

Hearings on Religious Persecution in China: Panel 2 Question and Answer

March 16, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Thank you very much, Dr. Chan.

As everybody can see we're behind schedule. So we will now go to the questioning, and I guess I would ask my fellow members of the panel to try to keep the questions short.

Now that we have found the three of you, if you permit we'll take the liberty of asking you questions perhaps after today, as we think through what you've said and what questions we need to pursue. But let's begin. Bob Seiple.

AMBASSADOR

SEIPLE: The situation between house church and the Three-Self church seems to be somewhat irreconcilable given the theology and politics involved; however, there is the potential to mediate between moderate elements in both the house church and the Three-Self movement to a different end. And if so, if there's a possibility of mediating among moderates in those two groups, who would be the change agent? Who could help foster that? Could it be done inside China? Could it be done outside China? Someone within the church, someone from outside the church? So it's a two-part question: Is it possible? Who initiates?

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Those microphones now work, so you can answer from your position.

MR.

FU: First of all, it is possible; and actually in many areas that I know, it's been offered. In a structural way, it's almost impossible. Those who occur to have a cooperation between these, the Three-Self

churches and the house churches, happened when those in the Three-Self churches are not pleased or are not satisfied with the strict sanction posed by the government. They feel very thirsty to do evangelism. And maybe in their particular areas, just like Dr. Chan mentioned, their religious structure of the official group were not very, very restricted by its moderate officials from Religious Affairs Bureau would not pose that strict rules to monitor that. So in this kind of circumstances, they do cooperate with each other; and actually, as you can see, they are more likely to go to another way combined with the house-church movement to evangelism furtherance.

DR. CHAN:

I think it is the question of the beliefs of Protestantism itself that they want to be different diversity or charismatic to the churches. And the problem lies in the fact that the Chinese government intends to have one church in China by force and structural means. That is impossible in the Protestant tradition.

MR. SEIPLE: Any tradition.

DR.

CHAN: Especially Catholic, because there is a hierarchy there; but in the Protestant tradition, it is to have one physical body of Christ, so-called; therefore there is going to be a different diversity so that the corporation is not on a structural level, but more or less the functional level.

It all depends on whether the government's restrictions are tight or loose. If it's a loose situation, we see the cases are overlapping and working amongst each other. But if it's a tight situation, the government will even exploit differences amongst the groups to the benefits of the government's control.

MR. FU: Let me add --

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Do you want to respond or do you want to move on?

DR. AL-MARAYATI: I'm sorry? Go ahead. That's fine.

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Very quickly.

MR.

FU: Very quickly. Actually, one of the contributions of the leading cooperation between two is the house-church pastor confession faith of the standard, and also expressing the desire to seeking dialogue with them; I think that's one element.

DR. AL-MARAYATI: This is related to Robert Seiple's question, and it comes to the issue in terms of the outside community and what role it can play in terms of improving the situation. And we have heard conflicting statements -- I guess this is directed to all of you -- about whether there should be any engagement with official bodies, recognized churches, and other religious groups, the Religious Affairs Bureau, or not. Considering that there may be moderate voices and that could influence things in a positive direction, that compels people to think we should engage; but on the other hand, there's a concern that by engaging with them we are legitimizing the policy that is generally repressive.

So

there is this feeling in our community as well of whether we should or should not pursue that on that level. And I would like to know your opinions about that, considering the complexities that you pointed out.

MR. WU: In the last couple years we found out that President Clinton and Speaker Newt Gingrich were present in the Chinese church, and this is a Three-Self church. That becomes a kind of fashion today in American politician and religious leaders, want to show up in these patriotic church. I just mentioned, this betrays the real religious believers in China.

Why not just stop that kind of practice? It means you present yourself in these patriotic church, you give them the kind of legitimacy, recognition. Of course you say, "If we show up over there, it means we care about religious freedom." Well, this is one of the options, you can't stand together with someone and not approve it.

I think one of our policy should be very clear, you condemn so-called three-self patriotic systems. We have to know -- they have a so-called Religious Affair Management Bureau. What is the purpose of this bureau, helping the religious fighting in China? Why call it that? That's a big cry. Just like talking about the cat and the mouse, "I will still serve as a cat. Maybe I change my color. The hair of my color, leave it black, leave it white, but I'm still catching the mice."

Do you think the cat really care about

the mouse? Just a fundamental problem. Many people, including Mr. Fu, escape from China. So many waiting for your help, waiting for your voice to support them. And our leader go into the patriotic church, and these churches are rebuked by the commoners, paid by the Communist, and we stand together with them. This brings me shame. Thank you.

MR.

FU: I really agree with Mr. Wu. I think it is not a big, big problem for most of the house churches to see outsiders, foreign missions, work in a local level doing humanitarian or even seminary training in the Three-Self churches or seminaries; but you need to remember one of the rules, golden rules, for the Chinese Communist Parties: You have to pay a price in exchange of your opportunity you get from them.

For

instance, when three American leaders visited Beijing, the next day in China, tele -- on people's tele, there is a big picture showing Chinese president shaking hands with this American religious friend and not even a word mentioning their concern of religious persecution, even on some -- even specific cases. Only the report on the news is "We Chinese enjoy the complete freedom of religion." They always want to use you to be a tour of propaganda. I think that you have to keep in mind you work for them. That's my feeling.

DR. CHAN: I feel that the whole dichotomy of registered and nonregistered and underground churches is artificially made by the document itself; and I will suggest, let the church be the church. And as we engage in dialogues with the Chinese government and churches, I will suggest that we will not try to legitimize other groups, either the underground or the official group.

Why don't we just deal directly with the government and say, why is the need for religious bureau? Why is there need to have some kind of patriotic setup? Why not do away with all of this and let the church be the church? In China exists the church, and by dialogue, by conveying these ideas to the government directly instead of going to visit the churches. And that is my response.

JUSTICE

SMITH: Dr. Chan, do you think a group like ours should concern itself with the house-church movement in China at all, or should we just let things go as they are going?

DR. CHAN: I believe that any human beings who is up for the conscience of humanities and for any human right that should care for anyone who is under this kind of

suppression and restriction in expression of religious liberty. Yes, I do feel that not only the Commission and everyone should concern for those who are under this kind of restrictions, and including the Christians or the Protestants and Catholics in the nonregistered or even within the registered groups that their rights have been denied, the basic human rights have been denied.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN:

You think it is helpful to the underground churches, the nonofficial churches, for the United States government, and for supporters here to be speaking out about their problems?

DR. CHAN: I feel that we should speak out about our concern to their rights, yes.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Mr. Fu, you agree?

MR. FU: Yes.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: And Mr. Wu has been very strong on this issue.

COMMISSIONER

ABRAMS: Thank you very much. We, as I said, we hope we can reserve the right -- you want to make one additional comment?

MR. WU: Yes. Can I make one additional comment, take the liberty?

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Please.

MR.

WU: Robert in the first panel asked about what an entrepreneur, American entrepreneur can do. First of all, ask American entrepreneur, who is your business partner in China? Are they free Capitalist? They are Communists. Your business partner in China is Communists; okay. One. Okay.

Second, let me give you an example. I heard a dialogue from the C.E.O. from Mr. Mikoda. Mr. Mikoda has an operation, big operation in China, big factory; and Mikoda is well-known in United States, not only the products but also the very good welfare policy for employees. Are you going to apply the same welfare policy to the Chinese employee? He said, we did. We have to treat it, you know, the same. I said, okay.

According to Chinese policy, every female worker, if -- for whatever, they are married or unmarried, okay, without the government permit cannot give birth. And even some women have the first child, not allowed to have a second child. If they have violated the policy, they will be fired. So if this female working in your factory in China, I'm going to fire her. I don't know.

He has clean hands. His partner handles the policy. He offers the money for the employee welfare, and Chinese fired these female workers. Our business in China is shameful business. Thank you.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Just very quickly, one minute here. Mr. Wu, I infer from what I've read you to say over these months, and your testimony today that you would impose normal trade relations; is that correct?

MR. WU: China is not a normal country. Why do they receive a normal trading status.

RABBI SAPERSTEIN: Mr. Wu, Mr. Chan, do you have an opinion on the PMTR?

DR. CHAN: No.

MR. FU: Well, again, you know, if it is normal, just make it normal. But I think in the eyes of a lot of brothers and sisters and even in the eyes of Chinese Communist Party members, the point is that do American people and the government care only money, contracts, business, or can they get something else?

COMMISSIONER ABRAMS: Thank you all very much for coming here today and for speaking with us, and for giving us your views of the institution of Christian communities in

China.