

Seventh Conversation with Professor Wang

Toronto, January 10, 1992

RM: This is our seventh conversation. It is January 10, 1992. Shall we start with these questions?

TY: Your first question is not difficult to answer. My life during 1931-37 was very easy. Easy in the sense that I had no demands made on me other than reading and working in the library. In the mornings, I would work in the classroom and the library and in the afternoons, I would participate in physical exercise - in gymnastics.

RM: This was at Qinghua. Between 1931 and 1937?

TY: Yes. After graduating in 1933, I went to graduate school for three years. After that, I passed the examinations to go abroad and was required to stay in China for one more year. So that makes the years 1931 to 1937.

RM: What were the living conditions like? Were you living in a dormitory?

TY: Living conditions were excellent! I was living in a dormitory with two people per room. As a graduate student especially, we had very good facilities to live in and very good meals - which were not expensive! I would spend no more than \$25 Chinese dollars for meals each month. After graduation from the university, I got a fellowship award of \$300 for my graduate years. Three hundred dollars in 1933 was quite an amount and was sufficient for my needs.

RM: What was going on in the city at the time and what was the general social and cultural life?

TY: The people at university were called 'people in the ivory tower' because university life was isolated from the general conditions in the city. At that time, the city's condition was not so good. People were poor. The government had moved to Nanqing; it was no longer in Beijing. So there were not many jobs available for common people. As a result some people

were very poor and did not have a lot of prospects at that time. That was normal. The only threat to the life of the people in Beijing at that time was the Japanese aggression from 1931. There was the Mukdeu Incident. Then in 1935, the Japanese threatened to come to Beijing. Of course, in 1937 war broke between Japan and China, starting from the [ northeast/southeast? ] and then moving north. The people in Beijing were nervous about that.

RM: Was there any conscription?

TY: No. There was no conscription. Only students who wanted to have military training themselves got involved in it. I remember the first time I came to Qinghua University, I participated in some military training. We suspended classes for three weeks so everyone could participate in some very elementary military training, but the university advised us not to do that because classes were considered most important for the students. The training was not required by the government, so we stopped it and resumed classes. Fortunately for me we had very good professors in the department - very well-known and very conscientious teachers. I got much benefit from the classes. Also, the library was excellent. I was able to find any book I needed for my thesis and my classwork. We were also able to order any book we required. The library would even buy books from outside the country! Even a student could make book requests that the library would have to go to the United States or even Germany to acquire. It was wonderful and one element that was most beneficial to my academic life. We also had foreign scholars coming to teach. There were, of course, only small numbers of them. We had [ Verbeck ? ] and also Quincy Wright during that period.

RM: What was life like in Chungqing from 1942 to 1946?

TY: I have to say something first. It's true I was in Chungqing from 1942 to 1946, but before that from 1940 to 1942, I was in Wuhan University in Sichuan Province in a very small town. Those years include my whole life during the war. Both in Sichuan, in [ Ja Ding ] where Wuhan University is

located and also in Chungqing University in Chungqing, people were very poor. It was a very hard life for us. We lived in a very poor dormitory.

RM: How many people shared a room?

TY: Well, it was one person per room, but that was because we were professors! The students had a different arrangement. Our dormitory was like a military barrack. I was married to Cai at that time and she worked downtown at the bank, but we stayed together at the university in one very small room. We had three meals a day, but they were very poor. We had what was called 'war-time rice'. It was a very rough rice. It was very seldom we had the occasion of having meat. It made our life very difficult, especially since we were just married. Cai also became pregnant with our first child there. The family buildings were very [ heavy ? ]. So I began to write articles in order to earn royalties from publications. The only royalty which ended up being a large amount (it was considered a large amount at that time) was when I wrote a bulletin - a monograph - on the status of aliens in China which was published in the United States in English. For the publication of that monograph, I received \$500. That gave us enough to have the first baby.

Between Central University and Chungqing University there was quite a difference. Central University is a National University. Chungqing University was a municipal university. Chungqing concentrated mainly on their business school. I taught there because I had no money; it gave me extra teaching hours, so I was making a few extra dollars. I taught there for about 1½ years concurrently.

RM: In the business school?

TY: Yes. I taught International Law and some Contract Law for business school.

RM: Next question: the student movements.

TY: These movements were called 'democratic movements', in the sense that the movements were against the government - not openly, but their thrust was really against the government. The government said that the movements were directed by the Communist Parties. They said that there were disguised Party Members going to university to assist in the organisation of the movements. They were disguised because they would have been arrested if they openly declared their status. In 1946 the student movement at Peking University in Beijing was growing more energetic and more forceful. The first time I came to Peking University, there was a movement against the United States. Do you know there was a case that occurred that year of a Chinese woman student was raped by an American soldier? That was the pretext for the students to raise the movement against the United States as a matter of protest against the Kuomintang government. People thought the Kuomintang government was supported by the United States, so this large movement existed when I first came to Peking University. Afterwards, there was another large movement against the Kuomintang under slogans of 'anti-hunger' movement.

RM: Would these movements be all over Beijing or just at Peking University or with all the young people in the city?

TY: They would be mostly students of the several universities in Beijing. Of course, the Peking University students were the forefront.

RM: They always have been haven't they?

TY: Yes. Another movement was the 'anti-civil war' movement. The students were against the government's pursuit of civil war. When we finally came to 1948, there were not many movements left. The government suppression on the streets was much more strict. Also, most of the leaders of the movements went to liberated areas to join the Liberation Army or to join the Communist Party. At that time, I also had the intention to go to the Liberation Army and join the Liberation Movement. I wanted to take my family to a liberated area and be where there was a liberated government. Unfortunately, we had just had our second child and we couldn't travel.

RM: In general, were there many students left at the universities at that time?

TY: Not many; the most prominent students, for instance, Madame Ma, had departed. As soon as I saw she was no longer in my class, I understood that she had left to go to a liberated area.

RM: So the most prominent students left. There remained only a small number of students?

TY: The number of students remained close to the same number, but it was the prominent students that were missing. At Peking University, for instance, about 30-50 students left. This did not make much difference in the number of students at the university overall. Some good students did remain to continue the work [ for the Liberation Movement? ] - like Ambassador [ Tshe ? ]. He stayed at the university and although he was not yet a Communist Party Member, he continued to be very active in the underground.

RM: Now question no. 4. What was the blacklist?

TY: The blacklist was prepared by the Kuomintang government with names of people who could be arrested or murdered or attacked or tortured. It was a list of people to which the Kuomintang would do something.

RM: And were you on this list?

TY: Yes. Before Liberation, our dormitories were protected by the students. So all the students surrounded and guarded the gates to our dormitories. They would warn us when a suspicious person approached. We felt somewhat safe in our dormitories because of their protection and concern. Of course, the Kuomintang government would not take any public action, so they would try to take secret steps. The students guarded us and gave us warnings when people came. Later on, they also warned us that it was not safe to go out at all. During the last days of the Kuomintang regime, we

stayed home for almost a whole month - never going out.

RM: Was it not safe on the streets?

TY: No.

RM: Now. Question no. 5.

TY: My situation between 1973 to 1977. Well, I was in a peculiar position, because I hadn't been released by the condemnation. I was sent to work in a factory office. I was not able to give lectures or to have any contact with the students, but I could do material work. I did a lot of research during that time and collected materials. Even under such conditions, I managed to do a lot of work. I wrote some background papers for the Third United Nations Law of the Sea Conference. It wasn't published under my name, but anonymously. It was in the internal papers used for the Conference; it was not available for the public. I also wrote articles concerning claims agreements. At that time, the People's Republic of China and the United States were negotiating claims agreements. I wrote a lot of articles on that subject [ during those years ? ].

RM: That's important, TY. I didn't realize you had written on claims agreements.

TY: They were not strictly academic articles, but a collection of materials [ that were being / that I ? ] assembled during the period between the second world war up to that time. Also I did some translations and commentaries on the two Protocols of the Geneva Convention. I had collected a lot of materials in English which I translated into Chinese and then made comments - article by article. That involved a lot of work, which I did by myself. I also completed the translation of the new edition of Oppenheim.

RM: Did you have any social life during those years?

TY: Not much. There were family activities - like any time - with my family and my wife's relatives. We didn't have social activities with our colleagues or students.

RM: That must have been very isolating. Very lonely.

TY: Yes. In 1973 we had only one unit of housing. Usually the faculty encompassed two units, but during the Cultural Revolution, we were confined to one unit of housing. During the first two years, we were confined to one room of one unit.

RM: In the unit that I saw?

TY: We were very crowded, and it was not a very busy life at that time.

RM: Very cramped and very difficult.

RM: The last question for today: when was Institute of International Law started? Was it 1983?

TY: Yes.

RM: Now, a different subject. I would like to go back to your earliest memories. As early as possible, and the things that made the biggest impression on you.

TY: I think the earliest thing I remember was that I was confined in a room. My father employed a teacher, to teach young children. It was a private school which I attended from 5 years old onwards.

RM: How many members of your family were there?

TY: A great number. We were more than ten. I have all older brothers and sisters. I was the tenth. The youngest one. Of course, some of my brothers and sisters died before I grew up.

RM: So it was a large family, with ten children. Your early memories are of your father teaching class?

TY: Not himself. He employed the teacher to give instruction in this room, which was called a school - a private school - which only included my brothers and sisters.

RM: So it was private tutoring for you and your family.

TY: Yes. A private tutor. It was very hard for young children, because we had to go that room from early morning until late in the night.

RM: Did you take lunch there?

TY: No. We took lunch with my family and after lunch, we would go back to the room. The teacher would take his own lunch which was supplied by my family.

RM: So it was a rigorous routine.

TY: The lessons given by the teacher were very hard. It was the teacher's theory that from a very young age, children should recite the most difficult texts.

RM: Of Confucious and - ?

TY: Even more difficult than that. We called it...I can't remember what it was called, but it was very hard and I didn't understand it at all! The teacher said that was good and said just keep reciting it. That was the method then.

RM: So you had to memorize.

TY: We had to memorize and repeat all things that were given to us by the teacher. We had to practice calligraphy in the afternoons and write short



essays and short poems. It was full-time. The only rest we had was on Sundays.

RM: Did this go all year? Summer too?

TY: Except the Spring Festival and other festivals sometimes when the teacher would go back to his own home.

RM: This was right in your village or city, was it?

TY: Not the city. You know that my father was an official of Foreign Affairs. He had a large building of which the first floor was offices. The second floor was where we lived. There were many rooms - about 5 or 6 rooms.

RM: How long did your father's tutoring arrangement go on before you went to school?

TY: My father [ was relieved from the post or relinquished his post ?]. So he had no more money to employ the special teacher anymore. He decided to send us to school. My elder brothers had the opportunity then to go abroad, because after the first world war, the value of the franc had depreciated a lot, so my father had enough money to send the three eldest boys to France to study. Those brothers had studied in Shanghai in a French school called "Collège de le Roi". After that, they went to Paris to study.

RM: So you father was able to educate a large number of your family.

TY: Yes, but it was very hard for him. After he was [ relinquished from his office ? ] my elder brothers had to return to China and go to work or began work in foreign countries. One of my elder brothers worked for a long time in Belgium. This was because my cousin was Chinese Foreign Minister there, so he worked in the delegation for about 15 years. Another brother came back to work for certain prominent persons. All the younger generation of our family, however, went to school. Although, once

I left the family school, I did not have much regular education. At that time there was revolution. The first time I went to regular school, it was a missionary school, but during the revolution, all missionary schools closed. They were attacked by the people. After that, I got to go to the government-run middle school. I finished my grade school education there.

RM: This was still in Fuzhou?

TY: Yes. Always in Fuzhou. Before going on, you know I have very strong memories of my father's work. At the time of the first world war, I remember vividly my father being very worried about something happening in Beijing. That was the time the Twenty-One Demands were put to [ Lan Shu Kai ], the first President of the Republic. Relations between China and Japan were so bad that my father had a very difficult time with the Koreans sent by Japan to make relations between the Chinese and Japanese even worse.

RM: The Japanese sent Koreans to Fuzhou?

TY: Yes. They sent Koreans to make trouble. You can imagine, I had a very bad impression of the Japanese. In fact, the first impression I got of the Japanese is that they caused great trouble for my father's work. That meant that he had very bad relations with the Japanese. Sometimes they shot people on the street. They also came to my father's office and harrassed my father. We could hear a row in his office. That meant the Japanese Counsel had come to argue with my father. So overall, I had a very bad impression. The second thing, of course, was the Japanese Agression in 1937. You remember I gave you an account of the Japanese bombing in Chunqing.

I remeber that my father received a lot of foreign journals because he was in charge of Foreign Affairs. They had wonderful pictures. I liked those pictures very much. I especially admired two - British General Kitchener! I would imitate his poses! The other one was French General ( Gauvre? ). I took some of those pictures and kept them on my bedside table.

RM: What was it about them that attracted you?

TY: I don't know. I thought the brave poses were excellent. When I was young, it was thrilling to see them - *real generals!* I was very distressed by the story of Kitchener's son and the battleship. I still remember the event clearly today. It's more than 60 years ago now.

RM: The next step for you, then, was going to school. How old were you when you started at school?

TY: I was 12. It was just before my father's death.

RM: Your school was right in Fuzhou?

TY: Yes. It was all in Fuzhou. After my father's death, our family had to move to the inner city, where housing was not as expensive.

RM: You were living on the outskirts of Fuzhou before then?

TY: Yes. The outskirts of the city were very beautiful. It was the area where the Foreign Consulates were situated.

RM: Of course, it's a beautiful city anyway.

TY: Yes. In fact, someday I would like you to visit my native city! So we moved to the inner city and began to attend the school which was run by the government.

RM: Were you close enough to walk to school?

TY: Yes. Everyday, I walked to school. There was no other means of transportation. The inner city was pretty small. You would walk about 15 minutes to get to school everyday, so it was not far. We were poor then, could spend very little money, so we would not have been able to get any other means of transportation. Everyday I would go home for both lunch

and dinner. I studied at that school for four years. From third year of junior school level to three years of high school level. I graduated from that school ranking first among all the students. There was an award for that, so I got some money for my university tuition. My mother was so happy that she gave me the chance to wear the first Western coat.

RM: Is that the photograph we have of you?

TY: No. It was a different one, not as good as the one in the photo which I got later. The next decision was where I should go to university. I insisted on going to university, rather than college, and I wanted to go to Shanghai or Beijing. Beijing was the more expensive of the two. My mother wanted me to go to [ Hhamen ], but I insisted on one of the two others I had in mind. The obstacle was money, so she began to try to get the money for my tuition. Two of my brothers were going to Shanghai, so we got the money to go to Shanghai, to Fudan University.

RM: Going back to your high school years, were there any girls in the school at this point, or was it all boys?

TY: Both girls and boys.

RM: Did very many of them go on to university or college, or were you the only one?

TY: I think there were many that went on, but they went to [ Hhamen ? ].

RM: Of course, that is nearby.

TY: Nearby, yes and not so expensive.

RM: A good one, though, I think?

TY: Yes, but in our minds, not so good as Fudan University in Shanghai. We thought that our perspective would be broadened by going to Shanghai.

RM: Yes, of course. Did the money to go come from the government?

TY: No. We had to pay for it ourselves. It was quite expensive for two years of study at Fudan University. One example of how we economized was that we would take the least expensive fare to travel home to Fuzhou during the Summer. It was much too expensive to stay in Shanghai for the summer, so we would have to go back home, and we would buy the very cheapest tickets for the trip.

RM: Was Fudan University in the same place then as it was when I saw it a few years ago?

TY: Yes. I think so, but the University has been expanded.

RM: You lived in a dormitory there.

TY: Yes. A very small dormitory that was not as nice as the ones at Qinqhua. We had six people per room. It was very cold during the winter vacation. There was no heat and all the water in the rooms would freeze.

RM: Did you have a social life? Were you in the city?

TY: You know in Shanghai, there was a difficulty in speaking the Shanghai dialect, so we would have social activities with the group of students who were from Fujian.

**HERE IS WHERE THE TAPE WENT FUNNY.**