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SHANGHAI HAD ITS OWN CHRISTIAN ORDER

New Zealander's Heterodox Parish

LAST November the New Zealand Presbyterian General Assembly elected as Moderator for 1946 a man who had spent 40 of his 69 years in China and who was still, at that time, in a Japanese internment camp. Last week, by air from Hong Kong, he arrived in New Zealand. Extremely spare and with a pallor of weariness after four and a-half years in enemy hands, the Reverend Herbert Davies had still an erect step and an infectious laugh.

"When the balloon went up," he said, "Mrs. Davies was in Hong Kong in the very building that the Japanese had marked down to be their military headquarters, and she was held there for some weeks after they took over. Word came to me in Canton that she was killed. But before I could confirm it, Canton also was captured and I was put under 'house internment.' Chinese acquaintances could visit and bring me food and I even got the BBC news, too, through my friend the Roman Catholic bishop, who, being a Frenchman, was

still free. The Japanese, however, kept pressing me to be repatriated by one of the neutral ships that were running to Madagascar. For my part I kept refusing until they said my wife was in Shanghai and that they would send both of us home. But when I reached Shanghai they reported she was still in Hong Kong. And when, after six months more, she really arrived we had missed the last repatriation ship. That is how I came to be held right through the war instead of being sent home early, as the Japanese arranged for whenever it was possible.

The Only One Left

"One year of the war had gone by now. But another six months passed before the bulk of 'enemy aliens' in Shanghai were interned. Even then very many were not. For example, they approached me and asked if I would be willing to stay out of internment and help to look after various old people' in the 'Missionary Home.' There were 40 there all told, with an average age of 71—including two nurses in their fifties. We managed our own affairs without any interference. Only once a week or so a gendarme looked in for a few minutes as a matter of form. Places of amusement were 'out of bounds,' but otherwise we went practically anywhere, provided we wore a red armband with a big 'B'.

"I was now the only European ordained minister left free in the city. The rest had gone with their work to Free China or else been interned or repatriated. Shanghai has a big non-Chinese population as you know, about sixty thousand perhaps, and not all by any means are Americans and British, or Japanese. So you won't be surprised that in 12 months I had conducted more than 70 burials. Dean Fitchett had asked me to carry on his work as far as possible, and now the Swiss Consul unofficially appointed me unofficial chaplain to European Shanghai. In this capacity I not only conducted the rites that a Presbyterian is normally familiar with, but confirmations as well. These were for various sorts of Scandinavians—Lutherans. I used the Anglican form of worship on Sundays, preached a good-measure Presbyterian sermon, and wore Chinese clerical robes.

Same Old Stew

"In '44 things tightened up and I was put into camp with the last 300 British and American to be rounded up. It was a clean sweep—even a man without legs was wheeled in. Naturally I missed precious freedom, but it was really for our own good, in that prices were skyrocketing and we would have starved anywhere else. The sergeant—there were only three guards besides him—was not a friendly sort and got a big kick out of showing his authority. But I can't say we were ever ill-treated. Food on the whole was enough in quantity, but not in quality. Morning, noon, and night for almost weeks on end the menu-board would simply read 'S.O.S.'—Same Old Stew. In consequence there was a lot of



REV. HERBERT DAVIES

Anglican services, Presbyterian sermons,
Chinese vestments

sickness, including dysentery and malaria. I became Head Gardener—more correctly, the main gardener—and it was a great thrill when my tomato-plants bore enough to give everyone seven each. With cucumbers and lettuces they varied our diet a little.

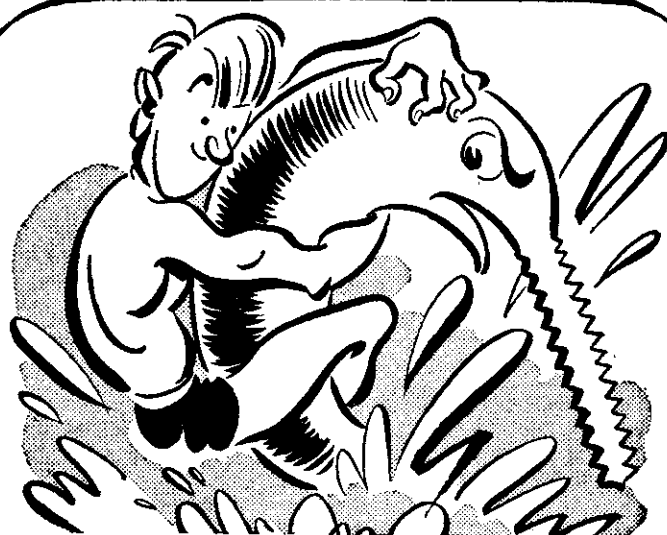
"We got the daily paper, Jap-inspired, of course, and we learned a lot from it—between the lines. But the way the puppet dollar was dwindling would have been enough, anyhow, to tell us that the war was reaching an end. Then U.S. planes began to come over and we felt most uncomfortable, because some Japanese colonel had his headquarters just 20 feet away from my bedroom. So we were doubly glad when 'over the wall' came news that Japan had surrendered. In about two minutes a Union Jack was fluttering over the gate, followed presently by a Dutch flag, and then the Stripes, and then the Russian flag. But it was all premature. However, only a day or so later planes came over from Okinawa and dropped parachutes—the loveliest sight, all colours of the rainbow, with food for us in the straps. Of course the Chinese on whose gardens and roofs they fell got a good 50 per cent of it, because what Heaven deposits on your land belongs to you, but we got enough and to spare.

The Biggest Thrill

"But my biggest thrill of the whole war was still to come. Yes, the greatest sight of all those years were the words, 'New Zealand' on the shoulder flash of an officer who walked into the camp some time later! It was Brigadier Clifton making contact with New Zealanders throughout China to plan their transport home.

"Hong Kong, when we reached it again, was a sad sight. The business blocks seemed scarcely damaged at all. But those beautiful white houses on The Peak and in the shrubberies up the sides were just blackened shells. It was not

(continued on next page)



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