

‘SERVE THE PEOPLE’: REWI ALLEY, PROUD NEW ZEALANDER AND COMRADE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE: An Interpretation

Sixty Years of Standing Together Through Thick and Thin. Fifty Years of Cooperation for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Progress: A Symposium to Commemorate Rewi Alley’s Spirit and Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and New Zealand (Christchurch, 20 October 2022).

I Bruce Harding I

I am honoured to speak about what we call a ‘Magic Kiwi’ at this 50-year anniversary of Australia and New Zealand’s conjoint diplomatic recognition of the People’s Republic of China by the Gough Whitlam and Norman Kirk-led Labour Governments in late 1972¹, after President Nixon’s epochal visit to Beijing in February 1972, which began the process of normalizing US-China relations after a 23-year freeze, with Nixon and Chairman Mao committing their nations, in a joint *communiqué*, to forswear the seeking of national hegemony.² (I suspect that

¹ See David McCraw, ‘Norman Kirk, the Labour Party and New Zealand’s Recognition of the People’s Republic of China’, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.4:1 (June 2002), 46-61; and McCraw, *China’s Foreign Policy: An Ideological Approach* (Wellington: Price Milburn/New Zealand Institute for International Affairs, 1975). Alley hated Cold Warrior Richard Nixon with a fierce passion and must have been privately angered and distressed at Nixon’s *detente* with Mao’s China (analyzed by Margaret MacMillan in *Nixon and Mao: The Week that Changed the World* [New York: Random House, 2007]). See also McCraw, ‘The Demanding Alliance: New Zealand and the Escalation of the Vietnam War’, *AJPH*, Vol.34:3 (1989), pp.308-319.

² The Shanghai Communiqué (27 February 1972) stated that “neither [nation] should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony” (www.digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121325). A joint communiqué (also acknowledging the PRC’s claim that Taiwan is a province of China) was signed by The UN Permanent Representative of New Zealand (veteran diplomat John V. Scott) and representatives of China in New York on 23 December 1972, a day after the Whitlam-led PRC recognition was formalized in NYC. In 1971 the Australian Labor Party had applied to the PRC and sent a party delegation to China, led by Whitlam, to discuss potential diplomatic and trade relations with Australia. On 28 June Whitlam told media that the general objective was “to see how far the people of China and the people of Australia are able to talk to each other”, and the delegation met Zhou Enlai in the Great Hall of the People (Susan Mitchell, *Margaret Whitlam: A Biography* [Sydney: Random House Australia, 2006], p.182). The PRC’s key focus in 1971 was on attaining UN membership and the imminent US-China opening. Whitlam’s senior advisor Graham Freudenberg confirmed the fact that New Zealand closely co-ordinated its normalization moves with the very speedy ones of Australia’s new federal government (Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics* [Melbourne: Macmillan Australia, 1977], p.246. See also ‘First Whitlam ministry decisions and administrative actions’, NAA A593, CL48 (National Archives of Australia, Canberra). Gough Whitlam and his deputy, Lance Barnard, governed as a ‘du-umvirate’ until the full Cabinet could be sworn in after the 2.12.72 federal election. On 5 December 1972, Whitlam, with whom I discussed this, cabled the Australian Ambassador in Paris to open formal negotiations with the Chinese and thus repeated the Nixon-Kissinger template of 1970-71 (see David Marr, Ian Hancock & Kelli Abbott (eds.), *The Whitlam Years* [Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2017]). The rather tardy NZ

Rewi Alley was none too pleased by the Nixon welcome from Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai while the Vietnam War still raged.)

I dedicate my remarks today to my academic mentor and friend, the late Professor W.E. ('Bill') Willmott, who, alas, died a year ago. Bill's parents were great friends of Rewi, and Bill later also became a valued friend to Rewi. Bill very graciously mentored me as a young sociology student, and our paths later intersected as he brought Chinese delegations to Rewi's old school and, after that, when we were both Research Associates at the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury.

Named in honour of a feisty Māori chief, Rewi Alley described himself as "a loner" and an ordinary "country bumpkin" from New Zealand³, but he was anything but that. While raised as a young boy in the rural South Island, Rewi's were progressive parents in a conservative pseudo-English city. His beloved mother, Clara, was an agitator for women's voting rights and his more stern father, Frederick, enthused in a socialist direction about the American reformer Henry George's views of reform in land taxation and collective farming. Rewi was toughened by the family's move from rural towns to Russley Road (Christchurch) and was not so much a loner as a slowly developing individual. He did not fit mainstream academic learning and recalled days at Wharenui School in Riccarton (where his father was the Headmaster) when he was strapped across the hands up to five times in a day. Rigid English-style rote-learning provoked some boyish rebellion, but Rewi was not an academic failure, and so graduated to high school, following his elder brother Eric to enrol in the Christchurch Boys' High School (a feeder school to Canterbury College, the young university). That school was sited near the town centre and was no longer an exclusively fee-paying institution. Free places had been introduced by the reforming Seddon Liberal Government to make democratic access to learning easier. By the time Rewi enrolled there in 1912 the school had a manual/technical department and, because of its Second Master George Hogben's policies as Director of Education, for some boys schooling at CBHS mixed traditional academic learning with instruction in manual and technical skills (the Sloyd system). This was also the dual instruction model of the Bailie schools in China, and the combining of academic learning with practical skills at Sandan Bailie School from 1944 to 1949 dovetailed well with his memories of the old Boys' High School which he always

process of diplomatic recognition was followed up speedily by the Kirk Government in March 1973 by the visit to China of Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister, The Hon. Joe Walding, as New Zealand faced the fall-out of Britain's entry into the EEC from 1 January 1973. New Zealand's first Ambassador to Beijing, Bryce Harland, arrived shortly after.

³ Alley; filmed on *Gung Ho: Rewi Alley of China* (Television New Zealand, 1980). Scripted and directed by Geoff Chapple.

remembered fondly. As a developing individual learning the way of hard work on the family farmlet, I suggest that Rewi enjoyed a wider brotherhood at Christchurch Boys', which may explain why he was so keen to enlist and fight in the imperialist First World War for King George V and Country, becoming a decorated war veteran after serving at Ypres and the Somme. He was following his brother (who was killed in that war) and other male role models at the Boys' High and must have, eventually, felt very disillusioned about that entire imperialistic conflict (although there seems no written statement of this). Bill Gammage has argued that in Australia, the myth of Great War participation "showed how the qualities of individuals might make nations great" and such involvement "proclaimed national distinctiveness" and demonstrated heroic warfare "as a test of men."¹ Gammage added that the Anzac legend became "a forum for such conservative values as the necessity for loyalty, conformity to the state, and acceptance of middle-class quiescence."² However, despite any later disenchantment by Rewi, it was also critical that on the Western Front he met some members of the Chinese Labour Corps, the first Chinese people Alley encountered at close range as human beings: "they were the first Chinese in our lives we had been able to meet on the level of mutual respect."³

Rewi's Headmaster at Boys' High School was a University of Oxford graduate in classics, a little, simple-minded Cornishman-made-scholar and an ardent Anglican believer. From Charles (Bevan) Brown, Rewi gained a sense of Christianized Britishness and a mission to serve. Mr Brown was jingoistic and deeply Victorian in his robust 'manly' idealism, and he appealed to the simple snobberies of a conservative, property-owning sheep and wheat-trading society in the small market town of Christchurch. I suggest that Charles Brown influenced Rewi and many others to view military service to the British Empire as the highest form of sacrifice to preserve civilized modern mankind. The man was decent but, frankly a misguided warmonger and

¹ Bill Gammage, 'Anzac'; in (ed.) John Carroll, *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1982), p.56. I agree with Gough Whitlam that Australia and New Zealand "have exceptionally similar societies and educational systems" in the main (*Abiding Interests* [St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1997], p.145).

² Gammage, p.63.

³ Alley, *Yo Banfa!* (Shanghai: New China Monthly, 1952), p.121.

recruiter for war with the most simple, conformist views, as Dr Beeby (another BHS boy) later asserted.⁴

What I find interesting is that nowhere in his writings have I found Rewi reflecting on the obvious fact that a Marxist, materialist analysis of the Great War explains why New Zealand contributed so much of its prime manhood to 'save Belgium': that it was *really* protecting its security from so-called 'Asian hordes' and also safeguarding access to its prime market for its exported agricultural products. Kiwis needed to keep the Home Country viable to fund our existence as a developing colony (and now Dominion) enjoying the fruits of 'imperial preference' in trade. This is what membership in what the late Queen Elizabeth II called "our great Imperial family to which we all belong" was all about. Rewi sincerely believed in service, fought on the Somme and suffered terrible war-wounds at the battle of Cambrai-Baupame, returned to a 'land fit for war heroes', took up some marginal land in Taranaki, worked his guts out with his Boys' High mate Jack Stevens and walked away from that farming experiment after a serious economic recession, and must have been just starting to develop the seeds of radical ideas and doubts about his schooling, the free market system and how he could find a way in life. Jack went off and got married (Rewi may have been sexually inverted or Rewi's war wound may well have made him sexually incompetent.) While farming and labouring, he had read in the *Auckland Weekly News* of the 4 May 1919 Incident and Dr Sun Yat-sen's attempted 'Great Revolution' in China (1924-27). Anne-Marie Brady suggests that Alley initially went to China to seek employment as a foreign mercenary fighting in the successful Northern Expedition against Beijing of 1926-27.⁵ This war, against internal warlord forces and Britain and its Concessions, was led by Jiang Jieshi and was supported by the Soviet Union (it had hi-jacked the KMT in January 1926) and was a conjoint operation by the Guomintang and the Communists, which captured provinces near Beijing, but the unity fragmented in 1927 after CCP forces captured Shanghai from British control on 21 March 1927. Jieshi had placed the 'red terrorists' Mao Zedong and Mikhail Borodin on a hit-list⁶ and the KMT brutally slaughtered communists and ruthlessly suppressed them in favour of his own messianic Nationalist quest to rule

⁴ Beeby, later Director of Education for New Zealand, asserted this to me and also in his intellectual autobiography, *The Biography of an Idea* (Wellington: NZ Council for Educational Research, 1992). My own extensive research in the CBHS archives and school magazines confirms just how hyper-British and conformist Charles Brown was, as a man deeply (and understandably, if regrettably) very much of his time and class.

⁵ Anne-Marie Brady, 'New Zealand-China Relations: Common Points and Differences', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.10:2 (December 2008), pp.1-20.

⁶ Jung Chang, *Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister: Three Women at the Heart of Twentieth-Century China* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019), p.136. Alley and George Hatem (aka Ma Heide) assisted Ms Chang with this book.

China, all as Alley arrived in Shanghai to join the anti-imperialist revolt. So began his 60-year love-affair with ordinary Chinese people cruelly oppressed by both Chinese elites (e.g.the Kungs and Soongs) and Western exploiters. But Rewi took a while to emerge fully from his Christchurch chrysalis of mental conformity because, having missed that conflict, he arrived in Jiang's Shanghai and needed to use his past military service to gain employment as a fire inspection officer and, from 1932, became its Chief Factory Inspector where he became socially radicalized and really faced down the horrific abuses of young children in the Shanghai slums and in the Concessions (the International Settlement). The Bund may have seemed sleek and civilized, but the corrupt capitalists and robber barons (*comprador bourgeois* Chinese as well as foreigners) distressed Rewi as he viewed hordes of famine-stressed refugees confined to intolerable labour in sweat-shops, many catching *beri-beri*. This confrontation with noxious profiteers and thuggish gangster types and the terrible waste and exploitation of human life in the crucible of evil that was Shanghai in that era led to Rewi's extraordinary dedication to the common-folk of China. Rewi described the city he sailed into in 1927 in words of righteous passion quite foreign to a Christchurch Boys' High Old Boy:

Modern Shanghai was founded by get-rich-quick foreign imperialist adventurers and opium traders who needed a place of their own exempt from Chinese supervision, safe and well-controlled by their own council, administration and police. A place from which to carry on their nefarious business. Based on predatory imperialism, it was a city of great wealth and vast poverty, developing certain types of industry, especially textiles, when cheap Chinese labor from a rotting hinterland became available. Chinese men, women and children, underpaid, often enough starving, many actually slaves, came to man its factories, create its amenities, and serve its every need. When wars and peasant risings made life for landlords and other exploiters in China less pleasant, Shanghai became a place of refuge and a haven for them. The Chinese underworld too found its paradise here. Shanghai ended up before Liberation as a city of extreme poverty for the many and extreme wealth for the few. It was a happy hunting ground for gangsters, pimps, prostitutes, adventurers and other exploiters, Chinese and foreign: a place where millionaires were made, and the beginnings of great fortunes amassed.⁷

Quite understandably, Rewi hated corrupt elites like the Kung family and admired Chairman Mao, the poet and rebel⁸, for his focus on empowering the worker-peasant people and for his belief in "the essential role of the poor and lower-middle-class peasant in the Chinese revolution"⁹ to overthrow imperialism and the reactionary warlord

⁷ Alley, *Travels in China 1966-71* (Peking: New World Press, 1973), p.61.

⁸ Alley, *Travels in China 1966-71* (1973), pp.34-35.

⁹ Rewi Alley, *Travels in China*, p.50.

¹³ Alley, *Travels*, p.18.

regime. Rewi was then a world away from Christchurch, but he must have recalled his old Headmaster's fervent imperialism and war-cries, as a negative object-lesson. As Rewi observed in 1971:

Confucius, so long ago, preached for the rulers decorum, filial piety and all the rest of it. His teachings were avidly taken by the ruling class and served to make feudalism last as long as it did in China. But Mao Tsetung puts his trust in the people. It is the people who are the deciding factor, he says.¹³

Alley learned the lesson that one could carry out a political message through empowering ordinary people in production, and this use of what Marx called *praxis* became a key driver in Rewi's *Gung Ho* programme of 'Create and Analyze' and in his educational work in Gansu, where he applied his own experiences of struggle and pain to serve others in a far worse situation in the imperialized China.¹⁰ In 1929 Alley went to Inner Mongolia to oversee the building of a canal near the Yellow River, to provide irrigation to restore the land and help reduce the ravages of famine and later did sterling humanitarian work in Honghu. A Marxist study group of Westerners met in Shanghai and Alley joined them, seeing that the parlous state of Old China needed a revolutionary solution. From 1936 Comrade Alley took fulsome part in the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, as what Edgar Snow called a human "Blitzbuilder"¹¹, a man "teaching China the constructive organization of guerilla industry", as Alley tirelessly criss-crossed occupied China and spear-headed an international

¹⁰ See Alley, *Sandan: An Adventure in Creative Education* (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1959).

¹¹ Edgar Snow, 'China's Blitzbuilder, Rewi Alley', *The Saturday Evening Post*, 8 February 1941), p.38. ¹⁶A New Zealand diplomat, probably W.J. Jordan, writing to NZ Prime Minister Rt. Hon. M.J. Savage, from *La Residence*, Geneva, on 23 September 1937, noted that China, a Member State of the League, had appealed for assistance after Japan's heinous attack on China, and added that the Committee of Twenty-Three had met but that America "is not prepared to enter into any discussion on what she will do if the League decides on some line of action. She will not discuss her action in any hypothetical position. We are called upon to make a definite decision, after which America will decide whether she will 'fall in' with us. That, of course, is somewhat unsatisfactory, except that it does call upon the League to make a definite stand, and, personally, I am of the opinion that if this were done, America, because of her anxiety in the Pacific and her feud with the Japanese, would play her part in the expedition" (p.4 of unsigned letter [National Archives, Wellington]. This unnamed diplomat (Jordan) assured the PM that he had reiterated his 1936 statement about New Zealand's "adherence to the Covenant of the League and the policy of collective security." That eleven-paged statement by Jordan to the League in Geneva was dated 29 September 1936 ([Pra 114/1/11 Part 1]. Jordan in a letter to PM Savage (Pra 264/2/7 Part 11) reported discussions with a British (Scottish) Minister, Walter Elliot, in which the British suggested a resolution condemning "the bombing of open towns and other actions of the Japanese" but also reassuring the Empire of Japan that a declaration of war was not looming, as Britons did not want "widows in Glasgow as well as in China". Jordan added: "If that is the spirit that has to prompt us, then, in view of that possibility we should not be in the League at all, but you and I understand that the purpose of the League is Collective Security in order to protect attacked States." China's representative at the League was Dr Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador in Paris (who had been acting President of China in 1927, the year Alley arrived in Shanghai).

campaign to solicit funds for the 3,000 *Gung Ho* industrial co-operatives which were so useful in resisting the Japanese forces (c.500,000 troops). Alley also warned New Zealanders that China was the front-line, in terms of forward defence, against further aggressive Japanese expansionism into the Southwest Pacific, and the first Labour government (of M.J. Savage) took heed of this and strongly supported resisting Japanese fascist aggression at the League of Nations, even to the point of economic sanctions and establishing an international force.¹⁶ Carl Berendsen, CMG, Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department (Wellington), received a report from diplomat R.M.Campbell in London concerning distressing malaise he observed at Geneva and Brussels in the League and 1922 Nine-Power Treaty conferences on "Sino-Japanese affairs" because violations of the Covenant and other relevant treaties did not move European governments, which "are able mostly to proceed on the assumption that their people feel so strongly for peace that they will acquiesce in anything rather than resist". Campbell added, very sadly and in clear disgust:

The spirit of Geneva, 1937, was that "we must not appear to let China down" (with all the emphasis on 'appear') and that we must not lead her to expect assistance; to assist China, we must see that she does not ask for anything that would call the United States Neutrality legislation into effect; and likewise we must be scrupulously impartial and fair minded to Japan—even the much quoted phrase by her Premier "beat China to her knees" was not allowed to pass in a draft League Committee report.¹²

Based in Wuhan, Alley, the practical, energetic 'atom', fought the Japanese blockade and used the *Gung Ho/Gonghe* industrial movement to revitalise Chinese industry which had been reduced to 20% of its former capacity. The industrialization of the village by creating a network of machine co-operatives in the hinterland supplied, for instance, three million blankets, and even hand-grenades, for the KMT in the fight against Japan. From 1944 Alley worked with a young Englishman, George Hogg (a very different 'Oxford man' from Rewi's old Headmaster Brown), in a school which they moved to Sandan in China's remote Northwest, to train peasant boys in a wide range of technical skills in what Hogg called a 'university for the common man'. Rewi wrote a moving tribute to Hogg (who died of tetanus in July 1945) in a superb book called *Fruition: The Story of George Alwyn Hogg* (Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1967). In 1942, before the triumph of Mao and Zhou Enlai (the 'War of Liberation'), Jiang Jeshi discharged Alley from Indusco, as it was becoming a dangerous, radical precedent for the Nationalists committed to comfortable crony capitalism and market monopoly. He was later to be dismissed as headmaster from the Sandan Baillie School when the

¹² R.M. Campbell, Confidential letter from London to C.A. Berendsen, 15 December 1937, p.2 [Pra 264/2/7 Part 12]. Declassified by National Archives, Wellington. Campbell reported exactly the same gutlessness (which he called Brussels "fizzle") about collective security linked logically to a deep reluctance to fight Franco's fascism in the Spanish Civil War.

International Committee of *Gung Ho* was wound up in 1951 and the school was absorbed into the Ministry of Fuel to train oil workers, then removed to Lanzhou in 1953-54¹³.

Rewi was very sad and lost for a long time after this, deeply missing the Sandan experiment, and he returned to New Zealand in 1954, but he strenuously wished to remain in the PRC and serve the New China after 1 October 1949. Rewi did that to good effect, in travelling as a spokesman for the new regime and its class war at various peace conferences (starting with the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Region in Beijing in October 1952), as the Cold War settled over the world like a dark cloud¹⁹, starting with the Korean War, gathering force as the Soviets fell out with China (1959-61) and as a nuclear arms race enveloped the Big Powers (including the PRC). Right-wing politicians in New Zealand denounced Rewi as a 'Red traitor', but he outlived them and forged many fruitful ties of friendship, such as our sister-city link. Rewi began to translate old T'ang dynasty (and other) poetic texts, and then wrote poetry of his own which fervently celebrated the heroic struggle of the masses of ordinary Chinese committed to liberating 'Mao Tsetung Thought' ranged against the grim legacies of feudalism and capitalism in the Old China. In Rewi's words, "A new culture is coming in, and though much of the old still remains in the thought of people, the new is so strong it steadily erodes all that is unscientific, all that holds back the creativeness of liberated minds."¹⁴ Alley, the old Marxist-Leninist cadre could not say the same about his birth-land, sleepy smug New Zealand, then mired in conformity and alarming him after it signed, with Australia and the United States, the ANZUS Treaty in 1951.¹⁵ Almost certainly in response to this, and during the Korean conflict, in 1952 Alley established the New Zealand-China Friendship Society, given Australasian fears of a resurgent 'Yellow Peril' (whether that be from 'Red China', Vietnam or Indonesia).¹⁶ Rewi kept up

¹³ Rewi was titular head of the Lanzhou Oil and Technical School until his removal as a 'dangerous Westerner' during the ideological upheavals of Mao's 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution', from 1966.

¹⁹ See Roger Dingman, 'John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954', *The International History Review*, Vol.XI:3 (August 1989), pp.409-477.

¹⁴ Alley, *Travels*, p.114.

¹⁵ See David McIntyre, 'The Background to ANZUS'; in (ed.) Malcolm McKinnon, *The American Connection* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1988), pp.132-140 and 'The Road to Vietnam', *ibid.*, pp.141-147. Also David McCraw, 'Reluctant Ally: New Zealand's Entry into the Vietnam War', *The New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.14:1 (April 1981), pp.49-60..

¹⁶ Robert McNamara unpacked serious US misjudgements around Asian nationalism in his important book (with Brian Van DeMark), *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1995), and Gough Whitlam wrote incisively about Australian Cold War anti-Communist hysteria in his compendious book *Abiding Interests* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1997), Chapter 3 '(Legacy of Empires in Asia)', pp.52-61. Whitlam once said that "My significant contribution in public life on the question of China was to defy and remove the obsessions about the China threat" (p.127). McNamara stated, in Errol Morris' film *The Fog of War* (2003), that "None of our

his war of words in favour of Mao's regime and may have shared President Xi Jinping's view that the Cultural Revolution ultimately strengthened China, so that when from May 1966 the PRC was convulsed with the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, Alley was inspired by a suggestion of his old friend Zhou Enlai to travel across China and see, and then report, progress during those difficult years. The result was his comprehensive 588-paged book, *Travels in China 1966-71* completed in late 1971, which was an epochal year for Western normalization.¹⁷ Rewi returned to New Zealand in 1971 to visit family and to reassure his own people after China had been admitted, with full membership²⁴, to the United Nations that year.²⁵ Gough Whitlam wrote of moving Australia "out of the long shadows of the fallen empires", reflecting that "When I was elected as [Queen Victoria's] great-great granddaughter's Prime Minister in Australia [1972], I had the satisfaction of collaborating with my New Zealand counterpart [N.E. Kirk] in ending the military and financial support for the ruinous rulers of South Viet Nam[,] which had never been extended by our counterparts and their predecessors in the United Kingdom, Canada and the Queen's other realms and territories."¹⁸ I can recall

allies supported us" (referencing Northern Hemisphere NATO ones). Australia and New Zealand did so because of their own trade and geo-strategic anxieties. Whitlam firmly asserted that this support in Vietnam was not dictated by the tripartite ANZUS Treaty (although SEATO membership must have played a role, even though the compact had virtually died by 1969).

¹⁷ Canada had commenced such normalization moves in 1969 and Ottawa finalized matters on 13 October 1970. In April 1971 the US Nixon administration, mired in the Vietnam misadventure, accepted an invitation to send a ping-pong team to Beijing ('ping-pong diplomacy'), and on 15 July 1971 Henry Kissinger openly admitted secret shuttle diplomacy with Beijing, effected by Zhou Enlai, to negotiate formal recognition of the PLC, which led to the visit of President R.M. Nixon to Beijing in February 1972 (see Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* [New York: Summit Books, 1983], Ch. 35: 'China: A Prime-Time Visit'; and Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1979]).

¹⁸ Whitlam, *Abiding Interests* (19987), p.95. Mr Whitlam recalled that when finally meeting Deng Xiaoping in Beijing in October 1986, he expressed regret at not seeing Deng in his 1971 and 1976 visits to the PRC. His host dryly responded: 'During the Cultural Revolution I was in a cattle shed in Jiangxi' (p.126).

²⁷ The scholarship of David McCraw establishes Kirk's fear of seeming to support Communism within the conservative New Zealand electorate and that he was, therefore, reluctant to visit the PRC as the Cultural Revolution was still in full swing. There was, for decades, a bipartisan commitment by both the National and Labour parties to the 'two Chinas' policy as were were co-aligned with other nations in the SEATO and ANZUS treaties of forward defence, and so my recycling of Elder's assertion elicited understandable disbelief at the symposium, from senior diplomats John McKinnon and Tony Browne, that a New Zealand National Government would have supported Albania's resolution at the UN to admit the PRC and to expel Taiwan. Elder relied on a statement by the senior diplomat, the late John Scott about the 1971 UN vote. In his first book, Sir Robert Muldoon wrote breathlessly: "In 1970 I had the honour of having tea with President Chiang Kai-Shek....He was vastly impressive as he spoke with the confident dignity of one of the great world figures of our time" (*The Rise and Fall of a Young Turk* [Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1974], p.167). Muldoon would hardly have at that meeting warned Jiang that his government would soon abandon the Taiwan regime at the UN, as this was not on any NZ agenda; and PM Holyoake's preferred position was that National did want to recognize the PRC but not at the expense of Taiwan (*NZPD*, Vol.350 [24 May 1967], p.795). Labour's Norman Kirk told Bruce Brown, of the passing of Resolution 2758: "It's a bad day's work". I concur totally with scepticism about a junior ANZUS partner abandoning a small, pro-Western state like Taiwan under a National Government and during the Vietnam War, even as

hearing Alley broadcasting about this in 1971-2, and I am sure that he met with leaders in Wellington, especially Norman Kirk (of this city) as then Leader of the Opposition²⁷, and Alley doubtless played a quiet role in ushering in New Zealand's full

²⁴ See John McKinnon, 'Breaking the Mould'; in (ed.) Bruce Brown, *New Zealand in World Affairs, Vol.3: 1972-1990* (Wellington: Victoria UP, 1991), pp.226-266.

²⁵ Diplomat Chris Elder has incorrectly (but unwittingly) asserted on the MFAT website that New Zealand (under the leadership of Prime Minister Keith Holyoake) voted, against the United States, to unseat Taiwan from the United Nations on 25 October 1971 and thus to admit the People's Republic of China to full UN membership, including becoming a permanent member of the Security Council, via UN Resolution 2758 during the 1,976th plenary meeting in New York. See Elder, 'Road to Peking: First steps towards diplomatic ties between New Zealand and China' at www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/mfat75/the-road-to-peking/ This MFAT source reproduces UN Resolution 2758 (XXVI), which restored "all its rights to the People's Republic of China...as the legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and [moved] to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it" (25 October 1971). Elder quite understandably relied on what he could never know was a faulty account by John Vivian Scott.

vote by the three (then) ANZUS partners. John V. Scott has written a detailed account of this period, as our UN representative and head of the NZ delegation at the time: 'Recognizing China', in (ed.) Malcolm McKinnon, *New Zealand in World Affairs, Vol.II :1957-72* (Wellington: NZIAA, 1991), pp.227-252. (I thank John McKinnon for drawing my attention to this highly nuanced document, even as it seems to have an agenda and is 100% inaccurate on this point.) Scott recorded, as the key New Zealand diplomat in New York at the time, that Holyoake reiterated New Zealand's continuing adherence to the two-China, dual representation (DR) and recognition policy, which permitted the PRC UN membership without necessitating Taiwan's expulsion. Holyoake reaffirmed the policy on 14 October 1970 (after Trudeau's abandonment of the ROC [MFA 264/3/14]) and in London on 28 April 1971. Scott reported that New Zealand received only a 15-minute advance notification, at the NZ Embassy in Washington, of the Nixon China *rapprochement* public announcement, which rather scuppered our strong DR stance, and so Frank Corner (then NZ Ambassador to the USA) predicted that America's impending 'nay' vote against PRC admission to the UN would really be *pro forma*: a matter of "merely necessary gestures" (Corner, cited by Scott, in McKinnon,p.241). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised Scott that New Zealand should make a 'Yes' vote for the PRC's admission if the vote to retain Taiwan was failing badly; and in 1991 Scott cited his own 1971 statement: "My delegation has therefore felt obliged to accept the view of the [General] Assembly as to the terms of which the PRC should be seated. New Zealand has accordingly voted for the [Albanian] resolution just adopted" (p.245). However, in fact Scott chose to make his own discretionary judgement, even as a majority in favour of admitting the PRC was growing, and voted 'Nay' for New Zealand. Scott may have exercised his ambit of discretion given that Mao's convulsive Cultural Revolution was still raging in Communist China and he may have believed that the PRC was a rogue, pariah state. In any event, from 25 October 1971 it was but a short step, fourteen months later, for new PM Norman Kirk to instruct John Scott, on 14 December 1972, to approach Huang Ha (then the new PRC envoy at the UN) to follow the Whitlam line and begin the diplomatic recognition process now that Taiwan

'Vietnamization' was deepening. It simply did not happen. The official UN report records that UN Resolution 2758 was passed by 76 votes in favour, with 17 abstentions, and 35 member states opposed (including the ANZUS signatories: Australia, New Zealand and the United States). See *A/Res 2758: Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations* (Call number UNA (01) R3 1971-10-25 [UN Digital Library]). Both the text and the recorded vote for 2758 were published in *The UN Monthly Chronicle*, Vol.VIII, No.10 (November 1971), p.561, confirming a negative

was 'off the runway'. It seems, on the sharply conflicting evidence of the late John Scott, that New Zealand had followed suit with the Nixon administration and the Western security consensus in supporting Taiwan as an international actor acting with integrity. We had formally opposed the expulsion of Taiwan in several earlier Albanian attempted resolutions, but Scott's confusing narrative would logically suggest that New Zealand revoked that DR stance (to appease the PRC at the public roll-call), but then later made a covert denial of its pro-PRC admission vote, at the last possible moment, to avoid that initial 'For' vote being recorded officially. However, this incoherent hypothesis is not in accord with the clear facts. Scott *never* proffered any vote in favour of the PRC, and so UN staff correctly reported New Zealand's clear opposition to Res 2758. In 1991, for some unaccountable reason, Scott erred and 'forgot' to check *his own* detailed report of the 1971 vote in the *NZ Foreign Affairs Review* so that his account, on the face of it, impliedly contested the official UN published report of the voting, which clearly demonstrates that New Zealand, under his grant of discretion, chose to keep faith with the Western alliance consensus. For reasons which he never gave, Scott chose to adapt the preferred MFA line. The then conservative McMahon Government (Australia) was fervently pro-US and pro-ANZUS, and while Scott reports Bill

McMahon hinting in Sydney on 13 May 1971 that an Australian dialogue with Beijing was timely (Scott, in [ed.] M. McKinnon, p.241), McMahon's administration would never have agreed to unseat Taiwan, as McMahon attacked Whitlam for going to China in June 1971, and the UN staff officially recorded Australian opposition to the PRC's admission. The misleading 1991 Scott account of a pro-PRC admission vote by New Zealand would leave the UN *rapporteur* not recording the *initial* vote of a very minor player in the UN pantheon. Under this weird hypothesis, in 1991 Scott exposed a rather egregious clerical error by UN staff, mis-recording a small part of one of the most significant UN decisions since 1945. In fact, John Scott elected to keep New Zealand's faith with the *de facto* 'ANZUS line' and with the ROC, given New Zealand's marginal size and status and the fact that its vote was immaterial in defeating the majority numbers choosing to expel Taiwan. Under John Scott, New Zealand rejected the PRC's power-play and kept faith with the rights of small-states not being bullied by great powers. Scott and his MFA team in NYC would not have viewed the 'Against' vote as operationally and diplomatically defiant, but one of adhesion to honour if not consonant with the liberal-flexible instructions given to him from the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and presumably with the concurrence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cabinet. If there had *actually* been a subsequent voting reversal by Scott to appease our ANZUS partners and Taiwan, why J.V. Scott would have kept silent on that later flop-flop would constitute an act of cynical statecraft, as any idea that New Zealand could have successfully duped the PRC with a

deliberate 'win-win' dual-voting stratagem is simply preposterous and untenable. The matter of New Zealand's vote is patently inconsequential in terms of global geopolitics, but it cries out for factual clarification in our diplomatic historical record. New Zealand voted only once, as recorded (=against PRC admission), and Scott's memory was either flawed or he chose, for undeclared reasons, a course of honourable forgetting and subjunctive history *ex post facto*. I do not think, upon the evidence of his detailed essay, that Scott experienced memory failure about his act of judgement on such a big NZ decision. Unfortunately his misleading account of 1991, if unquestioned, invites the strange view that the New Zealand state resorted to a dishonourable 'double-talk' subterfuge; and for some inexplicable reason Scott wanted to cover up his own use of delegated authority which ignored Wellington's suggested voting strategy. One might like to believe that this was, in fact, a memory lapse by an honourable public servant twenty years later, in which Scott cited and 'mis-remembered' the status of a draft pro-PRC statement he had written should he have chosen to cast a reluctant 'For' vote. It is inconceivable that a cynical change was made by UN staff to the voting record once the metrics of the vote demonstrated that one nation's vote was irrelevant, with a 2:1 majority of UN states favouring the admission of the People's Republic of China into the UN family (given China's past membership in the League of Nations). We were left, in the absence of definitive evidence, with the options of: (i) 'bad faith' state cunning/*realpolitik* by New Zealand; (ii) policy over-reach by a senior diplomat, later operationally rescinded by Wellington in 1972; or, (iii) more likely, a convenient 'memory lapse' by a key player in New York when looking back twenty years in a new era. Fortunately, when I consulted Dr Ian McGibbon, he came to the rescue by highlighting a key

and detailed document written by Scott in 1971. In "The International Scene: Chinese Representation in the United Nations", *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review 1971*, Vol.21, No.4, pp.30-35 [JX 1591.A35/1971], we find J.V. Scott's New Zealand Statement (18 October 1971), supplemented by a report later in that volume about the vote and called "The Month in the United Nations".

In the 18 October 1971 statement, Scott outlined a principled New Zealand position which welcomed the PRC's admission as well as its permanent membership on the UN Security Council, on the proviso that Taiwan not be expelled. As leader of our UN delegation, Mr Scott stuck strictly to that policy formula. Scott reported NZ concern about big power tensions in the Pacific basin and asserted that the UN General Assembly can make "room for both voices of the Chinese people", given that Taipeh has a population (14 million) greater than that of most UN member states (?); that the ROC's membership was not an "ephemeral situation", and thus "there seems no prospect of it coming to an end" (p.31). Scott reported NZ's pleasure about President Nixon's pursuit of a policy of *detente* (peaceful strategic engagement-HRB): "We see in President Nixon's visit [to China] a sign" that eased tensions "may at last be approaching" and affirmed a two China policy with a recognition "of the fact that there are two well-established Chinese Governments" (p.31), as both were founded out of civil war in 1949. New Zealand, therefore, co-sponsored two U.S. resolutions. These were A/L.632 (asserting that securing Taiwan's rights as a UN member state constituted an 'Important Question') and that dual recognition and representation was feasible (A/L.633). Scott noted that the "final preambular paragraph" of 633 affirmed that for the time being there are two Chinese governments (p.32). In speaking to 632 (the IQ matter), Scott rather clumsily iterated the NZ view that expelling "one part of the only divided country that is already a member, in order to make way for the other part" (p.33), would outrage the universality principle of the UN Charter (to which NZ was a founder in 1945: HRB). The Important Question draft resolution [A/L.632] was defeated 59-55 (NZ)-15 abstentions. The Dual Representation resolution [A/L.633] was never put to the vote as the Albanian one (A/L.630) superseded it and was adopted as Resolution 2758 by the required 2/3rds majority. Taiwan's delegation left the General Assembly chamber and have never returned. Scott probably voted tactically against 630, to lower the risk of that threshold being achieved and also not to abandon an ally (the ROC). The following day (26 October), Scott published an explanation of New Zealand's vote, noting that his government welcomed the PRC's admission and quoted "my Prime Minister" (Keith Holyoake) anticipating the ending of the PRC's isolation and welcoming a widening of its views of the world situation, and also citing Holyoake's statement: "I am deeply disappointed over the expulsion of Taiwan" (p.34). The irony is that while this drama was taking place at the UN, from 20-26 October the U.S. National Security Advisor, Dr Henry Kissinger, was meeting Zhou Enlai in Peking to make concrete plans for Nixon's forthcoming visit there in 1972 (*NZFAR*, p.36).

recognition of Communist China as a member of the family of nations fifty years ago, and which we are rightly commemorating today.

Rewi Alley's was a long, tempestuous and deeply productive journey from his humble upbringing in a tiny outpost of the dying British Empire into becoming an iconic figure for positive communal change in the New China: a fusalional figure in many guises. In 1954

POST SCRIPT: Research by David Belgrave has largely addressed the mystery. New Zealand did *not* vote twice. On 25 October 1971 J.V. Scott declined to follow George Laking's advised permissible flexible strategy, claimed that he was bored by the interminable UN debates (18-25 October) and never conceded his own unilateral decision to help George HW Bush (US Ambassador to the UN) and vote the safe 'ANZUS line' against Beijing's admission (see Scott, p.244). It seems that Scott was a conservative state servant who may have privately resented Kissinger's secret shuttle diplomacy to Beijing and, in my

reading, clearly chose to secure NZ's honour, against marginalizing Taiwan. Scott must have felt honour-bound to adhere to a fellow 'small' sovereign state and to resist Wellington's optional open-ended strategy. The pro-PRC vote document which he cited in 1991 was one which he *could* have used—but chose not to—out of concern that a close vote could favour PRC admission-ROC expulsion and that New Zealand voting for the PRC may have played a casting role. This was arguably quite an act of discretionary judgement by a senior public servant with a high ambit of trust, striving to stay within conservative parameters and in his mind not soiling his nation's international integrity. I do not seek to judge Scott's real decision, only to observe that, if anything, his erroneous 1991 account places a slight stain of dishonour onto his 'bosses' in Wellington. As things panned out, the New Zealand vote was numerically insignificant in the final outcome and Scott's decision was forgiven by his political and MFA masters in Wellington, who may have later felt that their 'bob-each-way' instructions were, in the final analysis, ethically dishonourable. As it transpired, Kirk's recognition of the PRC (encouraged by Frank Corner, MFA, according to Gerald Hensley) undid that pro-Taiwan vote, *de facto* anyway; and I suspect that by 1991 Scott wanted to tidy up history, to possibly cover his real tracks (=de-emphasizing his act of well-intentioned diplomatic decision-making), and perhaps, as a consummate diplomatist, to foster a new myth of long-standing Kiwi amity with Beijing, a position which enjoyed great currency after 23 December 1972. History was there for tidying up in accord with new political and diplomatic realities, in this view. I suggest that in 1991 Scott declined to remember his agentic disregard of George Laking's rather Machiavellian instructions. At worst, Scott contravened pragmatic instructions from Wellington, probably to secure his country's honour. He rose in the Ministry, and so his tactical judgement on 25.10.71 was clearly accommodated. That conceded, Frank Corner (Laking's successor as SMFA) may have quietly enjoyed instructing John Scott to commence negotiations with his opposite number in the PRC, instructions that were declared policy and could not be fudged. Given the rich footnoted detail in his essay, I believe that in 1991 Scott decided to 'vanish' his honourable fidelity to Taiwan, to SEATO and ANZUS and elide the actual voting record for New Zealand on 25 October 1971, as it was by then an old debate of no further relevance and was made distinctly irrelevant (in his mind) by the new opening with China in 1972, which is, after all, the focus of this symposium. I am really here exploring the past acts of a decent, small-part player on the world stage, struggling to maintain viable markets and credibility as an ally aligned with Western democratic values, yet also needing to accept *realpolitik* in its foreign relations, as a nation which can only enjoy exercising soft-power, and largely lacking a highly sophisticated national foreign policy-security discourse, but which limps along in a pragmatic (anti-intellectual) vein in so much of its public policy. But we can be proud of our Government's sterling support of embattled states (Spain and China) in the 1930s. In October 1971 it seems that John Scott was probably attempting to keep New Zealand true to that lodestar and ethical baseline.

I owe a real debt of gratitude to Dr Ian McGibbon for his suggested source checks and especially for directing me to David Belgrave's detailed Ph.D thesis (Political Science, Victoria University, 2016): '*Actually or Potentially Within Reach: The Place of China in New Zealand's Grand Strategy 1965-1972* at [www.DOI: 10.26686/wgton.1701898](http://www.DOI:10.26686/wgton.1701898), Corpus ID: 131848707 and to the *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review 1971*. None of the foregoing represents Dr McGibbon's views, nor those of anyone else. he asserted that the rest of the world needs the peace-loving Chinese, who "press forward with their tasks like a mighty wave engulfing the sorrows and tragedy of the past and advancing ever higher up the gleaming sands"¹⁹, in *their* version of Maoist heroic materialism. Even before he was starting to feel somewhat deprived of this ardent faith, the Sinophile Rewi movingly declared his ultimate fealty to both countries: "I remain a New Zealander, but I have become a Chinese too."²⁰

¹⁹ Alley, *The People Have Strength* (1954), p.281.

²⁰ Alley; cited by Willis Airey, *Learner in China: a life of Rewi Alley* (Christchurch: The Caxton Press & Monthly Review Society, 1970), p.288.