

Unwavering Hope: Fr. Harold Rigney's fight for Beijing Fu Jen University¹

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... [S]end [Holy Father] more scholars from within the Church who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and establish a university in a major city such as Beijing, which can enroll students both from within the Church and outside, and be a kind of model for the country².

“Fu Jen” was founded in 1925, and those weren't the best of Times in China to establish a Catholic University. The country's administration was divided between the Northern and Southern Governments, the Communist insurrection was growing fast, the Japanese was encroaching in the Northeast, and it was the midst of the 1922-1927 Anti-Christian movement³.

Our protagonist Harold W. Rigney (SVD) was born December 18, 1900, *in the County of Cook, Chicago District 3104, 750 W51 ST*. He was the fourth son (1 dead) of a book binder, William Rigney, then 34, from Montreal. His mother was Susan Selby, 29, from Jacksonville (Ill)⁴. He lived in the neighborhood known as “Back of the Yards”⁵ which together with Canaryville is part of Southwest Chicago's New City area. Since age 14 he was in the habit of writing his diary, a habit he kept until at least 1968⁶. His habit was a “first source blessing” that will accompany us through his service as last Rector of Fu Jen.

Thanks to his diary entries we have quite a detailed knowledge of his vocational and missionary journey; he entered Novitiate on September 7, 1923; Was ordained priest on April 19, 1930 and showed his interest to go to China, although he was sent to different mission places in the USA. He obtained a PhD in Paleontology from the University of Chicago in 1937. When World War II erupted and the US entered into the conflict, he served as Army Chaplain of the USA Air Corps for three and a half years, *until May 1945 when the European hostilities ceased. The remainder of his service [in the army] was spent in the United States*⁷. Two months later, on April 11, 1946, he was appointed as rector of Peiping Fu Jen Catholic University through a cable that read “RIGNEY GO PEKING SOON POSSIBLE”⁸.

¹ SVD Techy Archives = SVDTA. SVDRA = SVD Rome Archives.

² 1912 letter of Ma Xiangbo to Pope Pius X. See Ruth Hayhoe and Lu Yongling (ed). *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China*. Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

³ According to Lewis Hodous in his article “The Anti-Christian Movement in China” (The Journal of Religion, 1930, Vol. 10, (4): 487-494), the movement had 4 stages: 1919-1922 incubation; 1922-1924 propagation; 1924-1925 direct action; 1925 consolidation and expansion. See also 陶飞亚著。《共产国际代表与中国非基督徒运动》[J]。《近代史研究》，2003年第5期，114-136。

⁴ *Delayed Certificate of Birth* (February 27, 1947). At the time of signature, his father lives in 5143 So. Laflin St., Chicago (Ill). SVDTA Box 8.

⁵ Back of the Yards was an industrial and residential neighborhood so named because it was near the former Union Stock Yards; see Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_City,_Chicago, retrieved on Sep 20, 2025.

⁶ The last one I found, but some of his belongings were disposed after his death.

⁷ Harold W. Rigney self-presentation Resume (last recorded date May 1970 Became President of the Divine Word College). SVDTA.

⁸ Charles Michel, SVD Provincial USA Western Province. *Letter to Harold W. Rigney* (20/4/1946) urging him to “betake to Peking as soon as possible”. SVDTA

1) First period: School year 1946-1947

a) Arrival to China: Peiping

It seems that fr. Harold Rigney did not grasp this appointment to Beijing in all its urgency, and his provincial superior, nine days after this call, had to insist him through a letter on the urgency of his appointment⁹. This was April 20; 40 days later, by June 1st, Rigney was in Okinawa, from there to Shanghai where he visited Aurora University and some Catholic authorities, namely Cardinal Tien, with whom departed in a special car to Nanjing, where they were received by Cardinal Yu Pin, then with Tien, he continued to Qingdao, the SVD mission area in China, where he even spent some time doing some pastoral work in the Navy boats moored at the port and finally arrived to Beijing by a U.S. Marine plane on June 25.

He still seemed to be in no hurry, but must also understand that as he says, *[I had] received no instructions beyond orders to go to Peiping[,] there is no appointment for me to any administrative post at the Fu Jen*¹⁰. It seems that his appointment to Beijing Fu Jen wasn't yet even confirmed; *Fr. Rachmann SVD came to my room for a long talk. He said: On the day I arrived in Peiping -Mon May [sic. right month is June] 25, he received letter from Sup. General instructing him to consult again with Msgr. Zanin, Apost. Delegate, regarding need of American Rector at University. He planned to fly to Shanghai for this. He also said the General had considered appointing a University Rector and a Community Rector, and that he Rahmann would retain latter. He said he thought he and I (as University Rector) could work together*¹¹.

If circumstances were dire at the moment of Fu Jen's foundation, there were no less when Rigney arrived to Beijing to manage the university after the end of the War against Japanese Aggression; although it looked rosy in the horizon, there were still many "unresolved issues" ahead. As a first, he came to Beijing also as a counterweight to the German nationality of the last rector, Rudolf Rahmann (雷冕), who was appointed in view of the good relations at the time, between the KMT and Nazi Germany and later between Japan and Germany's Third Reich; indeed many German SVDs were working at Fu Jen and one of the first issues Harold Rigney had to

⁹ Dear Father Rigney:

The cable received from father Superior General appointing you for the Catholic U in Peking of April 11 "RIGNEY GO PEKING SOON POSSIBLE" I have communicated to you by phone and also asked you to **do all in your power to comply** with Father General's orders, namely to betake yourself to Peking **as soon as possible. Conditions at the Catholic U of Peking are such as to make your presence there imperative.**

A letter received from Father general only a few days ago -April 17- confirms what I have told you. Father General writes: "I received a telegram from Father Rahmann in which he presents Father **Rigney's coming as very urgent.** After due consideration the Propaganda [Fidei] then decided that **we should send Father Rigney by all means and without delay in order to prevent any imminent danger for the University.** Please apprise in my name Father Rigney of this situation and **urge him and help him to make preparations for an early departure** for Peking. I have advised already Father Rector Rahmann of his coming and given him also definite informations and instructions".

So far Father General. All I can add is what I remarked before: **Do all in our power to betake yourself to Peking as soon as possible.** If there is anything I can do for you in obtaining an early passage to China and Peking, please let me know. For the rest I wish you success, especially for your activity in Peking at the Catholic University, and with every good wish and kindest regards, I am,

Very Sincerely yours
Charles Michel, S.V.D.,
Provincial.

Appointment letter of Harold Rigney to China as Rector of Fu Jen, by SVD USA Western Province provincial, Fr. Charles Michel. April 20, 1946. SVDTA Box 4. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰ Harold Rigney. Entry for June 15

¹¹ Ibid. Entry for June 30

address was how to proceed with the German nationals, as the German Third Reich has now disappeared and Germany is being divided into two countries.

b) It's good, but it can be better

For Rigney, Fu Jen was the best of the Catholic managed higher education institutions in China, the flagship of the Catholic Church, a position the University achieved through the hard work of the Benedictines and former SVD personnel who steered the University and its faculty towards its aim. But, at the same time, Rigney was worried, because *it will require great efforts to hold this position for the future.*¹²

His first observation is that Fu Jen lacked “Catholic Spirit”, as religion couldn’t be taught in schools and no religious activity can be compulsory for the students. The second observation is that the SVD had lost a great deal of control over the university management, *especially during the last years*¹³. Regulations required a Chinese national as Presidents or Principals of educational institutions, and as there was no Catholic Chinese priests (or else) available and with the required qualifications. Both situations were outcomes of the aforementioned “Anti-Christian Movement”.

As a consequence, many catholic educational institutions resorted to a double management structure:

- The official one according to relevant laws and regulations which was supervised and approved by the Government, and
- A parallel Catholic non-official but decision taking one that used different names, like “Rector” (Fu Jen) or “Chancellor (Aurora)¹⁴. This setup worked for the catholic side as long as the Chinese official side accepted his role: no decision making role at all.

Regarding the first one –the lack of Catholic Spirit, this is the synthesis he presented to SVD community in one of the first meetings they hold after his arrival:

UNIVERSITY’S General aim: To participate in the mission effort of China		Specific aims:
Special aims:	<p>According to the Church & uncurbed by the Government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should include the following faculties: Theology, Philosophy, Literature and Arts, Law and Medicine. - Must be Catholic in a double sense: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Negative: Nothing be taught contrary to the teachings of the Church. b) Positive: Catholic thought be taught in Theology, Philosophy, Sociology, Economy and similar branches, and a spiritual program be carried in such a manner that the students may practice their religion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide Catholic education for Chinese Catholics - Provide a sound education

¹² ...there are already in China two Jesuit Universities...well known and flourishing...Archbishop Yu Pin is working very hard to establish in Nanking a Chinese University to be taught by American Jesuits...Jesuits of the French Canadian Province working at Suchow, have been asked by the Chinese Government to start a Catholic University...Riberi has encouraged them to do so...he favors starting a Catholic university in the South, perhaps at Canton, and another in the South-West, perhaps in Szechuan...China will have seven Catholic Universities in the not too distant future. Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for December 17, 1946. SVDRA. F.8174

¹³ Ibid. Entry for August 10, 1946. SVDRA. F.8138

¹⁴ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for December 17, 1946. SVDRA. F.8173

To develop and conduct a center of Catholic Humanism	- A program of Catholic humanism carried on in a university would involve: the teaching of fundamentals in undergrad department, and the introduction to methods of research in graduate department.	(Christian if possible) for non-Catholics
	<p>According to the Church but as curtailed by the State.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full programs as above as long as religion is left out; therefore, Theology could not be accredited. - Philosophy, Church History and Comparative Religions would be allowed as optional branches 	- Make efforts in the training of priests and Catholic teachers.

For Rector Rigney the University's Catholic identity was a cornerstone and the defining and significant trait of Peiping Fu Jen University, even though it was hindered both from inside and outside the University.¹⁵

Regarding management, even though he recognized the value of tolerance and diversity as a favorable and remarkable aspect of Fu Jen University, where an open atheist like Dr Hu Shih was a former member of the board and a mild Protestant as Ch'en Yuan¹⁶ was President, Rigney hoped that one day the leaders of the University, especially the President, could be closer to the Catholic Church and, if possible, fervent Catholics: *I am anxious to secure the service of a genuine Catholic [as president] who is willing to cooperate with foreigners in the development of Fu Jen primarily as a Catholic School.*¹⁷ He already had two notable catholic people in the University's administration: Chang Huai and the son of Ying Lianzhi, Ying Qian Li, Ignatius.¹⁸

Rigney's hunt for a committed and fervent Catholic to sit at the helm of Fu Jen lasted until the Ministry of Education of the New China made it clear in September 1950 that Mr. Ch'en Yuan was to stay as President and the Catholic Church or its representative had no say in that decision. This cleavage between the authority of the Catholic Church representative and that of the President was a major issue in the last days of Fu Jen as a Catholic institution. Nevertheless, if a committed Catholic would have held the Presidency of the university, the fate of Fu Jen wouldn't

¹⁵ Our new chapel was blessed this morning before the eight o'clock Mass. Its name is the Chapel of the Divine Word ... the opening of this chapel has been hoped for over a year as a step forward in our spiritual program for the University ... When I came to the University it was quite evident that the development of a Catholic program and the emphasis of the Catholic character of this University was necessary. In the school year '46 and '47 an effort was made to introduce student counselors who would serve as University chaplains ... this was sabotaged by an unknown individual who published an article in the local Chinese paper stating that Fu Jen has established a bureau in which those who were in love could seek advice. This rendered necessary the suspension [of the program] ... During the Summer of 1947 before departing...I arranged with Fr. Meiners that he should become University chaplain and that he should give a course on Catholic doctrine for Catholic students ... followed by Fr. Kroes's course in Catholic Church History ... I asked Fr. Kroes who was then the director of studies to arrange the class schedule for this course with Fr. Meiners ... On my return from Rome, I found to my disappointment that nothing has been done... Harold Rigney, entry for December 19, 1948. SVDRA. F.8490

¹⁶ Harold Rigney often mentioned that Ch'en Yuan was a Protestant Christian, although I have not found any other reliable source showing he was. Was it possible that he was baptized as such but nor practicing? If that is the case, after 1949 his "Christian past" fell into oblivion.

¹⁷ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for March 6, 1947. SVDRA. FF.8203-8204

¹⁸ According to Rigney, both of them were not suitable to become presidents of the university. Rigney considered Chang Huai a poorly instructed Catholic ... very nationalistic and has often caused or threatened to cause us a good deal of trouble. While we are not in favor of his continued service at the university we do not want him to become an open foe of our work. On Mr Ying he says that while not quite as nationalistic [as Chang Huai] seems to have the same ambition of becoming president of the school. Instead, in his mind there were two other people that he considered much more suitable to be presidents of Fu Jen: John Wu, the Chinese minister to the Vatican, and Francis Yeh, the head of the Shanghai based National Catholic Society. See: Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for March 6, 1947. SVDRA. FF.8203-8204

have change a bit; it simply would had alleviated Rigney's burden during the last school year of Fu Jen as a Catholic university (1949-1950).

c) The dormant foe within

After the end of the war, though the Communist Party tried to develop the cell they had in Fu Jen, as they were doing in other universities, especially national ones like Beida or Tsinghua, the fact that the university was a private one and its catholic character will make it difficult for communist cells to develop and act openly until the fall of Peiping in 1949; still, they kept a low profile waiting for the right time to surface.¹⁹

Since his arrival Rigney had showed much interest in Communism and its development in China, and the way it deeply affected the survival of the Catholic Church in that land. He was invested in creating study and information dissemination committees and meetings to make the world and the Church aware of the grave consequences of a takeover of China by the Communist Party.

Together with the University January 1947 Monthly Report, Rigney also sent to Rome a special report on Communist activity entitled: "Christianity in Communist Territories of North China"²⁰. Rigney felt that the situation was serious and delicate and *very little had been done in this regard, and the rest of the world, especially the secular press, seemed to be ignorant of the grave dangers threatening Christianity in China.*²¹ This memorandum was the collective work of many Catholic religious missionaries in China (CICM, Jesuits, Columbans, SVD, Franciscans) together with some bishops and even the internuncio Msgr Riberi, and it was done *on the presumption that he [Rigney] would send one copy to Rome, and one to Father Gilligan, secretary of the Internuncio, with the suggestion that, should he think it advisable, he should hand one copy to Dr. Stuart, the American Ambassador.*²²

By the end of February Rigney and Fu Jen University had become quite involved with this Report, and a committee called "Cultural Research Committee" was created to continue and complete the investigation.²³

¹⁹ Some of the Catholic students in the women's college posted anonymous signs complaining against the activity of the few students who are quite clearly communist and as such have organized self government bodies among the students. The communists have lost much prestige among the student body as a result of this counter-propaganda. Few days later, on April 27 he wrote: A Catholic student of the first year of Economics visited me and complained that communistic activities were going on in the university under the name of student self government activities. This student voiced the general feeling of our student body when he explained his real purpose in attending the university was to study and he had no intention of striking. He hoped the university authorities would take a firm stand in opposing trouble makers. See: Harold Rigney, entry for April 27, 1947. SVDRA. F.8356

²⁰ He mentions it in the report (SVDRA. F.8195), but it wasn't among the available materials I got.

²¹ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for January 31, 1947. SVDRA. F.8195

²² It was done on the presumption that he [Rigney] would send one copy to Rome, and one to Father Gilligan, secretary of the Internuncio, with the suggestion that, should he think it advisable, he should hand one copy to Dr. Stuart, the American Ambassador. See Harold Rigney, SVDRA F.8196. Sadly, there was not a copy of this report among the SVD Roman Archives photocopied materials at Fu Jen University.

²³ I invited the Franciscan, Jesuit, Lazarist, Scheut superiors to appoint a priest, while I appointed Father Arens..., to be a member of the committee. Today the five fathers met in my office and outlined a plan of procedure. It was decided to ask the cardinal ... to appoint a chinese priest. See: Harold Rigney, entry for February 26, 1947. SVRA. F.8202

2) Second period: Year 1948: the unthinkable did happen.

For Rigney the future of Fu Jen at the time of his departure from China in September 1947 to attend the SVD General Chapter at Rome as delegate, was a bright one; he used this trip also to go around the world dispersing information about the University to make Fu Jen a known player in the international arena -especially among Catholic high educational institutions, and to gather information to improve the academic standards of Fu Jen according to present international uses; he also searched for possible academic ties between Fu Jen and other foreign universities.

But upon his return to Beijing in the morning of February 27, 1948²⁴, the situation in China had changed drastically. If one year before he was meeting with some Catholic religious authorities discussing how to stop communist's cells infiltration in Fu Jen²⁵, his concerns upon arrival in 1948 would become what -if anything- can be done to help Fu Jen survive a likely communist takeover of Beijing, and even of China?

From awareness and defense against communistic influences and activities, Rigney started to see the situation as a fight for survival: to be or not to be Catholic, that would become the question. The first diary entry after his return in March 1948 clearly echoes all this new worrying situation:

Grave military situation in North China...Some of the Fathers have been very much alarmed, and have spread their fears among other members of the community. ... The community comprises about forty-five members: six Americans, four Dutchmen, one Belgian, two Australians, one Chinese, and about thirty-one Germans. ... The Chinese staff shows signs of uneasiness, because many of them would be undoubtedly in danger should the communist take the city. ... Aside from personnel...expensive library of 140,000 volumes. I called on the American Consulate...though Peiping was in no immediate danger, it was expected to fall or be besieged soon²⁶.

He felt it was his personal responsibility as Catholic rector to uphold the catholicity of the university and the safety and well-being of students, staff and teachers that comprised Fu Jen University, and he has to do this while heavily hindered by another significant consequence of the dire situation of the Chinese Nationalist Government: the financial burden that currency exchange devaluation and inflation brought upon Fu Jen's already strained economy. Rigney affirmed that *[t]he money market is very unstable. Two days ago the US dollar sold at CNC 11,000,000. ... One of our big problems is to get sufficient amount of Chinese money to meet our salaries²⁷.*

a) Peiping soon to become Beijing

By November 27, 1948 Rigney wrote a detailed report to the General Superior in Rome in which he elaborated on the delicate and desperate "Communist encircled" situation of Beijing:

²⁴ Harold Rigney. Entry for 27, February, 1948. SVDRA F.8403.

²⁵ Ibid. Entry for 11, August, 1947, SVDRA F.8630

²⁶ Harold Rigney, entry for 1, March, 1948. SVDRA. F.8403.

²⁷ Ibid. Entry for 22, July, 1948. SVDRA. F.8462.

General Fu has nineteen armies who are all deployed in this Peiping-Tientsin corridor ... families of officers of this armies ... moved to Peiping and Tientsin ... as a motive for the soldiers to fight for these cities. The defense line has been shortened. Kalgan to the north... and Paoding to the southwest have been evacuated ... defense lines will be Tsuo Chow about thirty-five miles to the southwest, the Western Hills, about ten miles to the west, Nan-K'ou pass 35 miles to the northeast; then Kupehkou pass about fifty or sixty miles to the northeast. The railroad from Peiping to Tientsin and then on to Tanku is guarded about fifteen to twenty miles on either side. Tientsin is guarded by Tangshan...the coast is defended from about fifteen miles south of the Great Wall south to about fifteen or twenty miles south from Tanku bar ... General Fu is greatly outnumbered²⁸. Although this information seems quite detailed, it was open information available in the city simply by asking the right people (Diplomats, army personnel, news, other university principals and congregations' superiors...) as Rigney did.

One of the problems Rigney had to face was the lack of proper directions from Rome due to the complexity of the situation, the speed of the developments, and the distance involved. In the end he felt anxious about of having to decide all by himself²⁹: the convenience-safety of carrying on with the University and the possibility of endangering the lives of confrères, faculty and students in case Peiping suffered a long and bloody siege.

He went gathering information all over Beijing, and this helped him in taking important decisions that will help once Peiping is under Communist mandate, and this seemed to be sooner than later.

- Evacuation of SVD personnel.^{30, 31}
- Assistance in the evacuation of foreign faculty if asked, although *no promises will be given them regarding the future.*³²
- Non-evacuation of University and/or Chinese staff and faculty.³³
- It was decided that Fu Jen was to continue running, but as December was considered *the critical month for the political and military situation...the sooner we allow our students to return home, the better.*^{34, 35}

²⁸ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for November 27, 1948 letter to SVD Fr. General. SVDRA. FF.8461-8462

²⁹ The University has adopted a policy to carry on normally and make no efforts to move even should the Reds occupy the city and to carry on thereafter as long as possible. We have received no instructions from you or the Propaganda on this matter ... Archbishop Riberi advised us not to evacuate ... many of the Chinese members of the staff are pressing us to evacuate and go south taking them with us. This would involve great expenditures of money and perhaps be prohibited by government ... [and] the danger of ... precipitating a panic among the people. Ibid.

³⁰ Minutes of the House Council, November 30, 1948. SVDRA. F.8453-8454 See also entry for December 4, 1948. SVDRA F.8488

³¹ See also Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for December 4, 1948. SVDRA F.8488

³² Ibid. Minutes of the House Council, December 4, 1948. SVDRA. F.8454

³³ Ibid. Minutes of the House Council, November 30, 1948. SVDRA. F.8451.

About the President and Dr. Chang Chung Yi it was agreed by the Council *that we ought to guarantee livelihood and housing for these two because of their loyalty and of their usefulness in the future...but no promises should be made to them about Formosa...the Formosa project is to be exclusively SVD.* (See: F.8455)

³⁴ Ibid. Entry for November 24, 1948. SVDRA. FF.8459-8460.

³⁵ The University Executive Council on November 24 re-scheduled the end of term to an earlier date, December 24, so students could start the New Year and the Spring vacation as soon as possible, therefore avoiding to worry about the lives of thousands of students, faculty and staff should battle in Beijing became a reality.

- Sending important documents abroad (students' records, SVD and Fu Jen properties' titles).^{36, 37, 38}

By December 1948 the Communist troops were just hundreds of meters away of Peiping city walls. Yenching University³⁹ just five miles northwest of the city walls fell in Communist hands on December 16, and the city's electricity plant and water treatment plant (300 meters from the walls) fell on the 21, and the city lacked both services, and Rigney wrote about the uneasiness among Peiping citizens.⁴⁰

The staunch traditional anti-communist stance of the Catholic Church, and the zeal Rigney and Fu Jen opposed the expansion of communist cells in Fu Jen, with the study committees, the information dissemination and so on, would become a hindrance for the times ahead. So, according to Paul Auer⁴¹, on December 1948 it was clear for the SVD at Fu Jen that Beijing was doomed and Fu Jen SVD community was getting ready for that day. Among the many letters he wrote back home, on the one of December 14, 1948, Paul Auer noted: *No coal, no electricity, no food -Peiping is going to be a wonderful place for the next few months – and two of our fellows Wiesen and Bates are still there! ... These fellows up there were supposedly helping to clear the archives of the University of all incriminating documents relating to the school's fight against communism. I can really imagine they never imagined they'd be in so much hot water so suddenly.*⁴²

3) Third period: coexistence

On January 31, 1949 Rigney received a call early afternoon informing him that the Red Army had entered Peiping; together with Fr. Wiesen he drove to meet the army. Rigney ends his January 1949 monthly report with a brief account of the liberation of Beijing:

*[We] met the army on the Hsi Huang Ch'eng Ken, the street bordering the North wall of the Winter Palace. We travelled along the marching army to Hsi Chih Men (the Northwest Gate) through which they entered. The soldiers were all heavily armed and looked very serious. Thousands of people stood on the street side silently watching the army. We met three or four groups of students who numbered between a hundred fifty to two hundred cheering and welcoming the conquering army. The papers reported that 22,000 soldiers entered Peiping.*⁴³

During the time of the anti-Japanese war and the civil war, Peiping Fu Jen Catholic University was one of the less anti-Japanese or communist-conflictive universities in China. This was a result of the long-standing anti-communist stance of the Catholic Church and the more or

³⁶ Minutes of the House Council, November 30, 1948. SVDRA F.8451

³⁷ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for January 11, 1949. SVDRA. F.8518

³⁸ Ibid. Entry for January 3, 1949. SVDRA. F.8517

³⁹ Today's Tsinghua University.

⁴⁰ [W]hat everyone fears more is the violence of the mob in the turn-over time. In the past it was the mob that did most of the looting, raping, destroying and murdering. The coming of the Communist soldier restores order. See Harold Rigney, entry for December 13, 1948. F.8490

⁴¹ Paul Auer was an American SVD priest who arrived to Beijing in 1947 with the purpose of studying Chinese and join the SVD China mission.

⁴² Paul Auer, Letters from Paul Auer in China (Dec. 1947-Feb. 11, 1949). SVDTA

⁴³ Harold Rigney, entry for January 31, 1949. SVDRA. F.8527

less clear division between political activism and academics in both catholic and western traditional educational practice⁴⁴.

On the House Council of February 11, 1949⁴⁵ he clearly envisioned the twofold path ahead for Fu Jen University and the SVD regarding the new situation brought about by the Communist liberation of Peiping that happened less than two weeks ago: Adaptation / “modus vivendi” or direct confrontation.⁴⁶

Fr. Harold Rigney preferred the first approach, and such was the path approved by the House Council, but would it be possible to achieve this “modus vivendi” that aimed to save Fu Jen as a Catholic high educational institution in New China?

Looking at the information present in the material sent to Rome by Rigney, we can divide the year and a half going from the liberation of Peiping (January 1949) to the liberation-taking over of Fu Jen (October 1950) into four periods.

- 1) 1949 spring semester: Political pressure build-up; first trial for adaptation.
- 2) 1949 summer period: evaluation of progress and discernment of next steps (I).
- 3) 1949-1950 school year: “modus vivendi” test year. Both sides put to practice the 1949 summer discernment about their principles and on what could or couldn't be compromised and scout the possibilities for a “way for coexistence” between the new Chinese Communist Government and Fu Jen Catholic University.
- 4) 1950 summer period: evaluation of progress and discernment of next steps (II).

I- 1949 spring semester: political pressure build-up

The political pressure over Fu Jen wasn't exercised directly by the New China's political authorities but through proxies, mostly the Chinese staff, students and professors at Fu Jen, the local media and public opinion, and also through “attitude”. This pressure-built up had three main operational theaters:

- The administration reorganization.
- The updating of the academic curriculum to new China's standards.
- The propaganda pressure through media and the promotion of an officially sanctioned “anti-imperialist sentiment” that, in fact and most of the time, distilled “off the record” through anti-foreign and anti-Catholic attitudes and actions by government officials, university staff and students, and the general public.

⁴⁴ That the Catholic Church Educational didn't encourage political activism does not mean that it didn't have its ideological preferences. As said, Fu Jen and main stream Catholicism was openly anticommunist. One of the possible reasons for this conception of education as a lofty “Ivory Tower” may reside in the Catholic Church deep Platonic heritage. For a better understanding of Catholic Philosophical and educational tradition. See: Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: a Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition*. Sheed & Ward, Lanham, 2009.

⁴⁵ Just two days after Rigney wasn't received by the new educational authorities of Beijing on February 9.

⁴⁶ We could follow one of two policies ... The first will be a policy of adaptation to the new times, working out a modus vivendi with the communist requirements. This would be in harmony with the advice of Archbishop Riberi ... The second policy would be one of fighting to maintain the status quo. If this were adopted, we would give up nothing without great struggle. It would entail much fighting, and perhaps ill-feeling on both sides, and it would also be used as evidence of ill-will, to say nothing of reactionary tendencies, on our part. See Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for February 11, 1949. SVDRA. F.8532

1. Exclusion:

Four days after the communist army entered Beijing, on February 4, in the afternoon, the Chinese staff at Fu Jen held a meeting, where *no foreigners were allowed*⁴⁷. This meeting was far from representative of the university staff, as only about sixty people, out of more than 300, assisted. According to Rigney it was organized by Prof. Liu Ching-fang (mathematics) and Ch'ai Te-keng (history) who *were most active in their attacks to the University and the foreign Fathers*⁴⁸ during the meeting. Five days later, Rigney had a first-hand experience of the new situation. On February 9, President Ch'en Yuan, Prof. Chang Chung-yi and Fr. H. Rigney paid a visit to the new educational authorities in Beijing; they asked to see Mr. Tien. What happened after half an hour's wait, showed Rigney the dramatic change of situation. *We were met by Mr. Chang Sung-ling ... [he] came up to us, and greeted the President and Chang Chung-yi, but gave me no recognition whatsoever. He neither shook hands with me, nor expressed any other kind of greeting. He told Prof. Chang that he would not receive foreigners. After Chang Chung-yi informed me of this I left and waited outside in the car.*⁴⁹ This left a deep impression in Rigney about the nature of a possible future communist government of China; *It is quite evident that whatever is foreign irritates the Chinese, especially the Communists.*⁵⁰

2. Irrelevance

a. Power wise

This new situation made Rigney think about possible ways to build bridges; some of them like *becoming more chinese ... perhaps also eating their diet*⁵¹ or having more Chinese priests and sisters working at Fu Jen were already impossible to implement or too late to have any real effect. Another way he thought of, was *that the Fathers and Sisters rendered themselves less conspicuous in the Administration by retiring from some key posts, sharing with the Chinese more of the responsibilities, and the knowledge of the administration.*⁵² He only had time to consult this idea with Fr. Hüngsberg, as that very same day President Ch'en Yuan and Dr. Chang Chung-yi called him into a conference and after telling him about the seriousness of the situation, proposed him the same he has been thinking about, that the Fathers and Sisters *retire from the prominent positions they held.*⁵³ Rigney agreed and even went further in his proposals than what was indicated by President Ch'en, who expressed great surprised and approval upon hearing Rigney's views.

On February 25 the House council made some amendments to the original memorandum and presented it on the 26th of February.⁵⁴ The main points of its content can be summarized as follows:

1. The school was founded in 1925 and since 1933 is entrusted to the Society of the Divine Word; New times and conditions require changes. These proposals have been discussed, amended, re-stated and approved by the due Church

⁴⁷ Harold Rigney, entry for February 4, 1949. SVDRA. F.8529

⁴⁸ Harold Rigney, entry for February 4, 1949. SVDRA. F.8529

⁴⁹ Ibid. Entry for February 9, 1949. SVDRA. F.8531

⁵⁰ Ibid. Entry for February 10, 1949. SVDRA. F.8531

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. F.8532

⁵⁴ See Memorandum of Proposals of Adjustment for Fu Jen. SVDRA. F.8628-8629. For Chinese See F.8630-8631

authorities.

2. Fu Jen will remain a private Catholic University, subsidized by the Church and the SVD.
3. The Rector, Harold W. Rigney resigns as Vice-President.
4. Since office of Disciplinarian is abolished, Fr. Peter Sun no longer holds this position.
5. Sister Otgerina SSpS also relinquishes the post of Disciplinarian of the Women College and offers to resign as dean of the Women College.
6. Rev. Joseph Goertz SVD resigns as director of studies.
7. Rev. Peter Huengsberg SVD resigns from the post of Administrator.
8. Harold W. Rigney remains as Rector of the Catholic University of Peking since he has received this ecclesiastical appointment from the Church.
9. Sister Otgerina SSpS, will represent the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Holy Ghost.
10. The representative of the Church and the Congregation of sisters will be voting members of the Executive Council, or its succeeding body.
11. The Executive Council is the highest policy forming body of the University and its affiliates and will be responsible for the University budgets and the dispersal of the University funds after hearing the advice of the financial committee.
12. The transfer of property requires the consent of the ecclesiastical superiors.

The Catholic side agreed that representation of the Church body in the management of Fu Jen was to be reduced to just two representatives, one for the SVD and one for the SSpS sisters (numbers 8, 9). Nevertheless, the faculty and staff believed their demands were not answered thoroughly and so the situation will continue to be a precarious and tense one.

b. Educational Mission wise

On February 27 the Provisional Executive Council (PEC) is formed, and in its first meeting on the sixth topic presented "How to deal with religions courses" it was decided that some be abolished⁵⁵ and some temporarily suspended.^{56, 57} This Provisional Executive Council was frantic in activity, deciding on the many different issues presented, issues that went from academic and curricular ones, to hirings, salaries, discipline...

On May 21 the new Beijing government presented the "Draft of Government Regulations for the Committee on University Administration (or University Council) of the Private Fu Jen University", and it was received by Rigney on May 24th.⁵⁸ It officially approved the presence of two representatives of the mission bodies in the school administration, but didn't say anything about the possibility of foreign teachers (priests and sisters included) forming part of the University Council, and of their passive rights of vote; as it was presented, the policy denied them

⁵⁵ Study of Catholicism, History of the Catholic Church, Papal Encyclicals and Ethics

⁵⁶ Logic and Introduction to Philosophy

⁵⁷ Minutes of the 1st Session of the Provisional Executive Council. SVDRA. F.8571

⁵⁸ Draft of Government Regulations for the Committee on University Administration (or University Council) of the Private Fu Jen University. SVDRA. F.8624.

of this right, as only Chinese nationals were entitled to hold positions. On May 31 the list of the University Council members approved by the Ministry of Education was presented to Rigney, who considered it not only “anti-foreign”⁵⁹, but clearly anti-Catholic, as even Fr. Peter Sun, a Chinese, wasn't accepted; for him the aim of such University Council, whose members were all Chinese and non-Catholic, was clear: to exclude as much Catholic and/or foreign presence in the management of the School as possible, something that had already happened in the Primary School^{60, 61}. The issue was brought to the attention of the Provisional Executive Council on May 6th and 18th to no avail.

It seemed to Rigney that even the members of the Provisional Executive Council did not want to abide at all by the demands they wanted to impose to the SVD and the Church: *The creation of the new system of organization and the selection of the new authorities must be done in accordance with democratic ways and not according to the decision of the few.*⁶² Double standards were often used when taking decisions, and whenever it happened the Catholic and/or foreign interests were abused in the process.⁶³

3. A diminished burden.

Among so many worries, there was something that lightened up Rigney's burden as Church representative: no more financial worries for the SVD: being no more the sole responsible of the well-being of the University, the Church counterpart (SVD and Propaganda Fide) was only obliged to provide what was originally agreed upon, no matter the situation, according to the specified monthly allowances or even all-together: *The house Council decided ... to offer the six hundred fifty three ounces of gold, which we have in possession and which constitute the budget for the months of May, June and July, to the President to be disposed of in managing the University.*⁶⁴ The next day, President Ch'en after consulting the Transitional Policy Forming Body decided not to accept the gold, as it was something too sudden and the University Council was not yet formed.

Also, if needed, the Chinese administrators were the ones who now had to plea for special treatment to the Chinese Government, and so, through the intercession of the President with the Education authorities, Fu Jen was granted a special gold rate (60,000 Peoples' Currency instead of 28,000PC), so that it could give out a better salary payment for teachers and staff. Rigney was clear that the SVD had no obligation to provide more than what strictly agreed, as now they had no control over the University, and so, Rigney did not approve the request by Chang Chung-yi to use June's money allotment to pay a higher salary in May.⁶⁵ He answered to Prof. Chang that it would be unwise to use up everything they have in these two months, and the better policy would be to limit the available gold: *I refused to allow any part of our budget to be spent in may, and ... I would rather go to jail before authorizing such an operation.*⁶⁶

⁵⁹ At that time “xenophobia” wasn't yet commonly used, and this feeling is called by Rigney “anti-foreignism”.

⁶⁰ Minutes of the 17th Session of the PEC. SVDRA. F.8593

⁶¹ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports Entry for April 23, 1949. SVDRA. F.8567

⁶² Demand N.5, Letter to the Staff of Fu jen University. SVDRA. F.8632 (Chinese 8634)

⁶³ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for May 31, 1949. SVDRA. F.8666-8667

⁶⁴ Ibid. Entry for May 9, 1949. SVDRA. F.8657

⁶⁵ In the past when we had more control over the University, we used to overdraw our monthly budget in order to pay higher salaries in such [economic] crises, in order to avoid strikes, or other disturbances. The staff is accustomed to keep demanding. See Harold Rigney, entry for May 30, 1949. SVDRA. F.8666

⁶⁶ Harold Rigney. Entry for May 30, 1949. SVDRA. F.8666

By the end of the 1949 Spring semester the power transition at Fu Jen was finished. The new University Council was formed and the Church representation was minimal. The evaluation of this council given by Rigney to the SVD General Government is quite somber; for Rigney Fu Jen is controlled by the Communist Government, the administration bodies of the University were just puppets in the hands of higher authorities⁶⁷. *According to the Communist method, there must be unanimous agreements among all the Councillors [sic] when anything is decided. If there is no unanimity, then the President has the power to decide. Prof. Chang Chung-yi, the Secretary General, says that the meetings are only a formality. The questions are settled outside the meetings. By other sources... I am told that the members of the Council speak, and take issue as told by the Government ... it is evident that the representatives of the Church will have little influence in the management of the University.*⁶⁸

4. Psychological war

Just after Beijing was taken over and during the time the House Council and the SVD community were preparing the plan of adjustment to the new situation, a plan that needed the approval of the Internuncio Riberi and Fr. Fuchs, the Visitor (regional superior) in China, the school faculty started their activity. On February 14 they presented their demands in a shocking way:

A poster was placed in the University wall, denouncing the SVD Fathers, and making eight demands...the Chinese staff should have complete control of the University finances; no religion must be taught, and no preaching was to take place at the University; the University should be run according to the principles of the New Democracy.^{69, 70, 71}

A big burden for the church members and representatives at Fu Jen was the self-imposed feeling that Fu Jen is already lost and the Church institutions could not do anything to save it; this feeling was worded by the Church authorities in Fu Jen University as a “movement against the University”⁷².

The pressure over Fu Jen was intense in the first weeks after Beijing's liberation, and was kept alive in the following months through different means; through actions, through rumors and through the building up of a non-official, but still tangible, attitude of disdain and antagonism towards the foreigners and the Catholic Church.

It was truly a bumpy ride:

- February 7: in the morning at 6 o'clock a Red Commissar ... about sixteen years old,

⁶⁷ Harold Rigney. Entry for May 30, 1949. SVDRA. F.8666.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Entry for June 21, 1949. SVDRA. F.8677

⁶⁹ Ibid. Entry for February 14, 1949. SVDRA. F.8534

⁷⁰ See SVDRA. F.8632-8633 (8634-8635 for Chinese)

⁷¹ Translation of the announcement. SVDRA. F.8685.

⁷² Sister Otgerina was very dejected and said that in her opinion the University was lost ... there would not be such danger if the movement against the University were a recent one; but it is old, she pointed out. In the later thirties, such staff members as Ignatius Ying, a Catholic, boasted that they had gotten the American Benedictines removed in 1933 (apparently they had hoped to take over the University themselves, but were disappointed when the SVD succeeded), and that they would get the SVD expelled. But the war with Japan intervened, during which period the Chinese staff were only too happy to profit from the protection of the foreigners. At the end of the second world war, a group moved to expel the German Fathers and take over the University, but were again thwarted. See Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for March 21, 1949. SVDRA. F.8556

came to the Fu Jen Middle School for Girls and wanted quarters. He told the sisters he was superintendent of five Middle Schools including Fu Jen Girls' Middle School. After talking to the sisters he left and dropped his request for quarters.⁷³

- February 26, the Middle School staff met and voted to remove all the Fathers and Brothers from the Middle school staff⁷⁴; Rigney was afraid that Fu Jen Middle School might follow the fate of Sacred Heart (聖心) Catholic Middle School of the Marists Brothers and the adjoining Middle School for girls, run by the Sisters of Charity, that were recently forced to close by a group of students led by Peita (北京大學) students.
- On February 28 Fu Jen University's Auditorium hold the first People's Court in Beijing.⁷⁵
- On May, the University's Unions of Workers and Administrative Staff decided to bring Prof. Liu Ching-fang to trial for squandering Co-operative money in 1946. According to Rigney, he was spared thanks to the pressure exercised by university leaders and the threat of communist agents among the students; the experience deeply affected Prof. Liu.⁷⁶
- Power of the press as guide of public opinion: on Feb 19, 22 and at the end of February, different articles appeared in Beijing's newspapers, showing how the situation of Fu Jen was under close scrutiny. The words used reflected the jargon and excitement of a winning revolution that had just conquered the former Imperial Capital of the Country. Translations of these articles were sent to Rome as material for discernment.⁷⁷

Hsin Ming Pao
19/2/1949

The Catholic Fathers of the school, especially the foreigners, are not only imperialists, but among the world's most cunning and tyrannical people

...These blood-suckers missionaries have so many connections among the city landlords and officials of the now defunct KMT government, which enabled them to take so much money out of the blood and sweat of the students

...President Chen stated that the students had always been discontented with the religious education they received from the missionaries in the University

...as from to-day the university is in Chinese hands

Hsin Ming Pao
19/2/1949

If a man is connected in any way with the Catholic University, he knows no freedom. His fate under the foreign missionaries is worse than that of a man under the rule of KMT

...men and women sections are separated so as to be different countries ... Church and Government subsidized students were worse than hooligans ... they even spied [on other students] ... All political affairs of the school were under strict control of the priests ... Chiang Kai Shek was held high and received eulogies ... Father Rigney, who is an American, was always asserting that the school was under his control, and that anybody who was not satisfied, could leave it.

The teaching at Fu Jen is anti-democratic, and anti-scientific. The school thrive on the practices

⁷³ Ibid. Entry for February 7, 1949. SVDRA. F.8530

⁷⁴ Ibid. Entry for February 26, 1949. SVDRA. F.8537

⁷⁵ A man of the 1st year of History was tried. He had lived with a girl student of the 1st year of Economics in the men's dormitory for a week after the liberation, when the dormitories were thrown open against my protest ... also accused of being a Kuomintang agent ... His hands were tied, and he was forced to kneel in the stage for five hours. He was accused, denounced and cursed by students and staff members ... he was found guilty ... [and] was handed over for further trial ... I do not know what happened to him after this. See Harold Rigney, entry for February 28, 1949. SVDRA. F.8538

⁷⁶ [Prof. Liu] was never the same after this trial, never so active and antagonistic as before, in spite of the strong support he had from the Red Government. Harold Rigney, entry for May 10. SVDRA. F.8658

⁷⁷ Ibid. SVDRA. Ff.8619-8622

of imperialism and dictatorship, and that has remained so until now.

Hsin Ming Pao 22/2/1949	Despite the announcement that [Fr Rigney and his staff] will retire, the student body, the teachers and the workers are proceeding carefully with caution, fearing ... [it] be part of an intrigue. Everyone is being urged to co-operate in the fight against the imperialistic teachers, and the secret activities of the Catholic Church ... the foreign missionaries will still be in a position to do a lot of harm, even after they will be ousted from the school. The students affirm that the subsidies...are nothing but a myth ... They have decided ... to oust by all means the foreign missionaries ... as they are not only imperialist but pseudo-scientists.
Hsin Ming Pao End of February 1949	The withdrawal of the Foreign fathers from Fu Jen means that the reactionary power is lying on ground. The Chinese [at Fu Jen] ... [must] continue to struggle valiantly in order to dissipate the darkness and spread light at Fu Jen. Religion and education must, of course, be absolutely separated, which will make the reactionary group at Fu Jen Helpless.

- Adding to all this, there was a “less official” pressure that came with the rumors that were going around Beijing related to Fu Jen and the foreign fathers. The first one appears on March 11 diary entry, where Rigney is *informed of a plot of some of the students of the University to assault and capture me to be tortured until I would reveal the amount and location of the money of the SVD fathers.*⁷⁸ This recurrent fixation with the money of the foreign fathers appeared again the next day when Fr. Glanemann, dormitory prefect at the Middle School, had to deal for two hours with students demanding the medical supplies he had, and wishing to know how many gold bars the University possessed.
- The gloomy picture of the situation in the Northeast where Communist presence has been longer was also a heavy blow to their hopes for a possible mutually beneficial understanding.⁷⁹

All this resulted in the building-up of an attitude of ill feeling towards the fathers at Fu Jen that isolated them. Even though the Chinese Communist government was careful in their wording assuring that this was not an anti-Catholic or anti-foreign campaign, but an anti-imperialist endeavor, in practice the three (anti-Catholic, anti-foreign and anti-imperialist) went together in the mind of the common Chinese and even in the press and in the Communist officials' attitude, as we have seen for example in the February 9 meeting between Rigney and Chang Sung-lin's. Less than four weeks after Peiping's liberation, by February 25, Prof. Chang Chung-yi already confessed to Rigney that *he was suffering very much these days as many students, workmen, and staff members regarded him as the “dog of the foreigners”,* and Rigney noted afterwards that *because of fear of being given such a name, few if any of the staff want to be seen with the Fathers.*⁸⁰ When Rigney went to visit the Ministry of Education in June 1949, he

⁷⁸ Harold Rigney. Entry for March 11, 1949. SVDRA. F.8554

⁷⁹ This evening I met a British gentleman from Mukden ... the picture is a dark one. All the Catholic schools are closed (I had heard this also from other sources). The celebration of the Mass in public is forbidden. Catholic priests are told not to walk too far from their residences. The Government in a very ruthless way extorts huge sums from private enterprises ... Taxes are also high ... The Presbyterian Hospital and Medical School were completely taken over by the Government [after they asked for temporary financial aid] ... many Soviet Russians in Mukden. It was very depressing to hear all this, and if the same methods and attitude obtain here, there is little hope for a bright future of this University, or the retention of any of our SVD properties. See Harold Rigney, entry for June 30, 1949. SVDRA. F.8680

⁸⁰ Ibid. Entry for February 25, 1949. SVDRA. F.8537

requested that President Ch'en and Secretary General Chang accompany him and both declined *apparently out of fear to be regarded as too closely connected with the Foreign Fathers.*⁸¹

In a report received about this early agitation against the SVD in Fu Jen, the Communist Government maintained a certain distance to the events, in some way letting things happen and then maneuvering in such a way that it would lead to their aim, that is, to eliminate the SVD influence and power in Fu Jen without resorting to an open struggle.⁸²

Rigney summarized in his entry of Fu Jen's Home Coming Day his understanding of the Communist tactic in this way:

*On many occasions it has been made clear to me that the tactics followed by the Communists are two-fold: first they attack us -in newspapers, articles and posters, by threats or strikes, and the like- and when the object they had in view is attained, the offensive is followed by the second phase of their tactics, the peace-front, in which they try to consolidate their gains by public demonstration of friendship, and the like, without however making any effort to repair the damage done by the offensive phase. Now that the Communist have achieved almost complete control of the University, it is to their advantage to induce us to agree with everything so that we continue to give them financial support as in the past.*⁸³

Finally, there was also pressure from the Catholic authorities in China, both Chinese and foreign, who repeatedly requested Rigney to keep Fu Jen running, as the Internuntius Msgr. Riberi said, "*usque ad ultimum*" that is, up to the end.⁸⁴

As a consequence, the SVD Fathers and the SSpS Sisters became more and more isolated in Fu Jen, as they were labeled as reactionaries and imperialists; it was a nerve-racking situation that would dampen their hopes and their spirits. These were the circumstances surrounding Fu Jen's Catholic management at the beginning of 1949 summer, the time to decide how to proceed for the 1949-1950 school year: should the Church continue subsidizing Fu Jen? Should they retire from it so not to jeopardize their faith and love of the Catholic Church? Should they close the University?

But it wasn't only the Marxist indoctrination and activities what were hindering Fu Jen's future; Fu Jen was supposed to be both Catholic and a leading academic institution, and its academic standards were dropping quite fast. On the Provisional Executive Committee meeting on April 6, 1949, the Graduation thesis of seniors became elective; the oral examinations were dispensed with; and the mid-term exams abolished and replaced with ordinary examinations.⁸⁵ On May 22, University's Home Coming day, Rigney made an extensive day-entry reporting to his superiors in Rome on the not so impressive nature of that year's event; he went early in the morning, because, as a sign of protest, he didn't want to be seen there.⁸⁶

All this disruption and interfering was done with a minimal presence of the communist vanguard elements in the university. According to the announcement by the Chinese Communist Party Fu Jen University Branch published on the University Bulletin Board on June 28, 1949,

⁸¹ Ibid. Entry for June 6, 1949. SVDRA. F.8670

⁸² Harold Rigney, Analysis on the Agitation against Fu Jen. April 22, 1949. SVDRA. Ff.8614-8615

⁸³ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for May 22, 1949. SVDRA. F.8663

⁸⁴ See FF.8660 (May 13) and 8679 (June 25)

⁸⁵ April 6 Provisional Executive Council meeting. Cases 1st, 2nd and 5th respectively. SVDRA. F.8587

⁸⁶ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for May 22, 1947. SVDRA. F.8662-8664

almost full five months after the communist army entered in Beijing, the party (students' section) was composed of 13 members and 21 candidates, out of around a 2000 people student body⁸⁷.

II- Summer of 1949: evaluation and discernment

After the 1949 spring semester, the issue wasn't simply that religion-related courses are taught no more in Fu Jen, or that Religion should be out of the school premises; now the issue is that Fu Jen might become a Anti-Catholic, anti-Church, pro-atheist indoctrination center, and that is something neither the SVD nor Rome would approve. Even at a personal ethical level there was a problem of conscience, so much that Rigney and the SVD House Council would seek the counsel of moral experts on this problem. The issue was even brought forward by the SVD General, Kappenberg, to the Holy See; it was answered by Pope Pius XII in an audience on June 9, 1949:

Q1. Should the Fathers and Sisters remain in their post at the University even though the University has lost its Catholic character?

A1. They can stay at their post as long as they are free to teach according to the principles of the Catholic faith. Of course they should resist all imposition of the Communists that go against those principles.

One of the issues that would complicate summer discernment is, as mentioned before, the peculiar nature of Fu Jen University, that Rigney presents when Fr. Bonningue SJ facing a similar situation at Tsinku (Tianjin) asked him for guidance:

...the Catholic University of Peking is not a S.V.D. University, the way Tsinku and Aurora are Jesuit Universities ... it is a University of the Propaganda [Fide] to which the S.V.D. is assigned as steward, to care for and develop it until the Chinese hierarchy can take over⁸⁸ ... the internuncio ... in October 1948 had advised ... a policy of working out a modus vivendi ... since this is a University of Propaganda we must obey the orders of the Propaganda ... we cannot close without permission or orders to this effect from the Propaganda ... we Fathers were remaining at our posts like soldiers on a special assignment ... leaving to the Church authorities [Vatican and SVD] the responsibility to continue the University or not.⁸⁹

The summer leading to the 1949-50 school year opened with good news; in June 1949 Rigney had a meeting with Mr. Chou Yang from the Ministry of Education. In that meeting one of the issues was the teaching of religion related subjects in the university. Rigney asked for clarification on one of the outcomes of that conversation: *The Communist Party and the People's Government allow freedom of religion, and allow missionary work (in the schools) after classes. If the aforementioned courses are given for scholastic research, they are admitted as elective courses, but the University must guarantee the students do really take these courses on their own free will, and without any coercion being used.*⁹⁰ Rigney wanted to clarify if this ruling also applied to the Middle school and Primary School affiliated to the University? The answer was in the positive.

⁸⁷ Translation of the announcement. SVDRA. F.8685.

⁸⁸ That may also be the reason why the SVD were careful in distinguishing between SVD property -bought with SVD funds, and the University property, bought with funds coming from donations the SVD Fr. Ralph was entrusted to search.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Entry for December 23, 1949. SVDRA. F.8948

⁹⁰ Translation of the Notification from the Higher Education Committee "Kao Chiao Mi Tze", No. 1161 dated September 1, 1949. SVDRA. F.8851

Somewhat they were back to the Republic of China legislation on this issue.

Although Rigney's report of June 14, 1949 followed the opinion of the House Council and the SVD community and recommended the continuation of the University and the subsidies, in fact that 1949 summer the SVD and Propaganda in Rome suspended the subsidies for the next school year. A cable from Rome received on July 14, 1949, said: *Propaganda answers me [Kappenberg] send no more money Fathers Sisters however may teach as long as possible stop Hence I must stop money for University*⁹¹.

The news was received with shock and joy by the SVD and SSpS at Fu Jen; Shock because the Fathers at Fu Jen didn't know what would be the response from the University faculty, staff and students; they even started to make plans for evacuation, making contingency plans in case of violence against the fathers and sisters, and, in the case of fathers Rigney (Church Representative-Rector) and Huengsberg (administrator) to get ready to go to trial before the People's court. Also, if there was no more subsidy, they were afraid the school would not hire them, and therefore they would have no income⁹². They may even be expelled from their quarters. The feeling of subtle joy came because, according to Rigney, the decision to terminate the subsidies *settled an important question, and on further reflection we realized how hopeless our task is here.*⁹³

Why did later the Church authorities in Rome reversed her former decision regarding the ending of the funding of the University in the summer of 1949? There were two main reasons. First, Rigney handed over the July 14 decision from Propaganda received through Kappenberg's cable to the Vatican's Representative in China, Archbishop Riberi, who right away got directly in touch with Rome after requesting Rigney to wait before moving forward with the announcement to the faculty and staff. Archbishop Riberi was stationed in China, in Nanjing, and therefore had a better grasp of the real situation of the Church in China and its needs, struggles and possibilities, than Rome. Even more, he was the Vatican representative in China and the decision to finish the subsidy for Fu Jen had been taken without consulting him. Indeed, Riberi's latest information on the University coming from Rigney (June 17, 1949), although it wasn't too optimistic, still gave some space for hope. On that report Rigney poised the same three reasons presented on the June 14 letter to General Kappenberg for continuing funding the University, a letter he also forwarded to Riberi. The reasons were:⁹⁴

1. *The principles of the People's Government in regard to education and many other phases of the life are still in the making ... the Red Government is still in the state of flux ... it would be unwise to close the University before we are certain of the final policy of the Government.*
2. *One must distinguish between theoretical Communism and practical Communism in China ... The latter, ... it is not truly the Russian type.*
3. *The physical plant of the University represents an investment of at least 2 Millions USDollars and the replacement value about 5 Millions*⁹⁵.

But apart from these three reasons, he added two more on that June 17 report to Arch. Riberi:

⁹¹ Harold Rigney. See entry for July 14, 1949. SVDRA. F.8798

⁹² Ibid. Also see Harold Rigney Letter to Kappenberg, July 21, 1949. SVDRA. FF.8786-8790

⁹³ Ibid. SVDRA. F.8788

⁹⁴ Harold Rigney, Letter to Kappenberg, June 14, 1949. SVDRA. Ff.8694-8696

⁹⁵ In 2011 US\$ it would be equivalent to US\$18,667,136 and US\$46,667,842 respectively.

- The possibility of offsetting communist indoctrination through the testimony and teaching of the Fathers and Sisters at Fu Jen, especially among Catholics, and
- The closure of Fu Jen would be a big blow for the Church in North China: *many in Peiping admire the stand we have taken ... neither too weak ... nor too strong.*⁹⁶ While a few catholic (teachers and students) have apostatized and some even applied for membership in the Communist Party -as a mean for survival, most Catholic students, faculty and staff were being faithful to their faith⁹⁷, and staying in Fu Jen would be a support to their struggle, and Fathers and Sisters should stay *on literally*, as Fr. Huengsberg said later in his report, “*in testimonium fidei*” [witnesses of faith] as token for the existence of the Church, as backing for the faithful.⁹⁸

The second reason for the reversal on the subsidy was that while Fu Jen was in such a challenging situation, conditions at Jesuit managed Tienjin’s Tsinku looked promising. Only the Middle School was somehow troubled. The University was in good shape, and therefore Rome's Propaganda approved on July 24 the subsidies for Tsinku for the next school year. On July 27, 1949, a new cable came from Rome approving the subsidies for all Universities in China for the 1949-1950 school year: *Riberi called today URBS [Rome] ordered all schools continue however possible allowing material cooperation excluding remunerating teachers of anti-christian doctrine.*⁹⁹

III- 1949-1950 school year: testing coexistence

If the policy change at the beginning of summer was good news, the school year started with a not so positive one, so bad that it even alarmed the Chinese faculty at Fu Jen: Student numbers had collapsed. On September 15, 1949, Rigney reported that *of some 570 students admitted to the first year, only 89 actually registered during a registration period of four days. This was a great shock to our Chinese staff. We Fathers, in general, smiled over it.*¹⁰⁰ In consequence, the University lately will extend the registration period and accept some conditional students. Still, the numbers went down.¹⁰¹ The University Council tried to cope with the situation by reducing departments and staff, but measures were not enough to avoid financial stress on the University due to the reduction of income from tuition fees, what, somehow, increased the value of the Church's sponsorship as a source of steady income for the university.

a. Propaganda front

Summer period convinced Fr. Harold Rigney that a new approach was need, without losing the spirit of adaptation, they needed to have stronger attitude than formerly; he realized that *most people who are successfully dealing with the Chinese, today, follow a policy by which they make*

⁹⁶ Harold Rigney, Letter to Arch. Riberi, June 17, 1949. SVDRA. F.8716

⁹⁷ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for August 7, 1949. SVDRA. F.8810

⁹⁸ Report form Fr. Huengsberg, July 4, 1949. SVDRA. F.8734

⁹⁹ Harold Rigney, Letter to Arch. Riberi, July 27, 1949. SVDRA. F.8791

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Entry for September 15, 1949. SVDRA. F.8857.

¹⁰¹ As reported in May 1950, the numbers had halved; the 1948-49 school year had finished with 2400 students; during the first semester of the SY 1949-1950 Fu Jen University had 1300 students; on the second semester of that school year it had just 1160 enrolled students, less than half the students it had at the end of the preceding school year. See Harold Rigney Letter to Fr. Rahmann on Fu Jen's situation. May 19, 1950. SVDRA. F.9024

*it known clearly that they do not fear either the Chinese or the Chinese Government.*¹⁰² He confronted directly the University Council for signing a protest against the US State Department White Paper on China, and reminded them that Fu Jen subsidies would suffer if foreigners and religious are openly attacked in the media by school personnel. He concluded his intervention saying *that if certain members continued to irritate us, first by arousing the students, then the workmen, and the members of the University staff, we could hardly look forward to a year of good cooperation.*¹⁰³

That party elements were behind the unrelenting opposition by some school members was confirmed when a few days later he knew about the Chabanel incident; A Catholic teacher at the Jesuit Chabanel language school confessed to the priests that he had complained to the police on his loss of position at Chabanel; the professor said that *the police official led him to a room where the police files are kept, and took out a book. It was reserved for the records of Chabanel alone. The teacher saw that all the Fathers were listed as spies, as were some of the servants. The police told the teacher that the police were obliged to protect foreigners, but he, the teacher, and other Chinese should make difficulties for the foreigners, and the police would help them [the Chinese].*¹⁰⁴ Events like this and the frequent remarks by government officials on public meetings depicting the Catholic Church as the natural enemy of the reds¹⁰⁵, did not help to maintain a serene attitude among the people, and it would have some consequences. One of them, would be Catholic Church resolve to explore the possibility and the need to go underground to keep its evangelizing and pastoral work afloat and out of Communist government interference.¹⁰⁶

The indoctrination programs were continued and systematized starting the school year, and they were inaugurated on October 17, 1949 by the Vice-Minister of Education, Chien Chun-jui with a three hours' lecture. All the Chinese students and staff were obliged to attend, and according to Rigney, his speech was mostly anti-religious¹⁰⁷. On a November 1st letter to China's Nuntius, Arch. Ribery, he states:

*The Communists are making strong and well planned efforts to indoctrinate the staff and student body of Fu Jen. During the Summer, all staff were obliged to attend a course of indoctrination, with 2 hours a week for the duration of six weeks. The present student body of all the years and classes have to attend 3 hours of lectures and 3 hours of discussions a week in Dialectical Materialism.*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for September 2, 1949. SVDRA. F.8853

¹⁰³ Ibid. F.8853

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Entry for September 21, 1949. SVDRA. F.8857

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Rigney relates what may probably be one of the first accounts on the shift to underground work of the Catholic Church in post 1949 China due to the pressure in the open: *We then visited His Excellency Msgr. Simon Lei, Bishop of Fengyang, Shansi, who was consecrated last August in Shanghai by Archbishop Ribery. At Msgr. Lei's request he was consecrated secretly since he wished to hide his identity as he planned to return to Fengyang in secret to administer to his diocese. As a priest, he went about his work in disguise as a collie ... or as a carrier. He intends to assume similar disguises, and on foot carry out his episcopal administrations. There are many Chinese Bishops and priests carrying the work of Christ in China in the same manner.* See Harold Rigney, entry for October 12, 1949. SVDRA. F.8890

¹⁰⁷ *...that religion is the opiate of the masses; that there is no conscience as formerly believed ... religion had its origin, passed its climax, and is now coming to an end; religions are tolerated, but all are allowed to attack religions.* See Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for October 17, 1949. 8890

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Letter to Archbishop Antonio Ribery, Internuncio to China, on the State of the Catholic University of Peking (Fu Jen), Peking China. November 1, 1949. SVDRA, Ff.8870-8877

It was clear for Rigney that the Chinese staff of the University were leaning towards ousting the foreign fathers from Fu Jen one way or another; on November 1949 he knew about the public appeal made by the University Secretary General, Prof. Chang Chung-yi, to eliminate foreigners (all fathers) as Heads of Departments of the University. It was the New Communist Government the one who gave the Catholic Representatives at Fu Jen a respite, as they publicly acknowledged the need to change their Yan'an policy of hostility to the Catholic Church into a softer approach as the new situation demanded. On September 20th 1949 an article by Yun Meng-yuan appeared in the Jen Ming Giarh [sic] (人民日报 People's Daily Paper) bitterly attacking the missionary work in China. Rigney reports that, shortly after, Mao disapproved it and in a meeting of 300 communist leaders Mao spoke along these lines:

Victory which came much earlier than expected for the Communist armies, resulted in the formation of a coalition government which in turn called for compromise. One compromised required us Communist to change our attitude towards religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular here in China ... the missions of the Catholic Church with their educational and welfare programs are not working against the state but on the contrary are useful to the state.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, Rigney recommended the Vatican representative in China to be patient, and wait for a consistent policy towards the Church by the new Government. Rigney recognized that there had been persecution of the Catholic Church in China, indeed he had been reporting about it since 1947, but until now, he said, had been mostly *local in extent and unofficial in origin.*¹¹⁰

This unofficial persecution was also real for Fu Jen catholic students, as Rigney remarked when recounting the situation of a young Catholic student at Fu Jen that was in such a dire situation he gave him his outer garment, *this young man is only one of the many of our Catholic students who are struggling against great odds, who are discriminated against by the Government, and most of our non-Catholic staff members ... I advised this young man not to leave China, since the Church must carry on ... Chinese priests and Chinese laymen must care for their own Church.*¹¹¹

This constant lack of “official” clarity on the religion issue was a useful tool in the hands of the new government; to the wide harming remarks made in the press, the Chinese Government answered with meetings where they recognized the freedom of religion, but it did few to restore the harm done and therefore it didn't stop the injury from happening again and worsen the situation. The rumors that often arrived to Rigney through different sources were not optimistic.

The attacks were of an oscillating nature, coming and going according to the needs of the situation. As the school year moved forward, the spring semester started with a new wave of condemning articles on the press, and the pressure to the Catholic Church was intensified. Rigney considered it the start of persecution, a new phase on attacks to the Church:

About two weeks ago, I began to think that a persecution of the Church, inaugurated by the Central Government, and guided by it, was becoming evident. This suspicion received support in two articles [Warning on imperialist Spies! and Vatican's Scandalous Actions] which appeared recently in local newspapers ... [saying that the Vatican] openly ordered the priests to serve American imperialism [and] will train the priests to do spy work ... a friend

¹⁰⁹ Harold Rigney. Memorandum to Arch. Riberi. November 11, 1949. SVDRA. F.8919

¹¹⁰ Harold Rigney. F.8920

¹¹¹ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for December 3, 1949. SVDRA. F.8940

of mine said that around the 12th or 13th of this month, some communist teachers and students of the National University of Peking said that the next phase of development in China would be an all-out attack on the Catholic Church.¹¹²

Although the Chinese Government officials were mostly careful at avoiding giving hints of anti-foreignism in public, that was the message that reached Rigney through “*non-official official*” channels, that is, from non-government people in close relation with the government. If on November 1949 Prof. Chang was appealing publicly for assistance to eliminate all foreigners as heads of departments at Fu Jen, on May 1950 it was President Ch'en who was suggesting that the foreign fathers who hold departmental chairmanship should resign. The reason he gave was that *the government was planning to re-organize the University Senate so that it would comprise [also] ... the Departments Heads ... [and] the Government planned to exclude foreigners from all positions of control.¹¹³* This wasn't news; on April 20, 1950, Rigney already had reported to Rome that *there are indications that the Government plans to pursue a policy of slowly tightening its hold on all private schools and hospitals so that after a few years they will come under its complete control.¹¹⁴* It looked as if Fu Jen was the trial ground of this policy.

b. Opposition front.

1. Physical space:

In his reports Rigney dealt extensively with two issues during this school year 1949-1950; one was the North Kung Wang Fu incident; the other the situation of the Jesuit University at Tianjin: Tsinku University. One is representative of the actions from related to the University staff and students, and the other of the actions taken towards similar Catholic institutions.

By the end September 1949, the so-called North Kung Wang-fu incident would end with two priests (Fathers Krieffewirth and Zloch) sentenced to 5 days in prison on illegal retention charges¹¹⁵. The incident was used to stir trouble at the Middle School and in the end the University too. Propaganda was hang on the walls denouncing the fathers *of being imperialists, of having deprived students of their liberty, of having insulting them.¹¹⁶* The incident was reported by the media, and an account of the whole case, quite biased according to Rigney, was given in the news broadcast. Then it came the inculpatory meeting at Fu Jen Auditorium to be attended by all students at the Middle and Primary school. An excerpt of the meeting with long commentaries and protests also appeared in the two main local newspapers¹¹⁷. Finally, on September 30, 1949, the students appealed to the court.

On the whole situation Rigney remarked the powerlessness feeling the SVD community at Fu Jen went through: *There was not much we Fathers could do, on our part ... [we were] told in a conversation [with the police] to take good note that nobody but the police had the right to confine students.¹¹⁸*

The two Fu Jen priests were sentenced on October 29 to five days' imprisonment each for

¹¹² Harold Rigney. Entry for March 23, 1950. SVDRA. F.9012

¹¹³ Harold Rigney. Entry for May 31, 1950. SVDRA. F.9031

¹¹⁴ Harold Rigney. Entry for April 20, 1950. SVDRA. F.9018

¹¹⁵ See Memorandum Concerning the Incident of September 25, 1949. SVDRA. Ff.8866-8868

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

restriction of liberty and insulting the students. Although the SVD community at Fu Jen took measures to avoid new troubles of similar nature, the Middle School students were generous in upsetting the Fathers at Fu Jen through protests, noises, naughty behavior and so on. On November 9 they went to prison to complete their sentence.

That same month, while Rigney was in Tianjin he knew about a similar case that had happened recently in the middle School of the Jesuits to Rev. Fr. Albert Ghesquieres S.J.¹¹⁹ The Fathers upon recommendation of their Lawyer Mr. Djang, decided not to appeal the verdict, *since most probably the guilt of the Fathers would be confirmed by the Court of Appeals, and a much larger sentence might be imposed upon them.*¹²⁰

2. Ideological space

It seemed that all these incidents championed by the students were directed at taking away the available physical living space of the Fathers at Fu Jen, even the small plot of land they used for their Vegetable Garden;¹²¹ The activities against the Fathers by the staff and faculty of the University, on the other side, were directed at eliminating all traces of moral and actual power the Fathers held upon the University.

- School plays were used as opportunity to show anti-foreign (mostly anti-American) and anti-religious spirit.¹²²
- Ygnatius Yang, a Catholic teacher, apostatized in public and invited other Catholics in the University, including a priest, to do the same.¹²³
- Prof. Ho Ting-Chieh *of the Committee of Indoctrination lectured to the Fourth Year students ... [and] accused the Church not only of feudalism and imperialism, but he also accused the Catholic clergy of Europe and other parts of the world, including the interior of China, of demanding exercising the "jus primae noctis"*¹²⁴. *A few Catholic students walked out in protest ... the Chinese Sister was upset and in tears ... The Chinese priests who attended were very angry.*¹²⁵

These cases were mostly left unattended by the University Council under the premise of "freedom of speech", or any other spurious excuse, a situation Rigney deeply lamented: *things at this University have come to a sorry plight where an apostate teaches, and boldly misrepresents the*

¹¹⁹ [He] was submitted to a trial by the People's Court on the charge of having forcibly detained some Middle School Boys in their Room ... the Jesuit Father asked two of these boys to remain in the room to guard at least their own belongings. This act was interpreted as denying liberty to the boys who remained in the room. He was sentenced to one week of hard labor. See Harold Rigney, Report on the Incident at North Kung Wang Fu, Part III, the Verdict. SVDRA. F.8898

¹²⁰ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for November 3, 1949. SVDRA. F.8909

¹²¹ The *controlling element* of the Biology Department on March 9, 1950 requested to take over the Vegetable Garden of the Fathers as they needed it for their research. Upon Rigney's protest, Dr. Chang said that the department had no authorization to take such steps. Harold Rigney. See March 9, 1950 entry. SVDRA. F.9010

¹²² Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for May 28, 1950. SVDRA. F.9031

¹²³ Harold Rigney. Report for December 1949. SVDRA. Ff.8941-8942

¹²⁴ "He said among other things that ... this was... also a right of the clerical lords. The Church abroad enjoys this privilege, but the Church in the interior of China enjoys it as well. Many churches are at the same time big land owners. Their serfs, the peasants, are their parishioners. When they marry, the representatives of the Church exercise this privilege of the first night. And they do this under pretext of propagating the faith". See SVDRA. F.8952

¹²⁵ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for December 15, 1949. SVDRA. F.8943

*Church, and communist professors accuse Catholic missionaries of such crimes as exercising the jus primae-noctis -and the Catholics are expected to stand aside!*¹²⁶

Finally, the faculty at Fu Jen used to blast the Fathers and the Church behind them in public meetings, like the “Meeting of University Officials of Hopeh (Hebei), held in the ministry of Education in Peking on November 17, 1949.¹²⁷ Ironically, in that same Hebei educational meeting President Ch'en Yuan reported that harmony had been gradually attained between Chinese and foreigners at Fu Jen.

This situation made the Church authorities at Fu Jen to question the worthiness of the University as a Catholic institution, as it was deriding the Catholic Church and Christianity, the opposite of what was intended to promote when it was founded. Indeed, on April 19, 1950 Rigney produced a survey¹²⁸ among the SVD community members of Fu Jen (plus Sr. Otgerina, SSpS) to research how did they feel about the University and its catholic spirit. The University was still considered Catholic by the slight margin of one, and all except one considered proper to continue the University for the school year 1950-1951, although not even half of them (nine) approved of giving the subsidy for the next year; of those who approved the subsidy, one saw it as a mean of pressure and three answers were labeled as “conditional yes”. As we can see Fu Jen University's Catholicity was being questioned, and was starting to be seen as an non-friendly and extrinsic institution by the very people that was entrusted to care for it.

3. Pressure through related institutions

Apart from the already mentioned Chabanel Incident, the St. Joseph (西堂) and Sacred Heart (聖心) schools, the school year 1949-1950 was the year Tsinku University, formerly considered by Rigney in better shape than Fu Jen, started to feel the full brunt of the new situation. It happened in a similar fashion as had happened in Fu Jen on the 1949 Spring Semester.

When Rigney traveled to Tianjin on September 5, 1949 to help in discerning the situation of Tsinku University from the experience of Fu Jen, the pressure from the Middle School, already out of control by then, had extended to the University. By November the rector of Tsinku Fr. Bonningue felt pessimistic on the future of the University, something that surprised Rigney as Bonningue had always been optimistic about the future. Rigney commented that *he is now beginning to feel the stress placed on his University by the Government ... to feel the full force of the indoctrination program of the Red Government ... He worries very much about the responsibilities regarding the indoctrination courses imposed upon the students. He did not seem to have much hope that his University could carry on long under the auspices of the Church and S.J.*¹²⁹ By December the Jesuits at Tsinku were under siege, with elements in the university asking for the removal of many Jesuit and Catholic teachers and staff.

That 1949-1950 school year some SVD business were also taken over or closed, strangling even more the already thin economy of the SVD and Fu Jen. On January 24, 1950 the shares of

¹²⁶ Harold Rigney. Entry for December 20, 1949. SVDRA. Ff.8945-8946

¹²⁷ Fr. Bonningue [Tsinku Univ.] said ... that our representatives did not give a favorable report about Fu Jen. The Secretary General Chang Chung-yi, especially, spoke against the foreign Fathers ... that there were still Departments with foreigners as Chairmen, and that these foreigners did not understand Chinese ... that the Chinese staff and students, including the Communist were displeased with this. Harold Rigney, entry for November 18, 1949. SVDRA. F.8914. Also F.8921: Statements Made at a Meeting of University Officials of Hopeh. November 17, 1949.

¹²⁸ The questions produced by Rigney were open and asked for concrete suggestions; sadly, these pages were not available at the Archives.

¹²⁹ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry on November 22, 1949. SVDRA. F.8916

the Peiyang press, owned by Fu Jen were confiscated¹³⁰, and on April 28 it was the turn of the Szechuan Travel Agency of Peking —totally owned by the SVD community in Beijing, and it was a sour experience.¹³¹

Rigney considered that much of this pain was also due to the Church itself, as it lacked cohesion and organization; it was like loose sand, each one trying to save their own boat.

*Many of us, said Rigney, want Archbishop Riberi to come to Peking and contact Chou En-lai...in order to represent the Church of China as a whole. As matters stand now the Church is an unguarded flock; the communists can attack and cripple and destroy first this middle school, and then that middle school, this diocese [sic], and then that diocese ... If someone could speak for the Whole Church before the Government, the Church will be in stronger position. As it is now, it is tragic to see the institutions of the Church liquidated one by one. The communists respect number and organization.*¹³²

4. Pressure through “exogenous” forces

This pressure begun on March 1950, when police started to visit the SVD's quarters at Fu Jen University. Police forces were at Fu Jen on March 15, 21, 22, 28 and 30. Rigney also noted the presence of *many police in plaincloth on duty in and outside the University*¹³³, fearing even that some fathers may be detained and sent to a concentration camp, something already happening throughout China¹³⁴. Having this possibility in mind the SVD community at Fu Jen even *worked out and adopted a plan of succession [in the community and the parish] in the event of arrests or deportations ... recently some missionary superiors have been arrested on little notice ... we decided there will be no replacements, in the event of arrests or deportations, of the personnel of the University.*¹³⁵

Rigney also started to realize that he was being followed when he left the University, especially when on bike, as when he went by car, he was sure the driver provided the information to the relevant authorities.¹³⁶

5. A Question of Principle

The key issue that in the end would become the battle-horse was the new Curriculum for Sociology that afterwards would be expanded to Economics, History and Sociology. This curriculum was drafted on April 1950 in a meeting of the representatives of the Sociology

¹³⁰ Harold Rigney. Entry for January 24, 1950. SVDRA. Ff.8967-8968

¹³¹ The Government had ordained that we pay each of our 14 employees, 4 months salary, as a separation fee, but since the number of our employees exceeded ten, this money was to be paid ... to the Government. When the employees complained to the Government ... they were told to see if they could get more money out of us ... the employees made new claims ... we finally settled ... glad [with our settlement] since other firms had to make much higher payments. Harold Rigney, entry for April 28, 1950. SVDRA. Ff.9020-9021

¹³² Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for December 19, 1949. SVDRA. F.8945

¹³³ Harold Rigney. Entry for March 22, 1950. SVDRA. F.9012

¹³⁴ See: Harold Rigney. SVDRA. Ff.8916 (Harbin); 9004 (Fr. Real, SJ); 9017 (2 SVD priests)

¹³⁵ Harold Rigney. Entry for February 15, SVDRA. F.9006.

¹³⁶ This whole issue of police visits was due to a radio with an apparatus for the reception of telegrams that, indeed, was broken. For him the confiscation of the radio set was a great loss as he lost *his only source of international news ... I would be in the dark as to happenings not only outside China, but outside of Peking*. Rigney considered that the telegram receiving set was a mere excuse, and he thought that *the police suspected I had a sending set in my room, but not finding one, they made an issue over this apparatus for the reception of telegrams*. See: Harold Rigney, entry for March 30, 1950. SVDRA. F.9014

departments of Tsinghua, Yenching and Fu Jen Universities at Yenching University¹³⁷. Nothing was publicized about these meetings and Rigney had to insist through Fr. Hogan to the Fu Jen Representative on the meeting, Prof. Li Ching-han, for a report. The report was discussed thoroughly by the SVD community, *and the Community was in agreement that a curriculum as sponsored in the report, could not be taught in this Catholic University because of its materialistic and atheistic nature ... the matter looks serious ... some confrères think that we have gone to the limit in materially cooperating with the Communist Government in our school, and to go any further would be wrong. Hence, it is not a question of personal safety, or the safety of the property, but really and truly a question of principle.*¹³⁸

Overall, at the end of the school year¹³⁹ Rigney felt that the Catholic Church wasn't getting a fair deal at Fu Jen. That they had tried to accommodate as much as possible to the new situation while the Chinese counterpart (staff, faculty and communist government alike) had not, and now it was becoming not only a question of financial or personal loss, but a moral question, that is, of material cooperation with something that for a Catholic was an evil intent: the promotion of materialism and atheism. It became an issue about sinning oneself and of inducing others to sin, and Rigney as Rector of Fu Jen was aware that he was in the end the one responsible of allowing or not that cooperation.

In the last semester of the 1949-1950 school year, it was also clear that the only leverage the Church had in the university was on account of the subsidies they were providing to the university (more than sixty percent of the total income of the school), even though many staff and students believed and proclaimed through the media, that the SVD and the Church were sucking the students' money.

6. Evolution of the Situation at Fu Jen According to the Comprehensive Reports Sent by Rigney to the Church Authorities during the school year 1949-1950.

Topic / Doc	November 1 To Riberi	November 7 To Rahmann	January 25 To Riberi	February 2 Shanghai Doc	May 19 To Rahmann
Background	- SVD have lost actual power in the university.		- Not optimistic about Fu Jen.	- It seems there are some rumors of Fu Jen cooperating in promoting Marxist and Communistic teachings	
Situation	- University in Hands of University Council, that is in hands of the Ministry of Education of the People's Government. - Few Catholic among higher faculty and administration levels. - Election of Council representatives influenced by radical elements.	- Situation not as bad as expected, though not a pleasant one. - Students practically run the Departments. -Radical elements in control of the	- Followed October 1948 proposal of finding a "modus vivendi". SVD carried it, but it has not worked because staff did not cooperate. - SVD would like to preserve the University as a Catholic enterprise	- Tsinku following the trials of Fu Jen.	- 20 SVDs at Fu Jen. 19 priests, 1 brother. 2 Chinese, 19 foreigners. -Community in good spirit, but suffering much and deriving no pleasure from

¹³⁷ First meeting at Tsinghua on April 5 and second this one on April 16. See F.9019

¹³⁸ Harold Rigney. Entry for April 23, 1950. SVDRA. Ff.9019-9020. Emphasis mine.

¹³⁹ See the June monthly report (Ff.9115-9119) and the Report to General Kappenberg (Ff.9130-9131)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy of elimination of foreigners from teaching and administration positions, even using physical violence threats by students. -Scholastic standards lower than before liberation. - Tuition income 17,160 US\$ (+6,000 not yet paid) versus 160,000US\$ of subsidy from catholic sources (almost seven times the tuition fees). - Strong efforts on Marxist indoctrination of teachers, staff and students. 	University.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in hope of a turn for the best, even by simply supplying funds. - Church representation at University Council small; just enough to express the view of the Church and protest and disassociate with objectionable decisions. 		staying at their post and continuing with their work.
Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fu Jen as a Center of Communism propaganda. University hall hosting many propaganda activities for the city. - The "Catholic" name almost dropped in February. Only relation to the Catholic Church or SVD is financial, the provider of funds. - Government is devising a program for controlling all private Middle Schools and Universities. - The fall of Fu Jen would be a big blow to the Chinese Catholic Church. -Middle School Catholic movement, formerly very strong, is destroyed. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All students must submit a detailed biography and confession, which must be acceptable to the indoctrination authorities in order to continue studying at the University. - Danger of formal cooperation with objectionable teachings and practices at the University. - Government wants to make Fu Jen adjustment process the model to be followed by the 27 missionary Universities in China. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal cooperation is a moral question that worries both Tsinku Jesuits and Fu Jen SVD Fathers. - Closing the University is not an easy matter. We cannot expect the Government to simply take over. 	
Suggestions			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Church authorities should decide before next summer about the continuation of the University, the supply of subsidies and the implications of formal cooperation. - SVD would only take steps at Fu Jen with the approval of Propaganda Fide. 	Archbp. Riberi's reply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He can't decide anything now; keep a wait and see attitude. - The three Catholic Universities must go their own way, each one solving their own problems the best they can, although they should keep in close contact. 	

IV- 1950 summer period: evaluation of progress and final discernment

The pivotal moment arrived on June 1950, when the Church authorities had to decide if they would continue sponsoring Fu Jen Catholic University. Already a full year of “cooperation” aimed to reach a “modus vivendi” had gone by, and now there was enough information to take a more balanced decision.

- The loss of control of the University and the lack of cooperation became chronic.
- It became clear that Fu Jen was Catholic only in name, and the only real relation to the Catholic Church was financial, as mere provider of funds.
- The anti-Catholic, atheist, and Marxist indoctrination was pervasive, and except for the Catholic group it seemed to be successful, at least from the outside. For many the only way to make a living was to join the communist party and accept its ideology, and even some Catholic did so. Indeed, The Anti-Catholic feeling in the University was becoming more and more evident among the students, and apart from the Catholic students and staff, *very few [non-Catholics] have both the spirit and courage to manifest any sign of friendliness towards us.*¹⁴⁰
- A few professors started to voice out ideas not just anti-Church but openly defaming the Church, and inducing Catholic students to apostatize, and the Priests and Sisters at Fu Jen could do nothing but accept their powerlessness and watch.
- The feeling of personal insecurity continued and increased: physical threats, taking over part of the SVD quarters, police visits, arrest of priests throughout China¹⁴¹...
- The new policy on foreign residents enhanced the insecurity feeling; many foreigners were refused re-entry¹⁴² and residence permits, and some of the priests at Fu Jen, Rigney among them, just received 6 months residence permits (not knowing the reason why some received one year while others only six months), making it difficult to plan ahead of that period, and living with the anxiety of always expecting for the worse.¹⁴³
- Foreigners faced increased difficulty to get exit permits from Beijing, both for abroad and for inside the country.
- The news on the situation of the Church institutions in places where Communists had an earlier hold, like Harbin in the North East territories, were dispiriting.¹⁴⁴
- The few radical elements in faculty and student body continued to manage and control the University.
- The 1949-1950 school year confirmed the rumors that Fu Jen was the model to follow to subdue other Universities run by missionary societies: Tianjin's Tsinku (taking over

¹⁴⁰ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for June 12, 1950. SVDRA. F.9117

¹⁴¹ Like Jesuit Fr. Henry Real, superior of the French Jesuits in North China arrested on 1950, February 3. (See entry for 1950, February 3. SVDRA F.9004), Fr. Ludov Senge SVD of Lancho (Kansu) in prison since February, and Fr Theod. Kalwey SVD of Sinyang (Honan) still in prison (See entry for 1950, April 8. SVDRA F.9017)

¹⁴² Like Father Oehler SVD, and for this Rigney considered Fu Jen's University Council responsible, as other Universities in Beijing, also under American management were able to obtain the permits for their returned personnel. See: Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for January 2, 1950. SVDRA. F.8961

¹⁴³ Harold Rigney. Entry for February 15, 1950. SVDRA. F.9006

¹⁴⁴ [O]ver a year ago, the Communist closed her school [Ursuline's sisters] and dispossessed them of all their property although they have been promised freedom of religion and freedom to conduct their school. See: Harold Rigney, entry for November 22, 1949. SVDRA F.8916. See Harold Rigney, entry for June 30, 1949 F.8680 for Mukden (Shenyang)

the Middle School with strike against coal fees on December 1949^{145, 146}) and Shanghai's Aurora (taking over St. Mary's hospital)¹⁴⁷.

Fu Jen was no exception but the norm, and that state of affairs in itself had been enough on the summer of 1949 to decide on the termination of the Church subsidy. The bright spots that the former summer made the Roman authorities to reconsider their decision and grant the subsidy to Fu Jen University for another year, were now present no more.

Although along the 1949-1950 school year some of the key issues appeared and were dealt with in isolated fashion, we can situate on June 7, 1950 the moment it was decided there was a need to set a threshold of minimum requirements. That day at early afternoon (13:00-15:30) there was a very special conference in Fu Jen on University matters. In that meeting were present the whole SVD Fu Jen House Council; *monsignor Martina, Representative of the Internuncio; Rev. Paul Francis Ly, Vicar General of Peking; Very Rev. Father Steinmetz, S.J., local Superior of the Jesuits ... Rev. Maurice Cavenagh C.M. ... pastor of Tung Tang; and Rev. William McGoldrick ... pastor of the Parish of the Chinese Martyrs.*¹⁴⁸

Fu Jen House Council and Rigney didn't want to decide by themselves on the policy ahead without having heard other Catholic leaders around, as no matter what was the decision taken—to continue or to stop the subsidies, it would have repercussions over all the Chinese Catholic Church, and indeed it was an issue that mattered to the whole Chinese Catholic Church. One objection, probably because of the language, is that apart from Rev. Francis Ly and some among those in Fu Jen's House Council (probably just Fr. Fu), there were no other Chinese national Catholic present at the meeting.¹⁴⁹ On those two hours and a half the main issue was the new curriculum of Sociology to be implemented next year and the annoying presence and attitude of some overtly anti-Catholic professors. The conference *agreed that the proposed curriculum for Sociology could not be put into effect entirely, and that efforts should be made to eliminate those who had offended us most by attacking the Church.*¹⁵⁰

By that time Rigney also realized that they had to make clear some conditions before any subsidy is approved. In his mind, a feasible condition was the right *to name a Board of Trustees to our own liking ... [to] represent the owners of the University [Catholic Church], but also appoint the President ... and laying down within the limits determined by the Church and the Government, the policy of the University.*¹⁵¹ The idea was an interesting one, although he wasn't sure how much actual room would this Board of Trustees (BoT) will have to truly implement policies in the

¹⁴⁵ See: Harold Rigney, entry for January 5, 1950. SVDRA. F.8962

¹⁴⁶ In a confidential letter Chih Hung, a Catholic staff at Tsinku, told Rigney that *a few progressive teachers and students organized a group called Commission for the Improvement of Tsinku University. Their aim is to have the Government take control of the University...using various means to fight the present University authorities ... They advise the students [to comply] if they do not wish to be reproached of opposing the Communists ... We are submitted to pressure exercised by certain students, and to investigations by people sent by the Government. This is a moment of extreme crisis.* Chih Hung Confidential Letter to Harold Rigney, December 18, 1949. SVDRA F.8953

¹⁴⁷ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for October 27, 1949. SVDRA. F.8891.

¹⁴⁸ Harold Rigney. Entry for June 7, 1950. SVDRA. F.9116

¹⁴⁹ It is true that Beijing's Cardinal, Msgr. Tien, was unable to return to Beijing after it was liberated by the PLA and was outside the People's Republic, mostly in Taiwan. Nevertheless, still there must have been other important Chinese members of the clergy whose voice may have given a different opinion on the issue.

¹⁵⁰ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, F.9116

¹⁵¹ Harold Rigney. Entry for June 15, 1950. SVDRA. F.9117

University, and if anyone would like to take the position, as *it would be difficult for any layman to fill such a post, because he would be marked as a reactionary, and a running dog of the foreigners.*¹⁵²

In the House Council of June 29, 1950, the SVD community at Fu Jen showed all their cards and set a no return point when they stated five necessary conditions for granting the Church subsidy for the school year 1950-1951. Rigney would ask General Kappenberg in a letter¹⁵³ to present those conditions as “*sine qua non*”, and so did General Kappenberg. The conditions were as follows:¹⁵⁴

- 1) *The right of the Church to name a board of trustees of their own liking.*
- 2) *That no contract be issued, or renewed, or not renewed, contrary to the disapproval of the Rector.*
- 3) *That the Corridor east of the main Middle School buildings, partly occupied by the Middle School, be freed, and reserved for the use of the SVD Community.*
- 4) *That the Middle School be self-supporting.*
- 5) *That no new assistants be engaged before we know the number of University students for the coming school year.*

All but one (4) of these “*sine qua non*” conditions¹⁵⁵ suggested to Father Kappenberg were aimed at limiting the effects of communist control upon Fu Jen:

Condition	Objective
1) Should a Board of Trustees be elected, has to be to the SVD liking; the new board should be named by the Church [after Consultation with the University President].	To limit the decision-making power of the radical elements in the University.
2) Issuance of new contracts, or the renewal or non-renewal of contracts, should not be done contrary to the express disapproval of the Rector (a kind of veto power).	To discharge at least four on the staff due to their atheistic and anti-Catholic attacks. <i>We Fathers do not know how we can continue with the University, and tolerate, on principle, such people.</i> ¹⁵⁶ Rigney hoped that others would cease their attacks when seeing the SVD had power to decide on such issue.
3) No new assistants should be engaged for the coming school year until we know the actual enrollment for the University.	Stop the movement to eliminate Catholic assistants from the University staff and filling it with communist elements. <i>We have lost so many of our Good Catholic teachers ... soon we will have few or no[ne].</i> ¹⁵⁷
4) The affiliated Fu Jen Middle Schools (Boys and Girls) should be self-supportive. [later dropped]	They are completely out of SVD control (and therefore under Communist control), so they can not be called neither Catholic nor private; they should be able to finance themselves from tuition fees.
5) Former SVD Community quarters East of the Boys' Middle School should be restored and reserved for the exclusive use of the SVD community.	Avoid the insult and disturbances caused to the fathers by the rudeness of the students, <i>much of which seemed planned. From early morning ... Mass ... until the evening devotions we are disturbed in our prayers and recreations.</i> ¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Harold Rigney, entry for June 26, 1950. SVDRA. F.9118

¹⁵³ Harold Rigney, Letter to Fr. Kappenberg, June 30, 1950. SVDRA. F.9130

¹⁵⁴ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for June 29, 1950. SVDRA. F.9119

¹⁵⁵ See Harold Rigney. Ff.9130-9131

¹⁵⁶ Harold Rigney. F.9131

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

These conditions were slightly modified before they were presented to President Ch'en on June 30, as Secretary General Chang Chung-yi recommended to change the first one to give some face to the President of the University, and so it was added "*after consultation with President Ch'en Yuan*".¹⁵⁹ The conditions, with the exception of condition number two, later on referred as "the veto power", were considered acceptable when they were presented¹⁶⁰ to President Ch'en. On condition four, the end of the financial help to the Middle School, Ch'en suggested to drop it as a bona-fide political measure: If the SVD wanted the Middle School to fulfill condition number three —to vacate some quarters, better not to make the unfriendly move of taking away the financial assistance. According to Rigney, President Ch'en Yuan saw these conditions with a favorable view, and Rigney believed it was because if fulfilled, he would be relieved of many heavy responsibilities laid upon the President of the University's shoulders by the new Government Regulations.

Of these five conditions (now just four) only the first two would be of crucial importance along 1950 summer, and would be the ones that would determine Fu Jen's fate, as both sides considered them a question of principle that could not be compromised:

- The right of the Chinese to manage Fu Jen, and
- The right of the Church to keep Fu Jen firm in its Catholic roots.

Both sides will fight hard over these two conditions, to the point that Rigney affirmed in the beginning of his July report that *these have been a most trying month, perhaps the most difficult of those of the four years ... the last days of this month I felt very weary and fatigued, it was even difficult to think. I realized then how constant strain can break one by bringing one to the state we will no longer function*.¹⁶¹ The next sentence in that report acquired a special premonitory feeling when we see it from the perspective of his future imprisonment in Beijing from July 25, 1951 to September 16, 1955:¹⁶² *It is clear to me that one under confinement can eventually be brought to a state of admitting anything after a prolonged nervous stress*.¹⁶³

On June 30, 1950 Rigney sent an Air Mail letter to Fr. Kappenberg, General Superior of the SVD and Chancellor of the University, urging him to take a decision on the subsidies and communicating him some conditions the House Council had decided should be accepted by the University to receive the SVD subsidy. On June 14th he had already sent a cable asking the General and the Church if they could guarantee US\$12,000 a month for the University (community excluded) until July 1951, but Rigney had not yet received an answer on the 29th, and as the contracts for next year should have been issued next day June 30, there was some unrest among the University staff.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Harold Rigney, Letter to Kappenberg, June 30, 1950. SVDRA. F.9130

¹⁶⁰ On the letter to Pres. Ch'en, conditions three and five change places. Therefore, the first three were on the management of the school and the last two on the Middle School and the well-being of the SVD community. See Harold Rigney Letter to President Ch'en Yuan, June 30, 1950. SVDRA. F.9132

¹⁶¹ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, Introduction to July 1950 report. SVDRA. F.9179

¹⁶² After being freed in 1955, Harold Rigney wrote a detailed and passionate account of that ordeal in his book: *Four Years in a Red Hell The story of Father Rigney (SVD)*. Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1956.

¹⁶³ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, Introduction to July 1950 report. SVDRA. F.9179

¹⁶⁴ Harold Rigney, June 30, 1950 letter. SVDRA. F.9130

Playing the Game (see pic in next page for course of events)

The summer of 1950 was depicted by Harold Rigney with the words *cold war continues at Fu Jen*¹⁶⁵. Indeed, the summer events looked like a mixture of board games of Chess and Go. Like in Chess we can see each gamer making strategic movements to take over the opponent strengths; like in Go, the final result of the game was the conquest of all vital space of one side by the other; we can say that when Fu Jen was finally being taken over by the Chinese Government, the SVD at Fu Jen only had one piece left on the whole board and it was taken away too. One of the players was Rigney (backed by the Papal nuncio, Rome and the SVD General Government) representing “the Catholic Church”¹⁶⁶; the other was Fu Jen's Chinese Faculty and staff (backed by the Chinese Communist Government) representing New China and its revolution.

¹⁶⁵ Harold Rigney. Entry for August 3, 1950. SVDRA.F.9401

¹⁶⁶ Although the Chinese Government was always careful in not depicting this struggle as anti-Catholic or anti-foreign, but anti-imperialist.

June 29 five Demands

J U L Y

6. President show letter to staff. All demands are ok except for the veto power. Also, Chang and Ch'en diplomatically attacked on how unnecessary the other 4 were.

12. Cable from Rome: Church doing best to send twelve thousand monthly till July 1951 on essential condition Church names Board of Trustees and through Rector can veto personnel contract matters

- The month ends in a stalemate over the five objectionables' contracts that will give way to the August tactical skirmishes.
- For the Church it would mean the search of outside allies; for the faculty and staff to use the power of media pressure

31. FIU Hall Meeting
Ch'en: I would not accept \$144,000 on condition that five staff members be not issued new contracts, because these five are Chinese.
Rigney noted: he failed to mention that about eight Catholics had not been issued contracts, although they are also Chinese

14. Meeting with president (MP). Rigney shows contents of Cable 7/12. Ch'en asked for the Withdrawal of Chen and Liu from the list. Rigney answered he had to consult the House Council (HC)

15. HC: Don't withdraw

17. MP: President urges removal of Chen and Liu from the list. Rigney answers that he will ask HC.

18. HC: Don't withdraw

28. HC: Evening as limit for reply. No reply equals to a negative answer, and there would be no more disbursements of funds as there are no more subsidies.
P. Ch'en through Sec. Gen. Chang asked for extension; Rigney accepts it.

30. SVD & SSPs communities: favor we make no compromise.

29. Evening Cable to Rome: ...we withdrew formal veto nevertheless insisted five objectionables be not reemployed as minimum essential condition but which definitely rejected today hence informed president we being obliged obey your former instructions.

19. MP: Ch'en threatens to resign. He is very concerned with Liu, seems to fear him.

27. Letter to P. Ch'en:
1) Church alone can name BoT.
2) We withdraw the veto power because it's against Government regulations, but demand that the 5 not be issued new contracts.

23. Fathers: Pres. Ch'en misrepresented MoE letter; Orally he said Church could nominate BoT, on the letter he said that he or the Church could nominate.

21. HC: Consult Fu Ting-yi, personal friend of Mao and 3 children are School Alumni.

22. Meeting with Chang: He gives Rigney a written statement of the president: The Government will take over the University if we demand a veto.

21. MP: Ministry of Education (MOE) does not allow the second condition (veto). First condition is OK if nominating after consulting the MoE, and the BoT is approved by the MoE.

AUGUST

2. First Gov. grant to FIU: 100,000 catties of millet (28000US\$)

3. HC: Not to make any move or contact, as can be seen as sign of weakness
Prof. Li (Peita) Contacts MoE on behalf of FIU. No answer from MoE.

8. Fr Sun (Tsinku), contacts MoE which answered:
- He can have a meeting providing he is not representing FIU
- No hurry. FIU is private and will continue that way.
- If FIU wants to contact MoE should do it through P. Ch'en.

9. Movement to isolate FIU Catholics from Fathers: It is not a fight against the Church, but against Foreign imperialism.
New Fu Jen Magazine takes on Rigney and the Church. Originals and translation sent to Rome.

18. HC decided to return contracts issued to Fathers and Sisters if there was no agreement at the end of the month.

19. Mao and Fu Ting-yi had dinner together:
- Mao said he wanted Fu...to serve as Chairman of the BoT Government would not take over the University [and] to convey this information to the Rector.

23. Two cables from Rome. Morning: Church decides no more subsidy for University because essential conditions unfulfilled
Afternoon: If university impossible, remain as necessary safeguarding property parish seminary ... Fathers pertaining to missions return there is possible.

24. Fu Ting-yi called on Secretary General of the Cultural Committee on FIU behalf:
- He did not manifest friendly interest in FIU
- He said the five objectionable should remain
- Church should grant the subsidy before further discussions

- August's skirmishes ended in a new stalemate that continued over September.
- The Church's search for help wasn't too successful, and the Chinese educational authorities seemed clear in their support of Ch'en Yuan and FIU's faculty and staff
- As the Chinese Gov. supported Fu Jen economically, the value of the economic subsidy as a bargain chip decreased.
- The undetermined situation couldn't be sustained for long, and September looked like the decisive month for FIU's future.

On Curriculum:
- Higher school curricula are still not national, scientific and belonging to the masses.
- Overcome the empty doctrinism of "Learning for learning's sake".
- Prevent narrow practicalism or experimentalism which ignores the study of theories.
- Higher schools should draw up drafts or plans of curriculums and submit them to the Central MoE for approval.

On Government Leadership:
- The MoE has full responsibility over the schools of the whole country (except military schools).
- The Boards of Education of the Administrative Districts have responsibility of leadership over the higher schools in their respective districts.
- Higher schools should execute all the decisions which the Central MoE promulgates.
- The universities and academics in North China District, except those which have been committed to the direction of the Provincial Government, are all under the leadership of the Central MoE.

28. Letter to Chou En-lai (F.9446):
- Now FIU administration knows the situation, as regulations have been published.
- FIU wants to comply and reorganize the BoT, re-register the University and gradual development of a more advanced administration.
- Invite as trustees Messrs. Fu Ting-yi, Chang Shihchao, Chang Tung Sun and Pan Kuang Tan.
- Hope that Premier Chou would support the University's actions.

31. Cable to Rome: Are confreres allowed to accept invitations for teaching inspire your cables August 22?

30. P. Ch'en sent the translation of the Government Document on Regulations for HS and Control of Private HS

27. Fu Ting-yi met Prime Minister Chou En-lai.
Chou En-lai stated that if the Church subsidized the University, the staff members should not attack the Church, and that regulations to this effect should be incorporated in our constitutions or by-laws. ...the five should remain, and ...dismissed if in the future they were to attack the Church.

When introducing the month of September 1950 Rigney called it the *last month of the first 25 years of the University*¹⁶⁷, and it would be the last one of Fu Jen University as an enterprise of the Catholic Church.

At the beginning of that month Fr. Harold W. Rigney and the SVD still had some hopes that the whole situation could become under control, and Fu Jen could continue as a Catholic learning institution subsidized by the Catholic Church; this hope was based on the naming of a new Board of Trustees that would elect a new President and Vice-president of the University and the stating in the by-laws of the University that the Catholic Church and faith should not be attacked.

A meeting with the MoE originally planned for September 9 was postponed for two weeks. During this time Rigney sent letters to Chairman Mao on September 12 and Prime Minister Chou (Zhou Enlai) on September 14 asking for assistance.

The SVD community was also able to produce a suitable Board of Trustees, who, with the exception of Chang Tung-Sun who was in Shanghai, would dine together on September 17¹⁶⁸.

Catholic Members	Government Members
Rev. Paul Francis Ly, Vicar Gen. of the Archdiocese of Peking	Mr. Fu Ting-yi ¹⁶⁹
Fr. Peter Sun (SVD)	Mr. Chang Shih-Chao ¹⁷⁰
Fr. Joseph Goertz (SVD)	Mr. Chang Tung-Sun ¹⁷¹
Fr. Peter Huengsborg (SVD)	Mr. Pan Kuang-Tan ¹⁷²
Fr. Harold W. Rigney (SVD)	

The meeting at the Ministry of Education was postponed again, from the 23 of September to the 25. Finally, that meeting ended all possibility and hope for the Catholic Church and the SVD to continue running Fu Jen, except if they dropped all of their already quite diminished demands:

This morning [25], I had a conference with the Minister of Education, Ma Hsü-Lun ... present with me was Rev. Peter Sun SVD ... Ma read to me in Chinese his letter ... one of the important ideas...was that the only connection the Church could have with Fu Jen was to supply the subsidy to conduct optional courses in religion ... that the Church should have nothing to do with the administration. I then asked Mr. Ma whether the Board of Trustees was considered as part of the administration. After consulting with Mr. Chang Tsung-Lin he replied that it was part of the administration, which means that the Church should have nothing to do with naming, or in any way controlling the Board of Trustees. Another important statement in this letter was that criticism of religion was allowed, and no limitations were offered, although limitations were made regarding the exercise of religion in the University [and] ...

¹⁶⁷ Harold Rigney. Introduction to September 1950 report. SVDRA. F.9531

¹⁶⁸ Harold Rigney. Entry for September 17, 1950. SVDRA. F.9535

¹⁶⁹ Ibid: Noted man of letters, former teacher of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (Mao Zedong), and a member of the Committee of Cultural Affairs.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid: Former minister of Education, teacher of Prime Minister Chou En-lai (Zhou Enlai), and a member of the Committee of Cultural Affairs.

¹⁷¹ Ibid: Professor of Philosophy at Yenching University, and a member of the Committee of Cultural Affairs.

¹⁷² Ibid: Professor and Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua University.

that Ch'en Yuan should remain as President, although we fathers are of the opposite opinion.^{173, 174, 175}

After the end of that meeting, Minister Ma wanted Rigney to meet President Ch'en Yuan who was waiting in an adjacent room, but Rigney, fearing that doing this would put unnecessary pressure on himself, declined and answered Minister Ma that *since we Fathers conduct our affairs along democratic lines, I would have first to present the Minister's letter to my confreres and discussed with them its contents, before I could take another step.*¹⁷⁶

Some Catholic teachers and staff at Fu Jen also tried to convince Rigney of accepting the imposed situation as a way of continuing having a Catholic presence in Fu Jen, but since long ago, the decision was not in Rigney's hands, but in Rome. He simply told the Catholics that faithfulness to Catholic faith was something that mattered, and we all must try to stick to our Catholic principles.

On September 28 a cable arrived from Rome; Rigney noted that the cable was received in Beijing at 8:00 in the morning and it took six hours to be delivered to Fu Jen; it read: *because of conditions cabled September 26 subsidies definitely discontinued stop Unless conditions essentially changed **Church upholds its decision even should you and all Fathers request reconsideration.***¹⁷⁷

Rigney and the SVD community especially appreciated the last sentence, as it took from them the responsibility over the decision as it was a matter to be decided in Rome and not by the will of the SVD at Beijing which could change due to pressure from different parties. The only thing left for Rigney and the House Council was to write down a letter —he called it memorandum¹⁷⁸, answering Minister Ma's letter by rejecting the conditions Ma had presented.

Rigney considered that to *accept them would put us in a worse condition than we have been in, until now. It would mean for us to tolerate criticism of the Church and her doctrines in a Catholic supported School, and to renounce every connection with the administration, including the formation of the Board of Trustees. Moreover, should our subsidies be insufficient because of the drop in the value of the American dollar, we would be subject to demands for more money, once we have undertaken the burden to subsidize the University.*¹⁷⁹

Indeed, that September of 1950 wouldn't have an easy end; apart of the sadness coming from seeing Fu Jen end its history as a Catholic University while listening to the loud and bold statements in Fu Jen's hall about the Fathers imperialistic attitudes, one member of the SVD community, Fr. Huengsberg, who went out with the chauffeur for some errands the day before,

¹⁷³ Harold Rigney. Entry for September 25, 1950. SVDRA. F.9536.

¹⁷⁴ See SVDRA F.9460-9461 for the Original Chinese and 9457-9459 for the English translation.

¹⁷⁵ Much later, when narrating his final tribulation in China in his book *Four Years in a Red Hell*, Harold Rigney also recounted this event using the following words: "Minister Ma told me that the only connection the Church could continue to have with Fu Jen would be the financing of the university. ... I asked if this control included the forming of the Board of Trustees. To this he replied, "Yes". I reported to Very Reverend Aloysius Grosse-Kappenberg S.V.D., my superior General and the Chancellor of Fu Jen University, that the only condition on which the Church had agreed to continue to subsidize Fu Jen, namely, the right to nominate a new Board of Trustees has been rejected by the Ministry of Education". Harold W. Rigney, *Four Years in a Red Hell The story of Father Rigney (SVD)*. Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1956. P.21

¹⁷⁶ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for September 25, 1950. SVDRA. F.9537

¹⁷⁷ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for September 28, 1950. SVDRA. F.9538 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁷⁸ Harold Rigney Memorandum in reply to September 25, 1950 Letter. SVDRA. F.9542

¹⁷⁹ Harold Rigney, Monthly Reports, entry for September 29, 1950. SVDRA. F.9539

September 29, had not returned back to Fu Jen¹⁸⁰; it would be a foretaste of the road lying ahead for Fu Jen's SVD and SSpS communities.

Although the University wouldn't be officially taken over by the Government until after the end of the National Day vacation period commemorating the first anniversary of establishing the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949, Rigney ended his report for September 1950 with these words:

It is with a heavy heart that we Fathers closed the day, the last of the old Fu Jen, on the eve of its silver jubilee, October 1st, on which day the "New Fu Jen" was to commence. The University was founded on October 1st, 1925.¹⁸¹

At the end of June 1950, the SVD Community at Fu Jen had stated the five conditions to be met so that the Church subsidy could be granted, and made a clear move against the issue of the new curriculum in Sociology, and also towards the unacceptable behavior, for a Catholic University, of some teachers with their aggressive anti-Christian attitude.

It took the whole summer to clear out the situation and as none of the two key conditions—the dismissal of the “five objectionables” and the right to name the Board of Trustees, were accepted by the Ministry of Education, the outcome was the end of Fu Jen University as a Catholic institution.

Fr. Rigney and the Church behind him were aware that the move they made last June when they presented the five “sine-qua-non” conditions for the subsidy, was their last hand as they had no more cards to play. The game was finally over and it had ended with a defeat for the Church representatives, although with the head held high on their moral conviction of not surrendering their Catholic principles; truly, it was a struggle “*usque ad ultimum*” that is, up to the end, as the Internuntius Msgr. Riberi had required.

¹⁸⁰ Harold Rigney. Entry for September 30, 1950. SVDRA. F.9540

¹⁸¹ Ibid.