1. A Rude Awakening

The first time I heard it in 1951 I just couldn’t believe it! The speaker, our host and an official of the Public Works Department, seemed to have a bee in his bonnet. We were only missionaries from the backwoods, and knew little of the ways of men in Hong Kong.

"It's the same with everything in Hong Kong," said the irate civil servant. "It goes right to the top. Everyone knows about it, but no one will speak out because his own friends may be involved. Even the Governor wouldn't dare to take action against it," he added. He was referring, of course, to corruption.

Only a few days earlier we had crossed the Chinese border at Lowu, and had seen the British flag flying over the immigration post there. But between 1951 and 1963 the truth gradually emerged, and much of the meaning of the red white and blue was lost forever.

Perhaps it is more than just a mistake that the flag is sometimes seen flying upside down in the Colony. British Justice, of which we once imagined we were so proud, seems here to operate in reverse: very often its application is only a matter of the colour of your skin, or even more often, the extent of your worldly wealth.

By 1963, the scales were off the blinded eyes completely. From then on there could be no com-
promise. My own turn came in that year too, when a Government official, working through friends, tried to do a bit of bargaining that amounted to scarcely concealed blackmail. Now, I can be persuaded, perhaps even pushed a little, but blackmail and corruption make me obstinate. Perhaps this was the real beginning of my open fight against injustice. It was certainly the year when I was given an offer to compromise with the Government, but threw in my lot with the people.