

Second Conversation with Professor Wang

December 31, 1990

RM: This is our second conversation. On the last day of 1990. At our previous meeting, we had reached the year 1949. Can we proceed from there?

TY: Before we do that, I would like to say something about the situation prior to 1949. Before 1949 I had joined the movement against the Chiang Kai-Shek Regime. I made speeches and wrote articles, which were political rather than academic, always on aspects of international affairs. I had met Dr. Dorothy Borg of the Columbia Institute of International Affairs. At that time, she was a member of the Institute of Pacific Relations, American Branch. I mention her because she is connected with my fate. She was invited to give lectures in the Political Science Department of Peking University and at the same time she organized seminars and discussion groups in Beijing, with my help. We asked professors from different universities to join those meetings to discuss international affairs, especially China's relations with countries in the Pacific region. One of her assistants was Harriet Mills who later returned to the United States and became - I think she is still in Michigan - Professor of Chinese Literature at the University of Michigan. I mention this because of something connected with me after the Liberation.

Before the Liberation, I was very enthusiastic about the victories of the People's Liberation Army. Most of our news came from a periodical called "The Observation", which was well-known at the time. Anyway I was very enthusiastic.

Now we come to 1949. Before the liberation of Beijing, the city was encircled by the Liberation Army. We were isolated from the outside. At that time, Qing Hua University, which was in the Western suburb, was already occupied by the Liberation Army, but Peking University was in the downtown area and we stayed there. We were fortunate in that the students took care of our security. For instance, we had a very large dormitory with 12 or 14 families living there - all of them were professors. The students of Peking University surrounded these dormitories in order to protect us. There were special agents of the Kuomintang authorities who could have attacked us anytime they liked, but we were safe.

RM: What month was that?

TY: The end of 1948. Beijing was liberated in February of 1949. I must also mention one fact that is interesting. Before Beijing was liberated, then the highest Kuomintang Army Commander in Beijing, Fu Zou-Yi, invited some prominent professors to his residence to have dinner and to talk about the future of Beijing and China. I was included but I

didn't say anything. However, one of my friends told him that, to be farsighted, he would have to surrender. Of course he made no expression and no response to this statement. Afterwards, we realized that this high General had surrendered to the Chinese Communist Party. We didn't call it surrender, but called it rebellion against the Kuomintang Regime. When the Liberation Army came to Beijing, I went to the city gate to welcome them and I climbed up on the cannon carriage in the old wall to shake hands with the army men. Almost all of the people of Beijing came out to meet the Liberation Army. We were very enthusiastic.

RM: It must have been dramatic.

TY: Very dramatic. Very, very dramatic. There was no sympathy at all for the Kuomintang Regime. Everyone had been waiting for the Communist Party to come.

RM: For a new start.

TY: Yes! A new regime and a new start.

RM: How old were you at that time?

TY: That was 1949, I was 36.

RM: So you were 36 when you went out to greet the Liberation Army.

TY: Yes, and I was very busy at that time because I had to attend meetings and conferences, both inside and outside the University. I attended lectures given by the Party leaders, like Liu Shao Qi, afterwards President of the Republic, and also Zhou En-lai, afterwards Premier of the New Republic. At that time, they were planning a conference called the CPPCC. The first conference was held at the end of August and the beginning of September. The first CPPCC, that is the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. I was not a member of that conference, but I was a member of later conferences. The preparation consisted of drafting the common program, which was a kind of tentative constitution for the New Republic. It was not the real constitution, but a preliminary one.

RM: Nevertheless, that was important.

TY: I was not invited to join the conference, but I did participate in the discussions on the drafting and I also heard a lot of reports by Zhou En-lai, who was the mentor of that common program. The program was passed by the CPPCC and became the first legal document of a constitutional nature. This was a very important step in Chinese History.

During the first few years after 1949, after the Liberation, I was very much occupied with my work. I can not recall the details my work at that time, but some of it was important. One [project] in which I participated was the delegation that was to be dispatched to the United Nations. The Chinese government that had been established under the common program meant to dispatch representatives to New York to participate in the United Nations. There was a delegation organized under the leadership of Zhang Wen Tien and I was invited to be the legal advisor of that delegation.

RM: That was a great tribute.

TY: However, we didn't have much to do. The intention was that we would go to New York to talk about the future of our work in the United Nations, but we were refused admission to the United Nations.

RM: Did you go to New York?

TY: No. We had a delegation office in Beijing; we worked there and waited for the reply of the United Nations for us to go. It was very interesting. They asked my wife to go and she wouldn't go, because we had a small baby, so I had to decide to go alone. Unfortunately - or fortunately - we did not go, because we were refused admittance by the United Nations.

The second project was in September 1950, I was sent to Britain with a delegation under the leadership of Liu Ning Yi, the Chairman of the All-China Federation of Trade Union. The delegation included some very prominent people. One of them was Professor Zhou Pei Yuan who afterwards became the President of Peking University; he was a very well-known physicist in China. We visited Great Britain for about one year. I think that was the first delegation sent by the New Republic abroad. I was very fortunate to be one of the members of the delegation. We visited various cities in Great Britain and met some prominent persons in the Labour Party, which formed the government at that time. So we met - not the Prime Minister - but we met some prominent Ministers of the Labour government in Britain. However, there was a break in the relations between the two governments then, because the Korean War broke out.

RM: Yes, in 1950.

TY: Yes and we were in Britain. We couldn't do anything because there was a conflict of policy between two governments. So we peacefully concluded our visit and returned home. The next year another delegation was sent to Great Britain under the leadership of the Li Yi Mang who was very prominent in the peace movement. He was the Chinese member of the World Peace Council. He was also a prominent member of the Chinese

Communist Party. He died just a few months ago, after a long life. We went to Prague, Czechoslovakia, to get our visas, but unfortunately the British Government declined to give us any visas. We could do nothing. We just stayed in Prague for a few days and then returned home. So that visit was unsuccessful. We had to stay there; we spent a lot of money to stay in Prague, but couldn't get visas. We were refused by the British; we had to make a statement to the Press, and then we went home.

RM: Was Peking University in session at this time?

TY: Yes, it was in session but not as usual, because everyone was enthusiastic and had many things to do, including the students. I gave courses, but they were occasionally interrupted by my work outside the University.

That is the second thing I wanted like to tell you. The third thing is that after the visit to Britain, I was sent to the country to join the Land Reform Movement, in October 1951. At that time there was a Land Reform movement and all, or nearly all, of the professors were invited to join. So we organized a large group, including professors and students. These professors and students were from four universities - law schools, as well as economic, political science, and sociology departments. There were only professors and students, which

at that time, were not very numerous. There were only 500 or 600 students so, altogether, we had about 600-700 people in the large group going to the South to participate in Land Reform. I was a leader of that group, which included some very prominent professors of that time. In the first stage, we went to Wuhan to make preparations. Then it was decided by the Wuhan authorities to send us to Guang Xi to participate in the Land Reform there. It was very hard.

RM: What sort of work was it?

TY: I will explain it to you. The first thing you should understand is that life was very hard in the Land Reform. I should mention that Guang Xi had just been liberated. So there were three kinds of danger. The first was the local bandits. There were quite a lot of them and most of the local people had guns and pistols. The second danger was that there were a lot of tigers.

RM: Tigers!?

TY: Yes.

RM: There were real, live tigers?

TY: Yes. I even saw one caught by the local authorities. During

the night time, when I would go out with some people to investigate various parts of the country, I heard the tigers growling. That was the second danger. The third danger was snakes, both large and small. The students were encouraged by the authorities not to fear these three dangers. The authorities said they would protect us from all these things. We were protected from the tigers and the snakes, but not from the bandits. You know we lost two students! One of the local cadres had guns and killed the students during the night. There were very poor conditions and all the students and professors stayed on the same floor. About 12 people on the first floor and 12 or 14 people on the second floor. One night, I was received an urgent call from some people, that two of the students had been killed. Murdered.

RM: By whom?

TY: By one of the local cadres. They lay between two of the students and just pulled out their pistols - this one and that one.

RM: Why did they kill them?

TY: I don't know. People said that according to Communist ideology, it was class hatred.

RM: They disliked intellectuals.

TY: The murderer was caught, tried by the People's Court, and executed.

RM: That happened in the countryside?

TY: Not in the country. In a small town. Of course the life of the Land Reform was very, very hard. The principle was that you had to participate in three areas of life together with peasants. We call it Sang Tong, which means "these three togethers": You had to live with the peasants. You had to eat with the peasants. You had to work with the peasants. You could not be privileged. Another thing was that you had to select the poorest peasant to live with. You could not live with some well-to-do peasant. When a small group of students and professors went to the country, they had to find the village that was the poorest. Then you stayed together with them, you ate with them and you worked with them. During the summer time it was very hard work. It was hot, very hot. In the winter time it was very cold. You worked with the peasants. That was the principle of the Land Reform. The authorities thought that the poorest peasants were the most exploited and oppressed, and therefore, they were the most resolute in resistance against the feudal system and against the landlords. The cadres, the members of the group that

became cadres, required you to stimulate, to encourage, to stir up, the revolutionary spirit of the peasants to work for the movement, to work against the landlords, to work against the feudal system.

RM: And how would you do that?

TY: By discussions, in small and large meetings. By talking with the peasants. Then, by organising them into peasant agricultural associations. Then the peasants took action; they captured all the landlords, who had been very aggressive before the Liberation. Their property, including houses and lands of the landlords, were confiscated and distributed among the poor peasants.

RM: Did the system work well?

TY: It worked quite well. All the land went to the peasants. They had the initiative and acquired the land.

RM: They got the land, then, the ownership?

TY: Yes. They owned it, for the time being.

RM: How long did you continue doing that work?

TY: I worked there for about one year. Yes. From the very beginning to the end.

RM: Was Cai with you?

TY: No, no. She stayed in Beijing, with the children.

RM: You were doing this physical work yourself?

TY: Yes, of course. Every cadre had to work the same way.

RM: So you got up early and worked all day outside?

TY: All day outside. But, of course, I was the leader, so I had to do two kinds of work. One was to direct and organize. The other was to work as an ordinary cadre. So the burden was even heavier for me.

RM: That was a big burden.

TY: A very big burden, yes. I got very thin. Cai didn't recognize me when I came back to Beijing! I was very thin.

RM: Did everybody survive?

TY: Everybody survived, except the two who were murdered.

RM: So then, what was the next stage?

TY: I came back from the Land Reform and found two things.

RM: What year would this have been?

TY: This was 1951. I went to the Land Reform in 1950, after I came back from Britain. The end of my participation in the Land Reform was (1951) in the summer time.

RM: So you returned in July of (1951) to Peking.

TY: Yes and I found two things. The first was that there was a political movement throughout the country, especially directed to intellectuals. It was the "Mind Reform Movement". Everybody had to criticize himself and be judged by the audience. Every professor had to go through the same procedure. If the audience was not satisfied with your self-analysis, you would have to do it again.

RM: Sort of a public confession.

TY: Yes. Political. It took me about one month. The second thing I had to face was the re-organization of the Universities and Colleges.

RM: Well, that would have been a big task.

TY: Yes, and I thought it was wrong. I expressed my opinion, but my suggestions were not adopted. The Political Science Department was abolished. The Law Department was abolished, too. The only Law Department newly established was at the People's University, which was the Russian-dominated. So in Peking University, there was no Law Department. I didn't know what to do. I came back from the Land Reform and found I had no job. Before I left, I was Chairman of the Political Science Department, but the Department had been abolished. I wanted to go to the Law School, but there was no Law Department in existence, except for the one at the People's University where the professors or teachers had to be selected by that University or by the higher authorities, such as the Minister of Education, but no such invitation was made to me. So I just waited. And waited. Fortunately, there was a very prominent historian named Jian Bo Zan, prominent in history and also in Marxism. He was rather influential in the academic world at that time. I don't know who introduced me to him, but he asked someone to ask me to join his history department. That was in October 1952.

RM: In Peking University.

TY: Yes. Then I asked him what I was to do? He said I should

teach the History of International Relations - both the World and Chinese. I had to give up International Law at that time. I taught the History of International Relations, both European and Chinese.

RM: Well, that was appropriate, under the circumstances.

TY: I was not very happy, though, because I had to put aside my own interest in International Law. However, they did satisfy my demand to establish a section on the History of International Relations in the History Department. I recruited some people for that section - about 5 or 6 people. They started a group on International Relations. During that time, which was 4 or 5 years, from 1952 to 1957, I wrote articles about International Relations and I collected material on European International Relations, but didn't write much about International Law, except sometimes they asked me to write some articles which were to be published in a newspaper. I collected a lot of Chinese treaties and edited three volumes of Chinese treaties. That was the kind of work I did at that time. I spent more than ten years, 1952 to 1962, editing this collection of treaties which was The Comprehensive Collection of Chinese Old Treaties and Regulations From 1689-1949. It was published in three volumes, a very big work.

RM: Did that work cover Chinese treaties from the beginning?

TY: Yes, from the beginning to 1949. The beginning means 1689, the year of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, between China and Russia. The collection included more than 1,000 treaties. I think it was a complete one. Anybody who wants to know the history of Chinese treaties can use that book. Quite convenient.

RM: That was a major work. Was the University still downtown at this stage or had it been moved?

TY: No, it moved after 1951. They moved to the place that you visited.

RM: The new campus.

TY: Yes.

RM: Where were you living, then, on the new campus?

TY: The first few months, we stayed in a small house. In 1952, we moved to [our present] house. We have lived in that house about 40 years. So then, I taught International Relations for a few years. During these years, I was invited to go abroad twice. That means that, [in addition] to those two delegations in which I went to Great Britain, [in the

following years], I went to India once to attend the Asian States Conference, which was held at the same time as the African Conference in Bangong.

RM: Oh yes, the famous Bangong Conference.

TY: Yes, that was the official conference, but there also was an "unofficial" conference in New Delhi, called the Asian States Conference. I was a member of the Chinese delegation to attend that conference.

RM: What year would that have been?

TY: 1955. The next year, 1956, I was sent to the conference held in Brussels called the "World Democratic Lawyers Conference". I think you know Jean Salmon quite well.

RM: Oh yes, Jean Salmon.

TY: Jean Salmon was a very prominent member of that conference. Also () attended that conference. We had a delegation under the leadership of the Vice President of the Chinese People's Supreme Court. After the conference, we went to East Germany to visit East German law schools. We spent about two weeks and then returned home. Those were the two visits.

RM: So you were very active.

TY: In 1956 the Law Faculty was re-established in Peking University. I think it was 1955 or 1956, anyway, I joined the Law Faculty in 1956. I was a Professor cross-appointed in both the History Department and the Law Department. You know, International Law was a third-year course, it wasn't offered that year, since the Law Department had just been re-established. We had to wait another two years to give the course. Unfortunately, just at the time I was preparing for the International Law course (from 1956-1957), a very strong movement began. It was called the Anti-Rightist Movement. At first, I didn't mind the movement, because I was always for the Communist Party. People even thought I was a Communist Party Member, although I was not at the time. I intended to become a Party Member. Everything the Communist Party explained to us, I wanted to pass on to others. So I didn't mind at all. Unfortunately, when the Party Committee of the University organized a conference for certain people to speak, to make suggestions to the government, I did make a speech. In my speech, I criticized the University; not the government, but the University. I said it was too bureaucratic. I said that there had not been many academic advances made within the University. Something like that. That speech was appreciated by the Party Leaders in the University, but a few [days] afterward, I was condemned for that speech. That led to small

meetings, then large meetings, which were convened to criticize me. In the Anti-Rightist Movement, you were not allowed to respond to any criticisms. You had the right to hear it, but no right to argue. Afterward, I was condemned as a "Rightist".

RM: This condemnation was made by Party Members outside the University?

TY: I was condemned formally by the University, but it was ordered by a higher authority - I don't know which authority - maybe the Ministry of Education, maybe some other department. Anyway, I was declared a Rightist, just like T.C. Chen.

RM: Was he condemned in the same way? for the same thing?

TY: Yes! You didn't know that? We had a lot of lawyers declared "Rightist". What was the result? Well, first, I was excluded from teaching. I was excluded from academic work. I was excluded from writing any articles.

RM: That was terrible.

TY: Yes. The only thing I was permitted to do was some library work and to collect material for others' use. One thing which was quite fortunate for me was that they left me the

freedom to translate books. I was not permitted to write books, but I could translate. It was at that time that I translated Kelsen's Principles of International Law, which was just published last year.

RM: I didn't know that.

TY: For a long time, no one would publish it, but it finally came out last year.

RM: In 1988?

TY: Yes.

RM: You were living in your same house and Cai was there, and the family was there.

TY: Yes, but she was affected by all of this.

RM: How was she affected?

TY: People discriminated against her at work and in her daily life, because you must understand what was meant by "Rightist". According to the Communist theory, there are two contradictions. Among people, there are two kinds of contradiction. One is internal contradiction; that is,

contradiction existing between people. Another is external contradiction; that is, contradictions between people and against an enemy. The Rightists were included in the second category, and were considered the 'enemy'. In other words, Rightists were enemies of the people. So, my salary was reduced. I had attained second rank; the highest rank was first rank. I was receiving the second rank of salary, but it was lowered to a fourth rank salary. For T.C. Chen, it was even worse, his salary was diminished to three ranks lower than mine was.

RM: That's terrible. So, life was very difficult.

TY: Yes. Because at that time, we had a large number of family members. However, that wasn't the most difficult thing, there was something else. It was that your friends would not take care of you, because you were an enemy of the people. I didn't have any social activity. I didn't want to talk with anyone, because I felt that maybe they wouldn't want to talk with me. So I was entirely isolated from the society, except for my family.

RM: No social life. And your colleagues did not come to see you?

TY: Very seldom. They wouldn't come to visit unless they were very courageous, but I didn't know why, because I was still

confident of my position.

RM: Of course you would be, with your background and your record of contributions to higher education.

TY: As a matter of fact, I applied for Party membership before 1957.

RM: Was any explanation given to you?

TY: They told me it was because my speech was considered anti-Party and anti-socialist. You see, sometimes the criticism by the people in the meetings had many fabrications of facts in it. So that hurt me very much. People liked to curry favour of the Party. Some people thought that they would receive better treatment if they made fabrications and condemned me as a Rightist. As a matter of fact, I hadn't said anything, except for that one speech. At that time, I thought that the speech had been innocent. According to the standards of those years, it was not sufficient criticism at all.

RM: How long did your isolation go on?

TY: For about one year. After that, I was sent to a socialist college to be "re-educated", also for about one year.

RM: That was in Beijing?

TY: In Beijing, quite near - very comfortable, but still I had to spend all the time reading political materials, studying political doctrine, and in discussion. That was how I spent my time.

RM: Every day?

TY: Every day! I stayed there. Not at home, but I stayed in the college, with some other Party people. This was the first time. Afterwards, a second time, I was sent to the socialist college, but that time it was more comfortable. I had a single room and could work by myself. But, of course, you had to spend the whole day in meetings - small ones and large ones - having to read materials, having to write confessions or explanations of your position.

RM: Could you go home on the weekends?

TY: Yes, but then there was the "hat". Being labelled Rightist is a sort of "hat" on your head, in the abstract sense. This "hat" was only withdrawn after five years.

RM: Did you have to wear that hat for five years?

TY: Not physically wearing it, but mentally. Everyone would say, 'you are a Rightist' and it was only after 4 or 5 years, the hat was released. Then you were treated as an ordinary person again.

RM: How was it known that the "hat" had been removed? Was there an announcement?

TY: Yes. There was an announcement in the University.

RM: Then you could rejoin society.

TY: Yes, I was permitted to give courses. As a matter of fact, in 1964 I prepared a course and presented it with another professor at the Law Department. Unfortunately, there was yet another movement, the "Socialist Education Movement" in the countryside. They decided that I should be sent to a suburb of Peking to work for the Socialist Education Movement. I was there (from 1965 to 1966).

RM: Why were you assigned to that?

TY: It was kind of a political education.

RM: Even after the previous five years, they thought it was necessary?

TY: Well, that kind of education was not especially for the Rightists. It was for everybody.

RM: Everybody in the Faculty had to do it?

TY: Yes. By rotation. [They decided] that year certain people would go to this part of Beijing, another group, to another part of Beijing, all for one year. The work was not published, because the great Cultural Revolution broke out. I was ordered to go back to the University. That was a great event in my life. It was 1966. I went to the country for the Socialist Education Movement in 1965 and it was explained that the work would take one year, but I didn't finish my work. As the the end of my year approached, the Cultural Revolution broke out. I was ordered back to Peking University. The first day I got back to Peking University, I saw A LOT of big posters everywhere! Criticism against the University. Arguing for the future of China, and things like that. As a former Rightist, I didn't care about all of those things. I would not express my opinions, because I had had such experiences before 1957. So I kept silent, but people wouldn't let me keep silent. After a few days, they asked me to come and join the group and "confess". Confession! To write accounts of your personal history - everything - from the very beginning, up to the present time - all personal relations, including any with Chinese and foreigners. Also,

We had to write down anything that might be considered to be political in nature. I wrote a lot of pages on this, but still I had to stay.

RM: Were your classes going on, was the University functioning at that time?

TY: No, everything was closed. Everything closed on the first day of the Cultural Revolution, which I think was June, 1966. The Revolution was touched off by an editorial which appeared in the People's Daily. ✓

RM: The Cultural Revolution went on for ten years, didn't it?

TY: Ten years.

RM: 1966 to 1978.

TY: 1976. Ten years. During those ten years, I couldn't read any books. I couldn't teach any International Law or International Relations. Everyday I had to go to the Law Department to be trained - to be educated - by those people who were revolutionaries. Sometimes there was fighting between two competing factions and we would be sent to some part [of the country] to do manual work. Very hard, at the time. Sometimes we would have to go to rooms to sit and write

our "confessions". In 1967 or 1968, more than 400 professors and high officials - high cadres of the University - were put into a camp.

RM: Whereabouts?

TY: It was a place quite near Min Zhu Lou - the democratic building - it was behind that. It was a house which was converted into a camp. More than ten people to one room.

RM: Was Cai with you?

TY: No, she was not with me. She was in another part of the University which was not considered so serious. Not as restricted. We had to sleep there, eat there-

RM: Ten people to a room?

TY: Sometimes even more than ten people to a room. We only had straw beds and people slept one next to the other. Very close. Including Chen Shou Yi and Rei Mn. We all were there. We were required to read Mao Tse Tung's writings and write "confessions". We did manual work everyday from early in the morning until late at night.

RM: That was terrible.

TY: Fortunately, I was not beaten.

RM: Were some people beaten?

TY: Yes! Sometimes you would have to go to a mass meeting to be criticized. You were only [allowed] to stand there like a -

RM: Like a 'prisoner in the dock'?

TY: More than that.

RM: You would stand in front of the audience, with your head bowed, your hands extended behind your back, and you would have to stand like that for two hours?

TY: Sometimes more than two hours. People called it a kind of jet airplane.

RM: Well, that was humiliating.

TY: Yes. Every kind of accusation could be made against you.

RM: And while you were standing there people were accusing you?

TY: Yes.

RM: How often did that happen?

TY: I experienced it only three times. Not so many. Some people had to undergo it more than I did. Then in 1969 we were sent to Jiang Xi Province, which there was a kind of a concentration camp. Everyone there, including the well-known, quite old, professors, did manual work the whole year. There were nearly 1,000 people in one area. It was a large area which was cultivated with rice and other crops. My wife was with me.