

# Hearings on Religious Persecution in China: Harry Wu Prepared Testimony

March 16, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

In 1949, the same year the communists took power in China, I was baptized as a Roman Catholic. I was only able to freely practice as a Roman Catholic for three years before the Communist Party's initiation of the "Three self movement." This policy resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands Christian Churches. All foreign missionaries were expelled from China and most of the Chinese religious leaders were imprisoned in the Laogai. Some were even executed. I would like to briefly call attention and honor to one of these Chinese leaders, the former Bishop of Shanghai Cardinal Kung, who was imprisoned for thirty years for his constant loyalty to Roman Catholicism. Ladies and Gentlemen, less than one week ago, on March 12,2000, Cardinal Pimnei Kung died at the age of 98. This man, who spent several years in solitary confinement, stood as a beacon of inspiration and guidance for his people through all struggles and hardships. I mention him today to honor his remembrance as a great leader in the fight for true religious freedom in China.

The Communist Party's "three self movement" was initiated to eliminate any form of religious practice that was not entirely under direct government control. According to this policy, all religious organizations are to be "self-supporting, self-administrating, and self-organized." The policy also brought about the formation of state controlled management bodies for China's five major religions, including Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism. All mosques, churches, and temples were required to register with these bodies and therefore come under their control These government run bodies support, administrate, and organize any religious activity. But because Mao Zedong could not allow any Chinese citizen to hold allegiance to any authority outside the Communist Party , under Mao these government run bodies actually allowed no religious activity. Throughout the three decades that Mao ruled China, the organizations of the "three self movement" worked with the Chinese Communist Party to eliminate religion and to promote the atheist ideologies of the Communist Party. Maoism became China's only legal religion, and Mao's "Little Red Book" its primary religious text.

For

many years it appeared this tyrannical policy might actually achieve its purpose of eliminating religion in China. Chinese religious believers gave up their faith and became followers of the Mao. The few who refused were thrown in prison and therefore eliminated from society. But inevitably, such an oppressive policy could not sustain itself. The disasters of the Cultural Revolution brought an intense ideology crisis to China and left an immense spiritual vacuum that could no longer be filled with the failed policies of Mao Zedong.

When

Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978, he realized many of the problems left over from Mao's dictatorship and decided to fashion his own dictatorship in a slightly different manner. This is clear through Deng's statement "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it still catches mice." These words applied to all the changes in Deng's policies of "reform and openness." In fact, the only real goal was to strengthen the Communist Party and to solidify its control. In this manner, Deng introduced elements of capitalism to increase technology and investment to bring economic development therefore increasing the legitimacy of Communist rule in China. His policies on religion are no different. When we examine these policies we must remember the real agenda of the Communist Party and know that it will not change when it comes to such inalienable rights as religious freedom.

In 1982, new stipulations were added to the Chinese Constitution that called for freedom of religious belief. The section reads:

"Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in or not to believe in any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in or do not believe in any religion."

It was under this policy that a limited number of places of worship that had been destroyed under Mao's rule were rebuilt. The Communist Party's Bureau of Religious Affairs underwent massive expansion. More and more Chinese people began to again adhere to various religious beliefs. The "Little Red Book" of Mao's quotations was no longer so popular as a religious text. Instead some people turned to the Bible, many others turned to the Yellow Book of the Falungong sect.

Often, Communist Party leaders will brag about the policy of so-called "freedom of religious belief," defending their human rights record in the same way that they brag that village elections have brought true democracy to China. When we hear things like this we should also be aware of what the next section of the Chinese Constitution reads regarding religion:

The state

protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens interfere in the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.

According

to this section of the policy, religion is allowed in China, but only if it remains under the government's control. Therefore, an expanded Bureau of Religious Affairs became necessary to control all of China's religious groups within the state sanctioned bodies. All religious organizations are still required to register with these bodies. Now, it is through these bodies that the government controls the location of religious venues, the curricula of religious training, funding and leadership of all religious organizations, and the teachings that they are allowed to adhere to and promote.

For any policy that

comes from the Chinese Central Government, including this policy of so-called freedom of religious belief, local governments must pass laws to implement and carry out those policies. Although these laws differ in implementation methods, they must adhere to the goal of achieving objectives set out in the central government policy. For the policy of "freedom of religious belief," that goal is to bring all religious activity under governmental control. I would like to now introduce the law passed in Tong Xiang County, which is located about seventy-five kilometers south of Shanghai in Zhejiang Province. The county has more than 130 years of tradition and history in Christian. This tradition, of course, faced a time of extreme tribulation and persecution under the rule of Mao. But since then, the Christian movement in the county has spread dramatically. In March of 1997 when this law was written, there were sixteen Christian Churches in Tong Xiang, none of which would register with the official government bodies.

I would like to

request that this document be submitted for the record. In my presentation today, I will summarize its main objectives as follows:

1. Divide the underground non-registered Catholic and Protestant churches. The vast majority of believing masses should receive patriotic re-education and become united under the patriotic church.
2. Suppress illegal religious activities and punish illegal religious criminals according to law.
3. All illegal religious venues should be destroyed. Non-registered organizations with a background of dealing with foreigners and conducting illegal religious activity should be supplanted and suppressed.
4. List the underground Catholic bishops, priests and Protestant

self-ordained ministers who have not yet been sufficiently dealt with according to the law. Bring them under "primary-point subjugation" (zhong-dian-quan-li), and implement measures for their investigation and indictment of their crimes.

5. At the most local levels of the Party, strengthen the regulation of religious activities according to the law; have it be the primary responsibility of assigned personnel. Those responsible for working with the religious policies should understand the basic religious situation at the local level, have some basic knowledge of religion, and have an understanding of the party's religious policy and related legal knowledge. They should resolutely regulate religious activities, know how to regulate them, and regulate them well.

The objectives and methods set fourth in this document demonstrate the mechanisms of the Chinese Communist Party in their new policy on religious belief. They clearly reveal and reaffirm that in reality it is not a policy of "freedom of religious belief," but of "control of religious belief." Party authorities actively work to divide and dissolve any underground non-registered churches while simultaneously promoting growth of government registered and government controlled churches. All who resist the policies of the government will be isolated and rooted out for re-education. Illegal religious criminal-are indicted for their crimes and bishops, priests, and ministers are brought under subjugation, meaning they are arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment and "re-education."

On the one hand, as we recognize the true suppressive agenda of the CCP policy on religion, we must also on the other hand recognize the situation that exists among believers in China's government-registered churches. Most of these people truly wish to practice their religion. In their churches, they are taught to be good citizens and good believers, to love their country and their religion, and to obey the Communist law. It is not these religious believers who are working against religious freedom in China, and they should not become the target of any group working against suppression of religious freedom. Most of them are seeking the truth and we should care about them and their beliefs.

This does not mean that America should accept China's policy of Communist party control of religious activity. We should never applaud China's efforts to support a "patriotic clergy." We should instead remember that if any member of any clergy or religious leadership is not recognized and registered with government-controlled patriotic bodies, then they will be isolated, re-educated, and often imprisoned. Today there is not sufficient support of these leaders and their churches from American. For the most part, the Communist party has been successful in their goal to isolate, re-educate, and imprison those who refuse to come under government control through alignment with the "three-self movement." The message must be clearer that fellow religious believers in the United States and everywhere support the right of Chinese believers to practice their religion freely and without the interference of the atheist authorities of the Chinese Communist party. We should firmly and publicly condemn the communist's

"three-self movement."

When Communist

authorities use the words "patriotic churches," this in itself is basically a contradiction in terms. It is impossible for a party with a fundamentally atheist ideology to truly seek to promote religious freedom. Will an American policy to "engage" the Chinese government truly demonstrate our stance against religious oppression in China, or will it only place an American stamp of approval on the persecution of Chinese religious leaders and believers of all faiths?

The

policy of the current administration chooses to show favor to Beijing, promoting economic and technological investment with China as a "strategic partner." This economic investment has fueled the legitimization of Communist rule in China. It fuels legitimization of a regime that imprisons thousands of Tibetan monks and nuns, arrests and imprisons seventy year old Catholic bishops and hundreds of other Christian leaders, and executes Islamic separatists. As we speak it carries out large scale crackdown with the aim of elimination of the Falungong meditation sect. Why has US leadership chosen to show favor to such a regime? Why did the US not follow this same agenda in relations with the former Soviet Union -evil empire? In our relations with China, US leadership must not only consider the interests of economics and business. As has been the policy with other Communist totalitarian regimes in the past, China policy must also reflect the interests of national security, and most importantly of inalienable principles of democracy, freedom and human rights.