Dear Virgil,

Oswald has written the official letter, and I am writing the personal version. We find ourselves very tired and I still do not know whether to laugh or cry. The relief over being free is all but overwhelming. This is a borrowed typewriter and I am a poor typist. We lost all of ours. As you know for two years we have not been able to write freely so I am starting Jan last.

(At 2 A.M. New Years morning we were awakened by five soldiers bursting into our bedroom, with our faithful women Liu De-tze leading them at the point of their guns. They searched the house thoroughly, and at daylight we discovered there were 30 armed soldiers guarding our place and the other two mission places. No one was allowed to come in or go out. Later they called Oswald over to the police office and told him they were taking over all foreign property, and that they were going to put guards in the house to see that we did not destroy anything. They said that we were not to send anything out or give anything away under threat of the worst. While Oswald was gone I wondered if he would ever return. As their favorite way of arrest was to send for you to come and then keep you. From that time until we left three months later we were under what they call "House Arrest". The head of the local police and his guard moved in with us, using my beds, stove, cooking utensils, etc., spitting on the rugs. The worst part was that they would allow no one to see us or talk to us unless the police were with us. We kept pretty much to our bedroom, but they never knocked or gave notice, just barged in any time of day or night. It was rather difficult to eat our food. We had food but could hardly swallow it. In the first two weeks Oswald lost twenty pounds and became very nervous. I think it was harder on him than it was on me. He had been through it once before alone, but this time I was with him. Fortunately I had a few spells of hysteria and would be relieved. I only lost ten pounds.) After two weeks they moved out of the house, but still watched the gate from their quarters just outside the gate. This was largely due to the fact that they were reprimanded by officials from Hofei by telegram. But of course they could not lose face by freeing us. Later still a higher official from the north area came over to help us and came to us in a courteous way. He was shocked that all our rooms except the kitchen, dining room and our own bedroom were sealed up. They said it was a mistake. When he went to the local officials they told him that they, the Chuhsien officials were old Communists and did not have to listen to this young squirt from higher up, so we continued under arrest and he had to go back. Chuhsien was governed by a group from Ding Yuen Hasien, the head quarters for some years of the bandits in Anhwei. Here were the bandits in control of the government and us. Another hardship at this time was the fact that while our own friends could not come, the soldiers and students of the government came in large groups into every room they could get into, especially my bedroom. They wanted to see how we lived. I guess they found out. We were finally told we might make our application to leave. Then we were told that we could take only what we could carry in our own hands. We must leave the rugs on the floor, curtains on the windows, pictures on the walls, dishes in the cupboard, bedding on the beds. We were constantly threatened and never treated with courtesy. Rumours came to us that they were trying to get our students and the Christians to say things against us. Some soldiers said that Oswald had pushed a little boy into a ditch once, but the children all loved us and they could get no child to say he had been pushed into the ditch. Finally the only crime they could pin on us was - The Peking government had ordered all the people to hate America and they could not make any of the
hundreds that knew us or had been to our place hated America or even say anything against America. And so we were guilty of treason, and had to be shut from all our Chinese friends. They thought they were treating us very well not to put us in prison.

While all this was going on the Chinese were being treated even worse. They were being accused of helping America. They were searched and all their possessions that had come from America which we had given them or they had bought had to be registered and they were not allowed to use them. After dark sometimes a few of the Christians would slip in and give us information or our servants would bring us word of what was happening. Our gardener was arrested taken to the prison on a bitter cold night, hand cuffed, made to squat in a room with seventy others in like position, not allowed to say a word or stand up. He was given no food or water for 24 hours. Such things as this frightened the Chinese leaders. Mr Wu Sin Tan almost lost his mind and finally succumbed to being used by them, the Communists as the only way to save the church. I think one of the things that hurt me most was when he had to say they would seal up the room with the piano so that I would not destroy it before I left. The fare well meeting that Oswald spoke of was the most pitiful thing I have ever witnessed. I should go away and say that our students and workers at the beginning of the trouble please to pay no attention to what their lips were saying. It was not from the heart but they were forced to say things. Caesar required lip service. And again before the accusation meeting they sent word to please not listen to what was said. It was all false but they had no choice. At the meeting all our mission employees, students, church officials etc were called in at 2 P.M. and told what they had to say. Rather they were given the topic, and then they had to tell the officials what they were going to say. And it had to be written down to be used for or against them later on. At three they sent for us. As we came into the room not one of them could raise his eyes or look at us. There were two officials in the back of the room, and Wu was chairman. The first song was "Blest be the tie that binds", which all my pupils knew was my favorite song, and it was the message they gave me that the officials did not understand. It was almost impossible to sing. One of my piano students played it very well, and another led it. Then Mr. Chu spoke. He had formerly said that if you repeat the phrases used in the newspapers they were satisfied. So he gave a general speech about China and the Chu Hsein being independent, etc. Then Mr. Wu spoke against American Imperialism in the cultural realm. Another spoke on the rearming of Japan another that now they were free of the foreigners, they had music of the people instead of the hymns and music of the imperialist countries. Now the government would help them and they would not have to be dogs of the foreigners. Once the official spoke up and said, "This meeting is too serious, why don't you laugh" and everyone gave a forced laugh just like puppets on a string. The meeting lasted about three hours, with us in front, taking it all. When they asked us if we had anything to say, I said that we "paid" them for undertaking self-support. And that was the wrong word to use. They jumped all over me for it. I still do not know exactly why. Another accusation was that we had said to students and others as they left our house "Taisi whoey" (Till we meet again) and they said that we meant that we would come back after we had helped America win the war. Oswald had said that when it was peaceful we would come again, and that was worse yet. When the meeting closed not one person dared to speak to us, they turned and ran home before the tears should fall. That night late Mr. Chu braced the guards and came, he always had some Rural Center papers to ask about as an excuse. He said he was fearful we were feeling bad, and wanted to tell us that it was all false, all forced, and in a very low voice told us again the message he wanted us to take to the American people, and that was, "Hurry up and fight, and release us from this. There is absolutely no other way, no other hope for us,
You can believe nothing they say and they cannot be appeased. At least 90% of the people of China send this same message. We did not see him again, nor any one else. Only our own servants were allowed to see us off, so it was with heavy hearts that we left after thirty years of service. Not because of the fear we had for our lives, but because we desired to see him one last time. As they said the only happy people in China were the ones that were leaving. Every one in Red territory is prisoner, with no freedom of thought or action, and the only teaching is that of hatred and distrust. If you have a friend you must criticize him. If you claim your parents or relatives you must report on them. Everyone is listening for someone to say something that can be reported. No one is happy or laughing. Even in the family that has been such a close unit in China they are suspicious, no one can trust anyone else, close friend or relative. As a result you sit for hours with some one and not a word is said. It is indeed hell on earth.

During the last month Oswald and I had made a better adjustment to the inevitable, and tried to prepare ourselves for the worst. We studied the life of Paul for about four hours a day, and then walked in the compound. Oswald measured the distance so that twelve times around measured a mile. We tried to walk one, two and near the end three miles a day, in circles. It helped us digest our food and sleep better. I had to take another series of liver injections which gave me a needed boost. We find ourselves very tired in every way. Right up to the last minute we feared we would be called back. When Oswald stepped over the line at Canton he asked someone if they could come over and demand that he come back. Of course he was reassured, but about an hour later when the train for Hong Kong came in and all the people began to get on it I could not find him anywhere. I waited there on the platform alone with the baggage. The China Travel man was searching everywhere and could not find him. He was gone fifteen minutes. I was sure he had been snatched back again and was on the verge of hysteria when here he came from a police office near the line where he had gone to phone to our hotel to see if they had a reservation. What a climax! But now we are FREE FREE FREE amen.

A week from this morning we board the plane for Sydney Australia and arrive there the next morning. The Pan American seemed a bit put out that they had handled all the funds for the missionaries and had not booked one of them. So we make up for the others. Since the first sure booking by boat out of Hong Kong for Australia and since bookings for Aus to U.S. have to be made eight or nine months in advance and costs very little more by air we are making them feel better. But I feel that is an awful lot of water to fly over. They have booked us on the double decker Stratoliner from Sydney to San Francisco. Oswald has to get his papers fixed up in Aus. I think a few months in the open in Aus. will help us both to find ourselves and recover some nervous energy. We hope to visit two sisters and a brother who are missionaries to the aborigines. We hope to get some good pictures. Oswald just bought a camera, since he lost all of his. It will give him a new interest to get pictures of Aus.

I really did not intend to write such a long letter but I just had to get it off my chest. We do so appreciate your generous kindness to us in every circumstance. It gives us a feeling of security and of love which is absent in the land we are leaving. We need to pray as we have never prayed before that the church may live through the terror of today. I am still trying to find my lost sense of humor. When I do then I will feel alive again and perhaps be able to sing which I have not done for over three months.

Best wishes to all,

Irven Coulter
Dear Friends of Dr. & Mrs. Goulter:

At last we have the good news that the Goulters are safe with their relatives in Australia. We received this long letter from them just this week which we are mimeographing and sending on to you as they requested.

Dr. Goulter stated in a personal letter that he had to destroy all his records even the addresses of his friends, but fortunately we still have the mailing list.

Should you wish to send them a personal contribution just make out your check to Dr. O.J. Goulter and mail it to the Bank of America at Redlands, California. This will be deposited to his account there. Then you may write them a personal not to their address in Australia.

Most sincerely,

Dr. Goulter's Service Link Church
R. Lee Pryor, Pastor

---

Hongkong, China
April 20, 1951
Temporary Address
32 Fyans St.
Colac, Victoria, Australia

Dear Friends and Co-Workers:

At last we are free. We have stepped across the frontier from Communist China into the British colony of Hongkong. Now we can write freely, which we could not do for the two years since the Communists took Shen-sien. Our letters have been opened frequently. Quite innocent remarks might have been misinterpreted and held as evidence to prove we were spies. Many missionaries, especially Catholics, have been sent to prison and not a few executed. Even your chance remarks when writing
never saw such despondence as now comes over the Christian community. Our gardener was thrown into prison and compelled to squat in a room with seventy other prisoners without food in the bitter cold of winter for two days. Such a fate seemed to lie ahead for many of us.

You will wonder what crimes we had committed. In this connection you must remember that communist thinking is an amazingly distorted thinking. We had conducted literacy classes for teaching people to read. This was regarded as "cultural aggression". We had distributed food and clothing to starving refugees; this was the crime of "buying the people's hearts on behalf of the American Capitalist Aggressor."

Quite apart from the nation-wide campaign against America, our situation was made worse because the local Government officials were ex-bandits and coveted the few possessions we had. In larger cities missionaries could sell their goods as they pleased, but in our town the officials coveted even our personal possessions. They would not allow us to bring away curtains, pictures, dishes, cameras or typewriters, etc. Even though they could not use these things their hands itched to get hold of them and they took them from us as we left.

You will wonder what was happening to our churches and Christian friends during this time. Firstly, they had to ask for "Political Instruction". They must even pretend to accept the Communist teaching. They must accept even what they know is false. Secondly, they must cooperate in processions and campaigns of hate against America. Thirdly, they must cut off all relations with the church in America. This meant that they must become self-supporting in church, school and service union. An amusing situation arose when the officials told them that they could not close the church even if they wanted to because that would show that they had only been attending church in order to cooperate with the foreigners. Since they attended church while the missionary was there, they may not stop when the Chinese pastors are in charge and the Government approves of continuing. This sounds very well, but we fear that the result will be that the Communists will use the churches for purely propaganda purposes. Even before we left they used the church building for all sorts of political meetings.
for use. To have sold or removed a thing would have been sabotage. They even took Oswald's typewriter out of his trunk, hence this letter is slow coming to you for it must be written by hand.

Our journey home had started, but I cannot tell of our anxieties and experiences in detail. Our baggage was searched six times and even our persons five times. Then we had the long train journey to South China and anxiety lest we should be called back to answer some accusation. But at last we stopped across the frontier and we are free, free, FREE! Oswald asked the Hongkong officials "Could the Communists come over and drag us back"? He replied, "Only by starting a war." You can imagine our state of mind. While standing there on the platform I suddenly realized that Oswald had disappeared. The train came and all our party got on, but he did not return. I was almost hysterical. Had they really come and snatched him back? Then he showed up. He had been in the Hongkong police office telephoning for a room at the hotel.

The marvels of civilization crowded upon us thick and fast. The Society has given us the opportunity of visiting Oswald's relatives in Australia on our way home. No boat passage was available so we are going by plane.

May 2nd. Now we are in Australia, just imagine it? Only seventeen hours to fly from Hongkong to Australia, landing at Darwin. It has been impossible to get this letter off with all the marvels of travel crowding in on us. Oswald has seven brothers and sisters all older than he is, all the way from 64 to 80 years of age, and all living. Three others are missionaries, still at work, but all home now for a family reunion. Of course there are many nephews and nieces, and dozens of grand-nephews and nieces. We have not seen any of them for thirty years. Imagine a reunion after thirty years.

Australia and the people are wonderful, the country is beautiful, and there is a spirit of youthfulness and progress in the country. Thousands of settlers are coming in every week from the old countries of Europe, but we must leave all that for another time. We can still hardly realize that we can leave our bedroom and find no guards at the door; that we can meet people and talk freely. Here is plenty of good food, meat, bread and butter, fruit and well stocked shops. We are in a cottage beside a beautiful lake and will be here for two or three months. How we appreciate your prayers. Once again we have experienced the truth of the promise "Go ye and lo I am with you always."

Sincerely yours in Christian Service,

OSWALD AND IRENE GOULTER
Dear Friends of Dr. & Mrs. Goulter:

At last we have the good news that the Goulters are safe with their relatives in Australia. We received this long letter from them just this week which we are mimeographing and sending on to you as they requested.

Dr. Goulter stated in a personal letter that he had to destroy all his records even the addresses of his friends, but fortunately we still have the mailing list.

Should you wish to send them a personal contribution just make out your check to Dr. O.J. Goulter and mail it to the Bank of America at Redlands, California. This will be deposited to his account there. Then you may write him a personal note to their address in Australia.

Most sincerely,
Dr. Goulter's Service Link Church
R. Lee Pryor, Pastor

---

Dear Friends and Co-Workers:

At last we are free. We have stepped across the frontier from Communist China into the British colony of Hong Kong. Now we can write freely, which we could not do for the two years since the Communists took Peking. Our letters have been opened frequently. Quite innocent remarks might have been misinterpreted and held as evidence to prove we were spies. Many missionaries, especially Catholics, have been sent to prison and some have been executed. Even your chance remarks when writing might have sent us to prison, so we greatly appreciate your care when writing.

When we wrote you last Christmas we were not planning to leave China until another year or two of service. You will wonder why the change. It is because a very drastic change came over the attitude of Communist officials shortly after that time. They started a great campaign to teach the people to hate America and aid Korea. Apparently it was organized by the Russian Communists, because it is carried on throughout Asia, and I suppose the rest of the world, too. This campaign went along with the Chinese participation in the Korean war, the Americans and Chinese freezing orders and other war-like measures.

This "Hate Campaign" is one of the most amazing episodes I know of in all history. The Chinese have long regarded America as their best friend, and the spirit of goodwill and friendship has been very high during the years since America generously aided China in World War II. To think that people would deliberately act out to change the attitude of hundreds of millions from love to hate seems incredible, but they are doing it. Every child from kindergarten up is taught hate, and from kindergartners to college presidents are drilled and lectured on every possible and impossible reason why they should hate America.

Since the officials then regarded us as enemies in the land, it became necessary for us to leave as soon as possible for all work would be out of the question. On Dec. 28th, just the day after a wonderful Christmas at the church, the officials called our two leading pastors and myself into their office and said "Our Government has ordered the people to oppose America and aid Korea, but you are actively promoting friendship with America. If this continues, it will be regarded as treason and you will be held responsible."

This order alarmed the pastors for it threatened arrest, imprisonment, and possible execution. Our Chinese Pastor pointed out that this meant that either Korea and I must denounce America and the United Nations and side with the Communist Government, or else leave the country as quickly as possible. Hence on Dec. 28th we asked for permits to leave China. We soon discovered to our dismay that it was then not a question of when we could leave, but as to whether we could ever leave.

On Jan. 1st a cordon of soldiers was thrown around all mission property, police moved into our house, and we were prisoners. The homes of all pastors and Bible School students were searched and policed the same way. Even under the Japanese I
never saw such despondence as now comes over the Christian community. Our gardener was thrown into prison and compelled to squat in a room with seventy other prisoners without food in the bitter cold of winter for two days. Such a fate seemed to lie ahead for many of us.

You will wonder what crimes we had committed. In this connection you must remember that communist thinking is an amazing distorted thinking. We had conducted literacy classes for teaching people to read. This was regarded as "cultural aggression". We helped distribute food and clothing to starving refugees; this was considered a crime of "buying the people's hearts on behalf of the American Capitalist Aggression."

Quite apart from the nationwide campaign against America, our situation was made worse because the local government officials were ex-bandits and coveted the few possessions we had. In larger cities missionaries could sell their goods as they pleased, but in our town the officials coveted even our personal possessions. They would not allow us to bring away curtains, pictures, dishes, cameras or typewriters, etc. Even though they could not use these things; their hands itched to get hold of them and they took them from us as we left.

You will wonder what was happening to our churches and Christian friends during this time. First, they had to ask for "political instruction". They must even pretend to accept the Communist teaching. They must accept even what they know is false. Secondly, they must cooperate in proceedings and campaigns of hate against America. Thirdly, they must cut off all relations with the church in America. This means that they must become self-supporting in church school and service union. An amazing situation arose when the officials told them that they could not close the church until they made it because that would show that they had only been attending church in order to cooperate with the foreigners. (Of course, they did keep the church open while the missionary was there, they may not stop when the Chinese pastors are in charge and the government approves of continuing.) This seems very well, but we fear that the result will be that the Communists will use the churches for purely propaganda purposes. Even before we left they used the church building for all sorts of political meetings.

Now I must let Irene take over and tell about some of our personal experiences.

Dear Friends:

To tell all that has happened during the past three months would take too much space and would be a sad story. At 2 A.M. on Jan 1st this year we were awakened by five soldiers bursting unannounced into our bedroom. At daylight we discovered that the house was surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets as though they expected the Christians to fight.

A friendly local official sent us a whispered warning, that we were to be deported, but if we tried to take anything with us it would be taken from us on the way.

The soldiers then moved in with us. I had to prepare beds for them, then they used our kitchen, radio, stove, etc., and made themselves generally at home. We stayed in our bedroom most of the time, but even there we could not rest, they would not break in. We had to list even the smallest article to turn over to them.

There were innumerable things of which they might accuse us. For example, sometime before liberation, Oswald had received some ten thousand dollars for the Rural Service Union literacy and health work from the U.S.A. funds. We had read that a missionary in West China and his co-workers had been imprisoned for handling such funds. We had in the house a gold bar, the only means of keeping such funds during times of inflation. We were ordered to list all such possessions, but we feared to lose every cent we possessed so we hid it, and carried it and several million dollars of Chinese money with us by turns. A million dollars equaled about fifty American dollars. We lost quite a few nights sleep over this and various other ways in which we defied the unjust impositions of the local official bands.

Being cut off from our Chinese friends we could gain rows of them only through the "underground" such as when friends came to us at night, or through friendly workmen. They told us that a soldier had fabricated a story to the effect that Oswald had pushed a little boy into the creek because the boy had called him a "Foreign Devil". However, no little boy could be found who would say anything against us.

Our pastors and students were treated even more severely than we were. They had to list all that we had given them for years, the theory being that we had paid them to spy by giving them such things as musical instruments for use in the church school clothes when they were shivering with the cold. They were "interviewed" hour after hour to make them confess that they had aided us in some offense. Not one of them could be bribed to connect any story that would harm us. Pastor Wu, who was very nervous was compelled to arrange an "accusation meeting" against us and to be chairman of a committee to take over our personal property, nominally for the church but really for use by the officials. They even sealed up our food supplies lest we give none of
them to staring people before we leave, and worst of all sealed my piano.

We could be pronounced guilty of one principal crime, that of treasonably making the people love America when the Government demanded that they conduct hate campaigns. How had we done this? For two years our home had been a recreation center for all the young people of the community. They loved to sit in groups on the clean floor and rugs and play games. My fondest memory is of coming down stairs on their night and finding a half-dozen groups playing games, a couple playing the piano, another the violeto and one each at accordion and organ. By day we had been making for Oswald’s album or American magazines. The climax came on Christmas Eve when seventy young people were in our home singing Christmas carols and playing games by candle-light. The officials then went out to sing carols at the homes of the Christians. The next day they demanded that this friendliness change to hate; that was the beginning of the end. Moreover, instead of these happy, hopeful, young people, our house was full of surly, fault-finding police, spitting on the rugs and misusing the house.

However, you helped us to prepare equipment for China and must not feel that it was in vain. During the whole of this term of service it has been used to the utmost. The young people who had been music students said, "Mrs. Coulter, every time we play the piano and sing, it will be your voice that is singing through us. When they were compelled to pretend to hate the hate propaganda they said "Please do not listen to our voices when we repeat the hate slogans, but know that they cannot change our hearts." They are forced to “render unto Caesar” lip service, but they still render to God His due of love and consecration.

The climax of this pathetic experience came when the Christians were compelled to hold a kind of "acoustic meeting" which was their tragically sad farewell. Had they not done this we may have been subjected to a public trial before the mobs. At this meeting pastors, students and church leaders were instructed as to what they were to say, the officials sat in the room to see that they spoke against us, such as by condemning my "patriotic music" and pointing out how we have been "tools of the imperialists" meaning Truman and MacArthur. But this talk was only for the consumption of the officials. To us they gave a secret message which the officials did not understand.

One of my students played, another led, while all sang my favorite hymn, "Blest Be The Tie That Binds our Hearts in MutualLove."

Two days later at 10 A.M., the officials came to examine our baggage, we were to leave that night. But they would not allow us to bring any things we needed for a daily use. Pictures and cameras had to stay as they were, with the house all ready for use. To have sold or removed a thing would have been sabotage. They even took Oswald’s typewriter out of his trunk, hence this letter is slow coming to you for it must be written by hand.

Our journey home had started, but I cannot tell of our anxieties and experiences in detail. Our baggage was searched six times and even our persons five times. Then we had the long train journey to South China and anxiety lest we should be called back to answer some accusation. But at last we stepped across the frontier and we are free, free, FREE! Oswald asked the Hongkong officials "Could the Communists come over and drag us back?" He replied, "Only by starting a war. You can imagine our state of mind. While standing there on the platform I suddenly realized that Oswald had disappeared. The train came and all our party got on, but he did not return. I was almost hysterical. Had they really come and snatched him back?” He showed up. He had been in the Hongkong police office telephoning for a room at the hotel.

The marvels of civilization crowded upon us thick and fast. The Society has given us the opportunity of visiting Oswald’s relatives in Australia on our way home. No boat passage was available so we are going by plane.

May God, now we are in Australia, just imagine it? Only seventeen hours to fly from Hongkong to Australia, landing at Darwin. It has been impossible to get this letter off with all the marvels of travel crowding in on us. Oswald has seven brothers and sisters all older than he is, all the way from 64 to 80 years of age, and all living. Three others are missionaries, still at work, but all home now for a family reunion. Of course there are many nephews and nieces, and dozens of grand-nephews and nieces. We have not seen any of them for thirty years. Imagine a reunion after thirty years.

Australia and the people are wonderful, the country is beautiful, and there is a spirit of youthfulness and progress in the country. Thousands of settlers are coming in every week from the old countries of Europe, but we must lose all that for another time. We can still hardly realize that we can leave our bedroom and find no guards at the door, that we can meet people and talk freely.There is plenty of good food, meat, bread and butter, fruits and well-stocked shops. We are in a cottage beside a beautiful lake and will be here for two or three months. How we appreciate your prayers. Once again we have experienced the truth or the promise "Go ye and lo I am with you always."

Sincerely yours in Christian Service,

OSWALD AND IRENE COULTER
FRONT:

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Haynes & Vesper Sts.
Van Nuys, Calif.

May 1961

POSTMASTER: If addressee has moved notify sender on Form 3572 postmark guaranteed.