was that the coast was clear. We saw the first Communist soldiers. We were scared stiff, and found that they paid no attention to us, came to the campus and found that the Communist soldiers had spent the night there before and everybody was talking about the wonderful discipline of these people. They had paid for every chicken they had taken; they had paid for the rice they had taken; they had cleaned up their mess after themselves. They had been perfect gentlemen, and the school was all agog with this talk of what wonderful, wonderful gentlemen these Communist soldiers were from the north.

QUESTION: What were your first experiences with the Communists?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, you remember coming down, when we finally came down the mountain on this path, and came out onto the road and saw this long line of Communist soldiers. One thing that struck us immediately was that they had horses, which was sort of an unknown thing in our territory. And we thought, will they catch us and line us up against a wall and machine-gun us? They paid no attention to us whatsoever. And as I say, we came back to the campus and found a wonderful report of what gentlemen they were. After that time, in the next year and a half, we had lots of visitors to our house. There was a camp for wounded Communist soldiers just across on the island. And those who were able to walk, one of the things for them to do on a day as recreation was to go over to the university and go visit the foreigners. And what did they want to see?
MRS. VAN WYK: The typewriter, the radio.

MR. VAN WYK: And the piano. Those three things they would like to see, and like to look at our little girls. And we never had any problem whatsoever with them. They were very crude, very uneducated, but they never misused us in any way.

QUESTION: What were your feelings towards them?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, we recognized that they were also capable of great ruthlessness. After we got back to the campus, we often saw ... We had not been involved in the fighting. As a matter of fact, Foochow, a city of a million, a million and a half, had turned over in less than one day, and didn't they say that the total casualty list was seventeen people had been killed. I don't know why that figure sticks in my mind, but it's almost nobody. The city just turned over without any great fight. There was some wild shooting. A few people reported shots coming into their houses, but very few people were injured or anything like that. But after that period, in the next weeks, we saw from the campus the evidences of what they were able to do, they were capable of doing. We lived downriver from the city, between the city and the ocean, and we often saw bodies floating down the river. And one thing that concerned the university, facing on the river there, was hoping that these bodies would float on by and would not become lodged on our bank because then it became the university's business to take these bodies and to bury them and to get involved. So as long as these bodies floated on down it was perfectly all right. And I remember seeing bodies rather
closely and seeing just a bullet hole right through the forehead. So the Communists were disposing of public enemies in the city this way and dumping their bodies off the bridge into the river.

QUESTION: Do you know how the Chinese in Foochow felt about the Communists?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, it was just accepting the inevitable. There was no great resistance movement at all around our area.

QUESTION: Did you come in contact with, or have any knowledge of people with Communist sympathies before 1949?

MR. VAN WYK: I don't recall any open declarations. My own language teacher whom I thought I knew very well, Mr. Wong, immediately after the Communist turnover, he became one of the leaders of the Communist educational process on the campus. What his sympathies had been before that time, I don't know. He certainly never disclosed them to me. I'm not aware of anything.

QUESTION: Did any long-time secretly Communist people show up in your area after the takeover?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, even Mr. Wong, whom I've just referred to, I do not think was a long-time secret Communist. I just think that he put his finger in the wind, saw which way the wind was blowing, and he decided to join them and not resist and make the best of the situation. But I don't think he was a long-time Communist.

QUESTION: What was life like under the Communists?
MR. VAN WYK: Birdie?

MRS. VAN WYK: Well, for the first period, for ourselves, life went on as it always had gone on, with one difference that classes were steadier, and there were no more strikes, and there were very few absences because the Communists said to the students, "Now, it's your job to get to work and to study." So for a while student life was a little bit better under the Communists. But as far as our own personal life was concerned, we were confined to the campus. The Communists told us that it was dangerous for us to travel on the river, and so they refused to give us any travel passes. And for months we were not able to go to the city except illegally.

MR. VAN WYK: But there must have been a period when there must have been some freedom, because I got to the city several times in those early days on sampan on the river, because I'd been on the river in a sampan when planes came over from Formosa and strafed the river. The river passage was not all that bad, but I was always afraid just at the point when we got up to the city and pulled into the docks in these sampans. The dock area was the favorite bombing area for the planes from Formosa, and I was always hoping that no plane would arrive while we were coming into the docks, and as soon as we landed I got away from the dock area as soon as possible. But after that time we didn't get to town. Then there was the time when you came down with the typhus and Birdie was a very, very sick gal, and had to go to the city to the hospital. You better tell about that.

MRS. VAN WYK: Well, I was put on the back of the university truck
and students just kind of sat or stood in front of me so that the police wouldn't see that there was a foreigner sitting in the truck.

MR. VAN WYK: Because there was a police check.

MRS. VAN WYK: Yes. And that way I got safely into the hospital. And we also knew that it might turn out that I wouldn't get back down, because other people who had been ill, or for some reason caught in the city, weren't allowed to go back upcountry.

MR. VAN WYK: I recall that when finally we left, in late November of 1950, we were missing the Methodist bishop, who should have been a member of our group. But he was detained. He wasn't allowed to go with us because in the month before we were to leave he had made a trip without permission out to some churches out of town. And the Communists found this out, and now they were punishing him and didn't allow him to leave when we left. As a matter of fact, he never left. He finally died in the hospital there, and never was able to leave the country. So you had to take this rather seriously. The Communists were not pressing us—they certainly were not persecuting us in any way, but we had to mind our p's and q's.

MRS. VAN WYK: And in their days of teaching the students, they certainly did tell them a lot about foreigners in China, and warned them that we were taking pictures of the poorer parts of the country, and . . .

MR. VAN WYK: Giving China a bad name in that way. But the
general line was that, "We like you Americans. We just don't like America. But you Americans are very nice people. It's just your government that we don't like." And we never found anything aimed at us directly. However ... Well, even at this point we had a number of visits at our house of police and men of the army. Our house sat up rather high on a shoulder there on the campus, overlooking the highway to the ocean, overlooking the river, and across the river was the airport. If ever anybody was situated in a good place for spying, we were. And they used to joke with us: "Come on. Show us your radio. Sitting in a situation like this, you must be in contact with Formosa. You must be telling about the activities here. Where's your radio?" And we did have an old army G.I. radio, which was quite different from Chinese radios. And it absolutely had no capability of sending; it was just a regular general issue army radio. But they used to ask, "Does this thing have a mike? Do you have a sending setup in the attic? How are you communicating?" But it was always done sort of in a bantering way, and never were we really accused of this. No, nothing was ever aimed at us directly. We never were subjected to anything that was bad in any way.

But as we say, once the Seventh Fleet had come in, and once China and America were face to face in Korea, then we became enemy aliens. And then, from that point on the university said to us, "Now you have become more of a problem than a help here on the campus." That was June of 1950, and from that point on we didn't do any teaching, and at that time we began to think about leaving, even though the Amoy Mission said there's no need to leave. Yet the general atmosphere around Foochow was that the
foreigners should start to leave. But none of us got off because the huge concentration of military in Foochow, which was all poised for an assault on Formosa. And there was every evidence—the river was jammed with boats, little fishing boats, and all armed with a machine gun on their prow. Every evidence was that they were about to launch an attack on Formosa. Then the Seventh Fleet came in and so they had to back down, and then all of this huge army concentration had to be moved out of Foochow, across the mountains, over to the railhead, which was the way we also had to leave. And all of us foreigners, many of whom were already packed and had permission to leave, had to wait until they had cleared. And so from June, July, August, September, October, I suppose, the first group got off. Some people who had packed in the middle of the summer and were just wearing light summer clothes, they were still around in October. They had already packed up all of their belongings, and their luggage was already gone. And they were left without clothing, and it got to be pretty, pretty cold. And they also had closed out their work, and the biggest problem was not cold, but boredom. And that became a serious problem for the folks in town. We at the university still had enough to do, not teaching, but things that we could keep entertained with, so that this did not become the big morale problem for us that it became for some others.

QUESTION: How did the presence of the Communists affect your work? Teaching, choir, chapel—did they continue just as before?

MRS. VAN WYK: Chapel continued for quite a while just as before, with the exception that down in the basement there was a group
of students learning Communist songs.

MR. VAN WYK: Folk songs.

MRS. VAN WYK: And they were very gay and happy about their singing, and very loud, so that sometimes you couldn't hear yourself think in the chapel. They did it exactly at chapel hour.

MR. VAN WYK: I felt it was rather worthwhile competition for our worship program. If I had been a student I think I would have been tempted to go downstairs and sing. They seemed to be having a better time than we were having up in chapel, so our chapel service improved markedly.

As a matter of fact, when the Communists first came in, we wondered what they would do to the university. The big surprise was that they came very soon. Within a matter of weeks after the turnover, some big official came down from the city and came to the administration and said, "We want you to continue in operation exactly as you have in the past." And they told the students, "Now, no more monkey business. Thank you for having helped to affect the revolution, but now back to the books. And no more strikes, and no more agitation like you've been carrying on." And so we were surprised. As a matter of fact, in the early days after the revolution, why, we had a much happier campus situation than we had had before, except that we had to make room for hsueh-hsi. There had to be so many hours each day in which students in small groups had to study Communist doctrine and indulge in self-criticism. But we never got involved in those study groups, but we heard a great deal about them from the students.
QUESTION: Were there noticeable changes in local government after the revolution?

MR. VAN WYK: Certainly the Communist revolution went too fast, even for their own sake, that they weren't able to man it. They weren't able to bring up the proper personnel to handle it, and they admitted as much in relation to the university when they asked our own administration to continue. They just didn't have the manpower, the trained manpower, who were able to take over. We saw this up in the city in the days when we were still able to get to the city after the turnover when they decided in their health campaign that everybody needed to be innoculated. And when we would come in at the docks, why, we'd get caught in a roadblock and be innoculated. We'd move down a few blocks from there into the inner city, and get caught in another roadblock, and we would have another innoculation of the same thing, and we'd probably end up the day with having had sometimes as many as three innoculations. And that hurts.

There were a number of ways in which the lack of experience, the lack of education, of the people became very apparent. I think of it in terms of the rules that they made when we were leaving China. Very understandably, the Communists were uneasy about the foreigners ripping off the national treasures of China. I don't know that missionaries had any national treasures, but some of us had a few odds and ends of curios which were of interest. But the Communists were very unhappy about taking things of national value out of the country. But they raided our baggage and lifted things which were not national treasures in
the least, and were for sale right down the street at any of the stores. But if they seemed strange to the policeman who was conducting the baggage search, why, out it went.

We felt this also on our way out of China. We begged them, after we had had our baggage search right down at the university, to seal it so it wouldn't have to be searched again. And so they pasted some paper strips across the baggage. But looking through foreigners' baggage is too much fun to be passed by by the police posts up the line. And in the course of the thirteen days that we were on the road going out of China I wouldn't dare guess how many times we were stopped and had all of our baggage looked through. Isn't that right? They just enjoyed looking at foreigners' possessions. But this is a matter of ignorance. This certainly has nothing to do with Communism, as such. And we were never misused; we were never threatened. We never had any fears for our lives, at all, under the Communists, did we?

QUESTION: How were you treated by the Communist officials?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, we've just spoken about that, and we've talked about how our house, and the campus generally, seemed to have been designated as one of the points of interest for the wounded veterans from across on the island. And we had the military--we had the police come and look us over every so often. I've said that they joked with us about whether or not we had a sending set, but it was always in sort of a joking way. Never were we threatened, and never did this become a serious matter. I don't think we ever were afraid during those days, were we? I can't think of any time when we--The thing that bothered us most, I think, was
the long periods when we had absolutely no mail. But every so often, mail which had been as much as four months on the way would come through and we had a wonderful period of reading all these letters which had accumulated somewhere along the line. So that—red tape—Oh, scads of red tape! But then, America is capable of red tape also. But it was at that level. Bothersome things, but nothing which was really bad in any way. Nothing that I can recall today.

QUESTION: Did you find that your Chinese friends became more wary of spending time with you or being seen with you?

MRS. VAN WYK: Not in the beginning, but towards the end. A group of students came to us one time and said, "Do you know that there is a list of university students who are Christian, or who attend chapel, or who are members of Bible classes? And we're a little bit worried about this list that's going around."

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. But when I think of some of our good Chinese friends, it was we who avoided embarrassing them by asking them questions. And we had lots of other things to talk about. But it seems to me that we made a point of not asking them many questions about their attitude toward the new regime.

MRS. VAN WYK: As a matter of fact, one time when you did talk with David about it . . .

MR. VAN WYK: David Cheng.

MRS. VAN WYK: . . . David Cheng, he became quite angry with you and said, "Well, if that's the way you feel, you'd better leave
China."

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. That was in a moment of pique on his part.

MRS. VAN WYK: Oh, I think it's a result of pressures on David.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. And he's still under great pressures from what we know today. For the most part, we felt that we shouldn't expose them to the problem of answering us in any way. Because all the time, we realized that we could leave, and they could not leave. And therefore our attitudes—naturally, also as foreigners—was different. But the fact was that anytime that we became unhappy we could get up and walk out. And they would have to stay and face the music. And this meant a very different approach to the problem.

The general attitude, I remember—and I've heard this any number of times from them—"Well, we're Chinese. We're much more resilient than you folks are. We bend like the bamboo. We've had revolutions. China's just had revolutions all through its history. But the revolution comes today and it's gone tomorrow. And we'll be back to the same; we'll be back to the old ways very soon. And therefore, there will be an upset in our life for a while, but China will continue on." And that was the general attitude: "We'll weather this storm, so don't worry too much." Of course, other revolutions had never been carried out with that thorough-going efficiency, and other revolutions had not had the military power supporting it such as this had. No other revolution was as ruthless.

We know very little about how they have gotten on under the
new regime. We know that one of our friends who was highly placed on the campus, we've heard this word: "He has changed. You know, that he was never all that he was never all that stalwart in his faith. And he has adapted to the new day and he has risen very high under them. Why, not in the least a believing Communist, but he was a man who knew which way the wind was blowing."

And the other man that we've referred to, David Cheng, a man with a Ph.D. from a university in America, one of the most gifted men, a man who was certainly headed for the presidency of the university, a man with perfect--nearly perfect--English, with a beautiful singing voice, a Christian leader. Was he ordained? I'm not sure whether he was ordained or not, but just a man who in every way was certainly going to be the leader in Christian education in China. The students turned against him while we were still there, and just tore him apart, exposed his whole past, all of his relationships with missionaries, all of his relationships with foreigners, the gifts that he had been given which made possible his years of education in America, and his life back at the university, the occasions when he had differed with students as dean of students—all of those things were plastered on the wallboards while we were there. And he was destroyed as an influence on the campus. Well, we understand that he also became the object of the hatred of the Red guard, and today he's still under a cloud. He is a lowly instructor in a university where his wife, who doesn't begin to have that kind of ability in any way, is head of the department. And David is a lowly instructor under her. And we sometimes dream of getting back to China, but we know very, very well that it would not be good for him for us to
correspond with him or to try and see him in any way. He is still under a cloud. We know of nobody else who has suffered as directly. Well, the wife of another one of the professors committed suicide, we are told, and beyond that we are not very sure of what's become of people.

QUESTION: In your position right across the straits from Taiwan, were you aware of any attempts to take over Taiwan?

MRS. VAN WYK: We were aware of the preparations for it because there were so many sampans that were motorized and hidden along the river.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. It got to the point where they weren't hidden anymore. The river was jammed with these things. Well, we weren't getting any fish. All the fishing boats had been commandeered. And they were equipped with this machine gun up on the prow. And all of these were in our river and in its estuaries and in the backwaters and so forth. There were hundreds--I wouldn't say whether there were thousands, but there were certainly hundreds of those things--and they were all ready for the attack on Formosa when Truman sent in the Seventh Fleet. It took awhile for the Chinese to stomach this. The wallboards all said, "Who's afraid of the paper dragon? We can take on the Seventh Fleet." But I don't know that that would have been a very even fight between sampans and the cruisers, and aircraft carriers, and destroyers, and all the P.T. boats, and everything else the Seventh Fleet had, because that's a hundred miles of very, very, very choppy water, and the soldiers who were going to ride on these little
sampans were backcountry farm boys who hadn't been on boats before. I think they would have been a very, very seasick bunch of people by the time they arrived at Formosa. I don't think they were going to be able to take over the island. But, so it took them awhile to back down.

We were most aware of Formosa in this way. One, our harbor was blockaded by Chiang's ships, and so there was no more shipping in and out of Foochow harbor. This would have been the logical way, of course, for us to leave China, is to go out onto the ocean from Foochow, and then in a coastal steamer go down to Hong Kong. But there was no possibility of our going out of the Foochow harbor because of the blockade out there. And then we had our—what were they, daily? They weren't daily, but they were several times a week—we had our airplane raids from Formosa, which flew right over the house, usually a flight of four. People said that they could see that they were American pilots in the planes. The planes were flying very low. They flew right over the house, and gave Suli a terrible case of nerves. She was able to pick up the vibration of the coming planes long before we ever heard that they were coming, and she would cry out, "The airplanes are coming!" They flew over the house, up to Foochow, and then would bomb Foochow, and then would come down the river strafing the sampans and junks that were on the river, and then another flight would go over.

One time we were up on the hill right behind the university with our Bible class, and this was on October 29, Nancy's first birthday, and we were up there having a picnic in a sort of retreat up there when the planes came over. Weucked down into
old World War II trenches that were still up there on the top of the mountain. These planes went right over our heads, very low. We didn't feel that they were going to attack us. On the other hand, to stand up on the brow of the hill like that, we would have been perfect targets for a little machine gun practice on the part of the pilots in the planes. So it probably was smarter that we ducked down. They flew over our head. We came up out of the trenches and then sat eating our sandwiches and so forth, sitting on the top of the hill, and watched Foochow bombed. And it's not often that you watch a war while you're eating a picnic lunch. And then the planes came down right about our level, down over the river. They dropped a bomb right at the university wharf, and they were machine-gunning the sampans that were on the river, and then pretty soon another wave of four planes came in. We felt very, very close to the war at that time.

So that was the closest connection that we had with Taiwan, and we were aware of the existence of Taiwan through these air raids. At that time there was almost no anti-aircraft fire, although the people who lived in town, the Matthews and the Fairfields, after a while said that right near their compound an anti-aircraft gun emplacement was set up. And that made them very uneasy because that exposed them to even closer bombing.

QUESTION: Did the Korean War have any effect on the way you were treated in Foochow?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, that made all the difference, that in that June when China was about ready, it seemed to us, to attack Formosa, Truman sent in his Seventh Fleet, and it was the same
time that the Chinese crossed the Yalu River—or whether America crossed it first, or who provoked whom to do what, I'm not sure. But from that point on, China and America were at war, and that made us enemy aliens. And that put us in a new category. Up to this point they had always said, "We don't like America, but we like you Americans." But now we had become enemy aliens, and it was about this time, June of 1950, that the Fukien Christian University told us that now we were an embarrassment. Up to this point they had said there was no need for us to leave. But from June on they said, "You'd better consider leaving." Our own mission people down in Amoy were surprised that we were taking this action. They didn't feel it yet down there and said, "Oh, there's no necessity to go." And so they all left rather later. They left a month or two after we did, didn't they? But we in Foochow definitely felt this from June on, and we started to make preparations for leaving.

QUESTION: What finally made you decide to leave China?

MRS. VAN WYK: I suppose the fact that we were expecting another baby. It had something to do with it, didn't it?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes.

MRS. VAN WYK: At first it didn't seem to matter at all. We figured that life was good and we could raise a baby, but . . .

MR. VAN WYK: And we weren't the only ones. Our friends were all expecting, also.

MRS. VAN WYK: But then the foreign doctors began to pull out of
the hospitals, and we didn't relish the fact that there wouldn't be any friendly assistance in medical . . .

MR. VAN WYK: That certainly was a factor, yes. Well, we had received warnings, also, from—oh, but this is back before the revolution when we had warnings from the American embassy, "It's time for you to leave." And we had thought, the first time we ever received a notice from the embassy, we thought that that was marching orders. But all the old China hands laughed and laughed and said, "If we had left everytime the American embassy had warned us to leave, why, there never would have been any mission work in China at all. We've had these so many times. Don't worry. Don't panic. Don't leave just because the American Embassy says that it's time to leave." Well, that was back before the turnover, in the summer of 1949. But as Birdie says, we decided to leave partly for family reasons, and it was because the university said, "You now have become an embarrassment, and it's more difficult for us."

QUESTION: Please describe your exit.

MR. VAN WYK: Well, we put in our application in June, although we weren't the first. There were many city people up in Foochow who had applied earlier than we. We were rather late in the group to finally put in our application. So, as we said earlier, some of the people who applied as early as June to leave, packed up, surrendered all of their freight to the government, and swept out their houses, turned over their jobs to Chinese, had nothing to do, and then were left stranded all of July, August, September,
and up into October. And this became a tremendous problem for them. So we were rather later than that group, and it was finally on, well, it must have been just about Thanksgiving Day in November of 1950 that we finally left. We came down from the house, down to the river. The university had a launch all set for us. And there on the riverbank we had a prayer service.

MRS. VAN WYK: But our big baggage had been taken to Foochow long before that. You had gone in a couple of times with our major pieces, and they'd been gone through, and they had taken out of our luggage certain things that they thought we should not take out of China, but they put them back in our hands and we left them—a vase, or so—with friends on the campus. I mean, we could dispose of them, but we couldn't...

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. Well, I had honestly opened my bags and shown them certain vases and so forth, which by no means were national treasures, but they were rather nice little pieces that we had gotten. And they had said, "No, no," but they didn't confiscate them. They gave it back and we brought it back to the campus, and as Birdie says, gave it to somebody else. So that was gone. I don't know how—was that October, maybe?

MRS. VAN WYK: Perhaps so. And also you had had to write a letter in English and in Chinese, stating why we wanted to leave China. About this time, instead of pushing us out, they wanted us to tell them why we felt we had to go.

MR. VAN WYK: I might just insert here that—no, this is not irrelevant. We've just had guests, Bob and Morrie Swart, who
just have had to leave Ethiopia. But they were telling how the Ethiopian authorities asked them time and again, "We have not forced you out, have we? Why are you leaving? We have not made you leave, have we?" "No, you have not made us leave." In their case it was the case that they no longer had the support of the Mission Aviation Fellowship, and therefore were stranded and pretty much had to leave. But this is very much the same thing. The Communists did not want us to be able to blame them that they had forced us out of the country—that we were leaving of our own free will, and that we could not charge them with having forced us out of the country. And we had to put this in writing. We had to get rid of our cottage up on the mountain. We will that over to the university. And we had had to dispose of some of our other goods this way. So that was all taken care of. So there on the riverbank the university had a launch, and we were all set to go up the river.

MRS. VAN WYK: We had our cook and his family with us, and they had a couple of bamboo baskets of their own possessions, and we had with us the two children and some small suitcases. And the river police had watched you coming and going many times to town and had not bothered you, but this particular day they insisted that they wanted to do a check on the baggage.

MR. VAN WYK: At which point the university president protested very, very vociferously and said, "This is very foolish. You know who these people are, and we can vouch for who these people are, and they have absolutely nothing that is of any value. They're not sneaking anything out of the country." But the river
police insisted on--or did the university?

MRS. VAN WYK: No, they went through a couple of . . .

MR. VAN WYK: No, I think they chose some of our pieces. Then there were prayers and some hymns there on the riverbank, and then we took the launch up to town. And then we had Thanksgiving dinner up with some of the missionaries.

MRS. VAN WYK: On the American Board compound.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. With the Alden Matthews family. We had Thanksgiving dinner. Then the next day we went over to the river and got on a riverboat, and that was a twenty-four-hour trip on the riverboat up to Nan P'ing? Oh, no. That was two days. Two nights. And there were seventeen people in our group--fifteen adults and our two little girls.

MRS. VAN WYK: We occupied a sort of a shelf towards the back of the river-launch, and the whole body of the boat was covered with sleeping bodies, so you literally could not put a foot down or walk anywhere, or get anywhere.

MR. VAN WYK: Then maybe we shouldn't put on the tape, but Julie knows the story of--Suli was how old? Suli was four and a half. And Nancy was two, and we had the potty. And the body of this river-launch was so packed with people that we weren't able to get out to the stern to the very primitive facilities. So under the cover of our blankets, and so forth, we passed the potty up and down amongst the seventeen, and passed it to the end man who dumped it overboard. And so we made our passage up to Nan P'ing.
Two nights. Nan P'ing overnight, and then we got on trucks.

MRS. VAN WYK: We had a very comfortable inn to stay in in Nan P'ing. I remember there were beautiful silk coverings on the blankets that we used.

MR. VAN WYK: We were in the hands of a travel agent, Mr. Chin, Mr. Gold. And the next day he provided these two trucks. One truck was just filled with our freight, all the baggage of the seventeen people. And the other truck had saw horses with planks, and a canvas covering over the back of the truck so that we couldn't see out. But there was this foot-square window looking into the cab and then the back of the truck you could see out. We were told that we were driving through some of the world's most beautiful scenery, but we didn't see all that much. There was lots of rain, and it had been raining, and all the military had moved out of Foochow over that same road in the previous months. The road had been chawed to pieces, and we spent most of the time trying to make our way up this mountain on this muddy, muddy road. All I can remember is mud, mud, mud. And we sat in the back of this truck, taking care of a few people who were seasick, telling stories, and trying to entertain the two little girls.

And finally then putting in at a kind of a truck stop, a very, very primitive inn at night, opening up, if possible, only one suitcase for us, and pulling out some oiled paper to lay on the wooden shelves, the bunks, and then spreading D.D.T. around under them, and then the oiled paper. But Birdie couldn't stand the oiled paper, so just lay down in the filth without benefit of the oiled paper. But I don't know that it was doing any good
anyhow, with mice running around the room, and it was pretty, pretty filthy.

In the morning having to get the little gals cleaned up and so forth, and get their hair braided. Why didn't we braid their hair while on the truck? It seems to me that the truck always had to wait while we were still braiding hair. We had the whole day to braid their hair. I don't know why we held up the truck to braid it. But that's one of my memories. (laughter) And the little girls eating only eggs and eggs in these primitive places where we had to eat. That was the one thing which they seemed to like. Three days in this truck. Finally over the top and down to the railhead to Shangjao--S-H-A-N-G-J-A-O--Shangjao, where we were to catch the train coming from Shanghai to Nan P'ing, and then which runs down to Canton. And there we put up with, or the women and children were entertained in the home of an independent . . .

MRS. VAN WYK: We were put up in an inn with mud floors, one of the dirtiest we'd ever stayed in, and the first day we were there we were invited by a missionary family to go with the kiddies and spend a day in their home. And it was a wonderful day to get out of that filthy . . .

MR. VAN WYK: But we men didn't go there. We worked on the baggage, and getting it cleared with the police.

MRS. VAN WYK: You must have been working on baggage. But the two little girls who had had nothing but soft-boiled eggs the whole trip were so thrilled to be in someone's home that I remember them reaching for vegetables, and a friend laughing and saying, "Well,
you don't have to worry about children. They know what they've been lacking, and what they need to eat."

MR. VAN WYK: Well, the next day at noon the train was to come in, and now we were looking forward to luxury because we had reservations on this train. So we had everything all lined up on the station platform for the seventeen of us, and the train was more or less coming around the band when the police decided it was time for one more baggage inspection. And it was in my bags that they discovered that I had both books and clothing mixed together. And that's a no-no. And when they discovered that, they found out that others were also guilty of this, and they declared that this was impossible to have books and clothing in the same suitcases. The train came in; the train went out, with our reserved seats empty. And we stayed on the platform and had to completely repack, and stayed one more night.

MRS. VAN WYK: By then the rain had been falling, and the streets of the town were muddy, filthy, slippery-slidey. The only way we could keep the children from being dirty was to keep them up on the beds.

MR. VAN WYK: I remember spending part of that day struggling with the zipper on my big canvas bag which had become very rusty. There had been so much rain, it seems to me that this bag had been exposed on the freight truck, and was all soggy and messy and the zipper got off the trolley, and we had a terrible time. I should say that during those three days on the truck trip we had been stopped time and again at police posts, and even though
our stuff was sealed and shown that it had been inspected, these isolated police posts had to have something for recreation, and what's more fun than to go through foreigners' baggage. Usually they didn't ask to see everything, but they just spot-checked and would take three or four pieces. But inevitably it was the Van Wyk's stuff that they chose. And our stuff got lots of exposure that way.

Well, we finally were ready with our freight to catch the train the next day, but now we didn't have reservations. And we then traveled on this train for forty-eight hours, sitting up, bolt upright, in straight seats, in not a too uncomfortable car, but it was not a car with bunks—we didn't have berths. We talked to the conductor and pointed to Birdie, and said she'd seven months pregnant, and her stomach is big, and she is sick, and could she have a berth. And he says, "I'm sorry. I'll put her name down, but there are others ahead of her." He said, "There was another time when you foreigners could have spoken to me quietly and made a little gift to me, and I would have seen that she had a berth. But this is the new day. This is the day of the revolution, and the day of new China, and she is in a certain position in the line-up for berths, and that's exactly where she is. And I'm taking no gifts, and you're not getting any consideration even though her stomach is big."

And so we sat up for forty-eight hours with the Overholts. We had facing seats, upright seats, Birdie and I on one side. Somebody gave you a sleeping bag, and you sat upright in the sleeping bag. We had Suli with us on the seat, and Nancy we had on this six-inch wide little table that extended from the window
out toward the aisle on which they put tea cups. And we tried to
balance Nancy on that, which was really quite difficult. We had
to stay awake, therefore. I don't recall sleeping at all in that
forty-eight hours, but it's probable that I did. But I was coming
down with a strep throat, and you were sick, and we both had fevers
going. And it was a rather long trip.

We were surprised to find on the train the number of Chinese
who were fleeing from Shanghai and who were making no bones about—
who weren't trying to hide at all—their wealth. And they were
ostentatiously spreading their money around. Some of the business-
men with girlfriends. And we were just amazed that that kind of
person was still around in China, and that he dared to act as
unrevolutionary and as unadaptable to the new day as some of them
did.

Anyhow, we did not get a berth. We sat up for forty-eight
hours. It was a gruesome trip, but finally we got into Canton
where we looked forward to the fact that we had a reservation in
a hotel. Where were we? Up on about the third floor?

MRS. VAN WYK: I think so.

MR. VAN WYK: In New China Hotel.

MRS. VAN WYK: And we were all looking forward to changing our
clothes because we just hadn't changed things for several days.
We'd just been living in our . . .

MR. VAN WYK: Several days? For nearly two weeks we had lived in
our clothes.
MRS. VAN WYK: So we wanted a bath so badly, and then we had no towels in the luggage we had. So you went out in the street to get us some towels, and then we put the water in the tub. We could only pull about an inch, as I remember.

MR. VAN WYK: There was no water pressure.

MRS. VAN WYK: It just wasn't very much of a bath.

MR. VAN WYK: But then that night went, and the next morning we were all called to the police headquarters again for a baggage check, naturally, and for final checking of documents. Birdie decided that this was just absolutely beyond what she could do, so I went alone to represent the family. The police were quite unhappy that my wife and children hadn't come. And I explained that her stomach was big, and very soon, Birdie had a caller. A policeman came to check whether her stomach was actually that big and whether she was pregnant, and finally she was excused.

So we had another baggage check, and then another night--two nights probably--in the hotel, and then the next day off to the railroad bridge, which is the cross point over into Hong Kong. We were amused because one person with us had told us all kinds of stories on the truck about the way he always forgets his keys, and that's exactly what happened that day. He arrived out there at the final check point, just before crossing into Hong Kong, found he had forgotten all his keys, and so all of his suitcases and his boxes with all this music and records and everything else were just violently broken open because he didn't have the keys along.
MRS. VAN WYK: That's the day that they wanted to pick apart the motor of our sewing machine, and you said (laughter) . . .

MR. VAN WYK: Oh, yes. And they wanted to open one of our tin cans. We had tin cans of what?

MRS. VAN WYK: Sardines or something.

MR. VAN WYK: Of sardines. And they wanted to see inside to see whether we were smuggling anything inside. And I said, "If you open the sardines, it's yours. We're not carrying open cans of sardines in our luggage." Then we wondered where Sue and Nancy were during this check. This was in this canvas checking area—dusty, filthy, dirty—and we found that the kiddies were off in the arms of our travel agent, and he had some friends, and they were being fed candy which was bought in open booths, something that we had never done in all our time in China. But the kiddies never came down with anything serious after eating like that. So maybe all of our carefulness over the years had been useless.

So finally we were cleared. Then we had to walk across the railway bridge. And Mr. Chin, our travel agent, suddenly came up with these several friends who wanted to carry our luggage, and carry the girls, and carry anything else, and to assist us. And so we became quite a party. And when we crossed over into the Hong Kong side, it made walking easier, having all these men carrying our luggage. But the Hong Kong police were very unhappy. They said, "You see what you're doing. You're helping all these people get into Hong Kong without proper documents by calling them part of your party."
Well, we got into Hong Kong, and immediately there at the train station, we were now in free country. First of all, we all had Coca Colas all around, because one thing we had was money. We didn't have some other things, but we did have money. We bought Coca Colas . . .

MRS. VAN WYK: And had our shoes shined. They were filthy with mud.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. With thirteen days of mud caked on our shoes, we had shoeshines. We really lived it up, and then finally got on this train and went down into Hong Kong, and went to the church guest house of the Church Missionary Society, the Anglican Church, came into the arms of our good friends who had left earlier, the Wilkinsons, the Anglicans who had lived below us, and we stayed in Hong Kong . . . .This was what? This was near the end of the year. Wait a second. This was just before Christmas, because finally we spent Christmas and New Year's on the Wilson going to America, and we arrived in San Francisco maybe the third or fourth of January of 1951. And I guess that's about it.

QUESTION: What do you feel were the primary objectives of the R.C.A. mission in China? To what extent were they met?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, certainly evangelism, but I might say that in the whole church in China, and by the time we got there there was this united church, the Chung Hua Chi-tu-chiao Hui, the National Church of China. I think all of China recognized that the Amoy Synod was the strongest of all the synods in all China, and this was not only due to the work of the Reformed Church, but it was
also that they cooperated there in that area with the L.M.S.--the London Missionary Society--which is the Congregational Church of England, and the English Presbyterians were the other group. But it's not just a case of good missions, and I think it was, and good theology, and I think it was, but it was also that the Amoy people are a very special people. They've always been oriented toward the outside world. The Amoy people are known to be much more outgoing than, s our Foochow people where we were. Our people were boorish, and not nearly so sophisticated as the Amoy people were. The Amoy people are known for their outward-looking, their outgoing attitudes. And we recognized that on our campus at Fukien Christian University. The Amoy people were the natural leaders on the campus. And certainly our church and these two English missions were placed in one of the best--providentially led to work in one of the best--places in all China, the most responsive.

I remember when I was down there for a mission meeting, walking in Kulangsu, which is an international settlement, but walking along the street on a Sunday and wondering if I were in Holland, Michigan: hearing hymns being played on pianos inside the homes, and hearing church bells, and watching the people all going to church. And it was just a very different thing from anything we had experienced up in Foochow, or anything that we see in Tokyo nowadays. So it was a very, very strong church there.

QUESTION: Do you feel that there were any steps the missionary movement might have taken to help create a more indigenous movement or to minimize the association of Christianity with the
Westerners?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, without mentioning names, certainly within our own mission group there were those who had become very, very close to the Chinese. They hadn't gone native, by any means, but they had a genuine, rich relationship with Chinese pastors—an easy relationship from all that we were able to see. Now, my experience with the church in Amoy is very limited, but after one of the mission meeting when we flew down as a family, Birdie stayed with Mrs. Veenschoten in Changchow with the little girls, and I went with Dr. Angus, and Mr. DeVelder, and an Angus boy, and maybe Mr. Koeppe—I'm not sure who all. I went on a rather extended trip, a week or more upcountry, and we went from church to church, and at least to my uneducated eye, I was very proud of the relationship, the what seemed like genuine fellowship existing between the missionaries and the pastors. That was a strong church, and the pastors had a very self-confident attitude in relation to the missionaries. I'm not very unhappy about what I saw there. I know some others, in other places, but I think it wouldn't be proper for me to say anything about them here.

QUESTION: What are your feelings about the cultural trappings of Christianity? Can it be successfully adapted by another culture?

MR. VAN WYK: Cultural trappings. We argue this, and we continue to discuss this in Japan. The gospel is not just a theory. The incarnation stands at the heart of the gospel. It always comes incarnated in some way or other it comes in living people, and
these living people are products of certain culture and of certain age, and of certain education, and of certain background, and they can't help but show it. Any attempt of a foreigner to become something else, to go native, always seems to us a rather artificial and foolish thing, because you can't fool it. Just because you sleep on tatami, or wear geta, you are not becoming Japanese, and the same is true of China. But to demand that every expression of the Christian gospel be done the way it's done at home is certainly a wrong thing. Now, this is always going to be a matter of tension. What are the true essentials of the gospel, and what are the trappings—what's the form in which it's packaged. It will always come in a package, and just because people sit on the floor, or because they use chopsticks, or because they sing a hymn with one of their own melodies does not mean that it's going to become any more native, it seems to us.

As a matter of fact, it was the foreigners who kept wanting to sing hymns in the Chinese melodies, and the foreigners chose the Chinese melodies much more often than the Chinese did. For them, they said, "Well, you folks like these melodies, but you don't know that in our minds they remind us of pagan worship, and we're not nearly as happy with those melodies as you are." Yes. I don't know what could have been done very differently, except that the foreigners have to be much more ready to surrender control and not insist that it be done the way it's done back home. But they are placed in a position of leadership. They do not have the cultural heritage, historical heritage, and first generation Christians cannot be expected to supply that leadership immediately. And they look to the foreigner for that leadership, but
the foreigner has to be very ready to surrender it to native leadership.

QUESTION: Did your experience in China prompt you to do things differently in Japan?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, we were full of lessons learned in China, and came into Japan and proceeded, not too humbly and not too tactfully, to tell everybody here in Japan about the lessons we had learned in China because we were amazed at some of the things going on in Japan on the part of the missionaries, and we kept asking, "Haven't you heard what happened in China? And how come you're still doing these things?" Well, that was the quickest way for us to become obnoxious, and we soon learned to keep our mouths closed about lessons we had learned in China. Japan is a very different place. The people have a very different educational level than the people that we faced in China. And surely, some of the things we learned in China prompted us to do things--I think that we were much more ready to listen to the Japanese than we were, probably, in our early days in China. Also we were a bit older. But the fact is that we fit into a situation at the university like Meiji Gakuin which now has a hundred-year history, where it's been in the hands of the Japanese administration since the second president, and we weren't tempted to take over. We did think, when we first came, I remember, that you just probably would walk in and probably become choir director, and that I probably would take over the band. We soon found that they had a choir director who was a nationally famous Bach man, a Japanese, and that Birdie was not going to take over the choir.
And I certainly was not going to take over the band because they had a director from one of the philharmonic symphony orchestras downtown doing that. And we found a very different situation in Tokyo than we found in China.

QUESTION: If you were to do it all over again, would you do things differently, or would you have the mission do things differently?

MR. VAN WYK: What would you have changed, honey?

MRS. VAN WYK: You mean about what we personally did?

MR. VAN WYK: Yes, or that anybody would have done.

MRS. VAN WYK: Well, we were just beginners in China. Our four years there were years of learning. I don't know that we could have changed the number of times we stubbed our toes. We had to stub toes in order to learn. (laughter)

MR. VAN WYK: Yes. If anything should have been changed, we should have gone over there twenty years older than we were, except that we wouldn't have been as flexible. As we look back now, we were terribly immature.

MRS. VAN WYK: But we were open, and eager, and ready for things to be different in a way that I probably wouldn't be now.

MR. VAN WYK: Yes, I don't have all that many regrets. I just thing I did probably a very bad job of teaching, and certainly my approach to teaching of language—when I think now! (laughter) We weren't called on much in direct language, conversational English. I don't think I taught a conversational English class.
Because I think of the horrible job I did with the cook's children. I had no conception of how to teach oral English. I've learned a great deal that way.

But I don't know what the mission could have done differently, except to be just much more open and responsive. But those were days when--I view the revolution there as inevitable. Chiang Kai-shek had lost. There was no possibility of shoring him up and of stopping the revolution. And we were there at that particular time, and I don't know what could have been done in a very different way.

QUESTION: Would you like to see a renewal of the missionary movement in China?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, certainly we would not say no. Of course we would, if we were invited. But I don't think that invitation's going to come for quite a while. We oppose those who say, "We'll get in by hook or by crook, and we'll see if we can't undo the revolution." That revolution cannot be undone. That revolution has changed the hearts and minds of men—certainly at the political level, at the economic level, at the cultural level. This does not mean there's no room for the gospel there. But there is a new attitude toward foreigners. Missions cannot be carried out as a cultural invasion. The Chinese are far more sophisticated than they were. It is not a weak government. I cannot predict on what basis China will once again be open to the gospel.

QUESTION: What are your feelings about Christians in China today?

MR. VAN WYK: I think the greatest problem for the Christians--
every testimony is that people are allowed to be Christian, although under great difficulty. But they are not killed for being Christian and are not outright persecuted for being Christian. But what bothers me most is the terrible loss of Christian community, that Christians don't dare gather together and share. Everybody is suspicious of everybody. A number of reports of lone Christians, but nowhere is there any talk of Christian fellowship. And what we do hear is the fact that Christians who are aware of other Christian leaders other places in the country are people who were Christian leaders, but who don't dare communicate with them and share. And so they sit all by themselves, maintaining their Christian faith, but absolutely out of contact with each other there, and out of contact with Christians in the rest of the world. And I gather that they feel that the rest of the Christian community in the world has pretty much crossed them off. And the Christians in America, at least, have washed their hands of the Christians in China, and that's a terrible thing.

QUESTION: Can Christianity and communism exist side by side?

MR. VAN WYK: Communism as an economic system, or communism as a totalitarian state? The totalitarian state is very afraid of Christianity—men who live under God before they live under the government, who place God above government. Communism as an economic system would not seem to be absolutely inimical to Christianity; in fact it seems to me that it's a very real possibility. But usually when people talk about communism, they're talking about the governmental system rather than about the economic system.
QUESTION: In retrospect, what kind of an effect do you think mission work and the missionaries' presence had on China?

MR. VAN WYK: Well, I think among other thing, the missionaries, the Christian gospel—in fact, the whole contact with the West—was such as to bring into China which was always called the Sleeping Dragon, it brought about the revolutionary mind. I think that China has the West and certainly has the Christian church to thank for the revolution. The missionaries created the kind of thinking that brought about a dissatisfaction with the old imperial system. It was the effect of missions that brought about Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement which died only because of the war and it disruptions, and it created an expectancy on the part of the Chinese that made them unwilling to live under the corruption of Chiang Kai-shek, and made them look forward to the coming of the new order. They got something different than they expected.

I think back to the Chinese professors talking about the way in which they would just bend like bamboos, and that they would not defeat the revolution; they would just swallow it, and after a few years they would come back normal. That is not going to happen in any way. It's a much more thorough-going revolution than they ever had guessed. It's not going to disappear. Yet it's very apparent that China already is working that revolution in its own way as over against the Russian way. And now with the defeat of the gang of four, the influence of Chou En-lai and the moderates is taking the upper hand, and I think that after another ten, fifteen, years we may see that the revolution has become far less revolutionary, at least far less shrill, in the way in
which it's carried on, and that we may in the long run thank God for the changes that have taken place in China. And China may once again be open to the outside world, and when they are open to the outside world, as they already are, then conditions may be influenced in such a way that even missionaries may be tolerated there, and even perhaps invited in the long run. But that's not in the near future, by any means. And that's as much as I can see on this page.

Now, after a night of sleeping on this, we do have one or two second thoughts. Not anything which affects what we have said, but something to amplify and that has to do with the second page regarding the turnover, the coming of the Communists. A number of the questions seem to be asking about the way in which the Communists came—was it prepared by advance agents; were there undercover agents; was there a great deal of activity below the surface undermining the morale of the Kuomintang and the Chinese people. It was at this point that I'd say that we younger missionaries had quite a difference of opinion with the older missionaries. The older missionaries had what we called the devil theory—the naughty Communists, the naughty people who were bringing in the revolution, and that if you could find who the naughty people were, and disarm them and expose them, why, then we perhaps could delay or we could postpone, or maybe indefinitely delay the coming of the Communists. I think this is pure foolishness. As we've pointed out all along through here, the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek, had completely lost his Mandate of Heaven. There was no support—absolutely zero support for him. There was a lack of eagerness for the coming of the Communists.
I knew very few people who were eager, welcomed their coming, looking forward to it, aiding and abetting their coming. That was not the mood, but the sense of the inevitability of the thing just pervaded everything. Everybody knew that this had to come. It was just a question of when it would come. And it was not a case of a few people who were Communist agents who were undermining the government. The government had gone, had lost all hold, all control, all ability to handle the situation, and it was just a question of how soon the Communists would arrive from the north and take over. It was not a question of whether they would come, but it was a question of how soon.

In fact, that brings up an interesting little side light. It must have been June of 1949. We were already up on the mountain, I guess, or at least during that summer I remember being up in our cottage and hearing gunfire out in the distance, and discussing with our friends, "I wonder how close they are?" This was sporadic firing around within earshot. And we knew that it was just a question of a very short time. As a matter of fact, it didn't come for another two months. But at the time we were so prepared to hear about it that it was reported, we're told, in the New York Times. In fact the story comes about this way. My parents were at General Synod, which must have been June of 1949, I think at Buckhill Falls, and one morning the news came in through the New York Times that Foochow had fallen, June of 1949. And I gather that General Synod stopped for prayer, and people comiserated with my parents about your children having now befallen into the hands of the Communists. Well, we're not surprised that the people in New York heard that Foochow had fallen, because we at
the university, one hour out, also heard that Foochow had fallen. And it took us a couple of days to find out that Foochow had not fallen, and didn't fall, as a matter of fact, for another two months. That's the way the rumors flew. So we reject the devil theory. This is not to say that there weren't advance agents, that there were not those who were definitely favoring the revolution and helping to set the stage for it. Birdie has referred to one student, and we know that there were others who were the object of police raids on the university dormitories at night. But exactly what the charges were, and exactly what the nature of their activities were, we are not sure at all. Yes, we mustn't be naive about that. There were those who were aiding and abetting it. But this was not very evident to us, and was not the main part of our memory. Our memory is of the inevitability of the revolution, and so we reject this looking for the scapegoat, and the naughty people who brought in the Communists. We reject that completely.
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