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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 22, 1983

Mr. Morton C. Blackwell
The White House
Washington, D.C.


Dear Mr. Blackwell:

I am writing regarding your November 17 letter to Don Anderson concerning the report that Mr. Chun Chul Pai and his son are facing arrest.

As I believe Mr. Anderson advised you by phone, our Consulate General in Shanghai has sought an appointment with the appropriate office in Shanghai Municipality in order to look into this situation. To date this appointment has not been granted, but we will keep you informed.

Mr. Anderson asked that I forward to you a copy of a recent American Consulate General cable entitled "Christianity in Shanghai." Please note that while the cable does not have a security classification, it has been designated for "limited (to) official use." I am also enclosing for your background information a memorandum of conversation recording a meeting with the Rev. Shen Yifan of the International Church in Shanghai (also classified LOU).

Sincerely,



Donald W. Keyser
Deputy Director (Political)
Office of Chinese Affairs

Enclosures: as stated

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TELEGRAM

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ACTION EA-12

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AIT TAIPEI
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU VIA POUCH

PROTESTANT VERSIONS. IN SHANGHAI THE SUPPLY IS ALMOST SUFFICIENT, ALTHOUGH SHORTAGES MAY OCCUR IN INLAND PROVINCES. THE MOST COMMON IS THE EDITION OF 1919, IN THE OLD-STYLE, COMPLICATED CHARACTERS. A COMPLETELY NEW TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK IS UNDERWAY AT THE NANJING SEMINARY, WHERE THE GOSPELS AND ACTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND WORK ON THE EPISTLES IS UNDERWAY. ALTHOUGH THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH DOES NOT PUBLISH ANY MAGAZINE FOR ITS MEMBERS, IT DOES HAVE SOME LITERATURE TO EXPLAIN ITS BASIC TEACHINGS TO INQUIRERS AND HOPES FOR MORE. THE NATIONAL CHURCH MAGAZINE, "TIANFENG," IS PUBLISHED IN BEIJING.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 SHANGHAI 2872

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, CH
SUBJECT: CHRISTIANITY IN SHANGHAI

REF BEIJING 16347

1. THE RECENT VISIT OF NA/HR OFFICER ROBERTS PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS THE STATE OF CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS IN SHANGHAI. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF ROBERTS'S CONVERSATIONS WITH A CATHOLIC PRIEST AND A PROTESTANT MINISTER. FULL MEMCONS WILL FOLLOW.
2. A PRIEST AT THE PATRIOTIC CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL IN SHANGHAI STATED THAT THERE ARE NOW 14 CATHOLIC CHURCHES OPEN IN GREATER SHANGHAI, FIVE OF THEM IN THE CITY'S CENTRAL WARDS AND NINE IN ITS RURAL SUBURBS. THIS REFLECTS THE DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLICS, 60 PERCENT OF WHOM LIVE IN SHANGHAI'S RURAL COUNTIES. THESE 14 CHURCHES ARE RUN BY ONE BISHOP AND 45 PRIESTS. THREE ADDITIONAL CHURCHES ARE NOW UNDERGOING RESTORATION. ALTHOUGH NOTING THAT NO STATISTICS HAD BEEN COMPILED IN SHANGHAI SINCE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, THE PRIEST ESTIMATED ABOUT 100,000 CATHOLICS LIVE IN THE SHANGHAI DIOCESE AND SAID THAT, CONSIDERING THE NUMBER OF YOUNG CONVERTS, THE NUMBER OF BELIEVERS WAS STABLE. TYPICAL SUNDAY ATTENDANCE AT THE CATHEDRAL IS 1,500; AS MANY AS 5,000 CROWD INTO THE CHURCH ON FESTIVALS.
3. ON OTHER TOPICS, THE PRIEST NOTED THAT SHANGHAI HAS ITS OWN CATHOLIC SEMINARY, IN ADDITION TO THE ONE WHICH JUST OPENED IN BEIJING IN SEPTEMBER. THE SHESHAN SEMINARY OPENED IN OCTOBER 1982; SIXTY SEMINARIANS (ABOUT 30 IN EACH CLASS) ARE NOW ENROLLED IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF ITS SIX-YEAR COURSE. THE SHANGHAI DIOCESE PRINTS ITS OWN INSTRUCTION BOOKS, PRAYER BOOK, HYMNALS AND DESIGNS RELIGIOUS PICTURES, MEDALS AND CRUCIFIXES. BIBLES AND THE "CATHOLICISM IN CHINA" MAGAZINE ARE PUBLISHED IN BEIJING. THE CHINESE CATHOLIC CHURCH SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF BIRTH CONTROL, SO THAT THE PEOPLE CAN HAVE A GOOD LIFE.

4. AT THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH IN SHANGHAI, A MINISTER STATED THAT MORE THAN 20,000 BELIEVERS ATTEND SERVICES EACH SUNDAY IN THE 15 PROTESTANT CHURCHES NOW OPEN IN SHANGHAI, ELEVEN IN THE CITY PROPER AND FOUR IN ITS RURAL COUNTIES. ATTENDANCE AT HIS CHURCH, WHICH IS RUN BY FOUR MINISTERS AND ONE WOMAN ASSISTANT, AVERAGES MORE THAN 1,000 EACH SUNDAY, AND THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 400 BAPTISMS SINCE THE CHURCH REOPENED IN DECEMBER 1980, LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO. ONE OR TWO OTHER CHURCHES ARE NOW BEING RENOVATED. AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM IN MANAGING THE CHURCH IN SHANGHAI IS THE SHORTAGE OF PASTORS AND THEIR ADVANCED AGE. ALTHOUGH THE NANJING UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY WAS REOPENED IN 1981, IT ENROLLS ONLY 60 STUDENTS PER YEAR AND NONE HAS YET GRADUATED. THE CHINA CHRISTIAN COUNCIL HAS THUS ESTABLISHED A NUMBER OF "SECONDARY SEMINARIES" WHICH GIVE COURSES SHORTER THAN THE NANJING SEMINARY'S FULL FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM. THE MINISTER HOPED THAT AN INSTITUTION WITH A TWO OR THREE YEAR PROGRAM WOULD BE FOUNDED IN SHANGHAI.

5. SINCE THE REOPENING OF CHURCHES IN 1980, ABOUT 1.3 MILLION BIBLES HAVE BEEN PRINTED IN SHANGHAI, NANJING AND FUZHOU IN VARIOUS

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INCOMING
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6. ALTHOUGH THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN CHINA IS SAID TO BE IN THE "POST-DENOMINATIONAL ERA," THE MINISTER STATED THAT THE VARIOUS CHURCHES ARE JOINED, RATHER THAN UNITED. HE CHARACTERIZED THE REMAINING DIFFERENCES -- IN LITURGY, CHURCH GOVERNMENT, AND SACRAMENTS -- AS "SECONDARY," AND AS OF GREATER IMPORTANCE TO SOME MINISTERS THAN TO MOST MEMBERS.

7. THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN CHINA IS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT FINANCIALLY, THE MINISTER SAID. IN THE CASE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH, THE CHURCH'S BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS ARE MAINTAINED AND THE MINISTERS PAID FROM THE MEMBERS' OFFERINGS. RENTS FROM OTHER CHURCH PROPERTY, INCLUDING BACK RENT FROM THE PERIOD OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, ARE USED TO FINANCE LARGE PROJECTS SUCH AS CHURCH RENOVATION AND THE NANJING SEMINARY. THE MINISTER STATED THAT CHURCH MEMBERS ARE FREE TO WITNESS TO FRIENDS AND RELATIVES AND TO BRING THEM TO CHURCH SERVICES. TO AVOID DEBATES AND DISTURBANCES OF THE PUBLIC ORDER, HOWEVER, THE CHURCH DOES NOT CONDUCT OPEN-AIR PREACHING. AT PRESENT, THERE IS NO SIGN OF AN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE CHINESE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES. THERE IS AN ACTIVE PROGRAM OF CONTACTS AT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AND VISITS BETWEEN CHURCH GROUPS IN CHINA AND ABROAD.

8. FULL MEMCONS WILL BE POUCHED TO ALL ADDRESSEES.
BROOKS

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4/22/09 CJD

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE AND PLACE: October 20, 1983
International Church, Hengshan Lu,
Shanghai, China

PARTICIPANTS: Rev. Shen Yifan (3088/0110/5672) 沈以藩
International Church, Shanghai
Mr. Donald A. Roberts, HA/HR, State Department
Douglas B. McNeal, Political Officer,
U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai
Mr. Yan Haichan, interpreter,
U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai

SUBJECTS: The International Church; a sketch of the history
of the Protestant Church in China; Protestant
organizations in China; Bibles, publications,
and seminaries; conditions for proselytizing
and relations with other religions and
foreigners

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At the ivy-covered International Church on Hengshan Lu, Reverend Shen Yifan showed us the large main sanctuary, which seats 700, and explained that more than 1,000 persons attend services every Sunday. The overflow is seated in two separate chapels, the first on the third floor, which seats 250, and a second on the second floor seating 300. There the congregation listens to the service over loudspeakers. Rev. Shen, who conducted the entire interview in clear and fluent English, explained that his church has four ministers and one woman assistant and is the only Protestant church in Shanghai to conduct services in standard Chinese (Mandarin).

Other activities at the International Church include Bible classes on Wednesday evenings, attended by 200 and taught by the ministers in turn, and an Inquirers' Class for young adults (15 to 18) and adults on Thursday for those contemplating baptism and church

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membership. The church does not practice infant baptism, but both sprinkling and immersion are practiced, depending on individual preference. The church is growing; in the period of somewhat less than three years since its reopening on Christmas Day 1980, 400 baptisms have been performed.

The church relies entirely on its own financial resources: offerings from its members and rent from its properties. The church has received some of the back rents owed from the period of the Cultural Revolution, which were a great help in financing the restoration of the church, and some rent is still due. The ownership of private property is protected by the State, so receiving such rents is not a problem, nor seen as exploitation. Church offerings are sufficient to meet the running expenses of the church and to pay the ministers' salaries. There is a surplus, which is used for repairs and to maintain the grounds.

Greater municipal Shanghai now has a total of 15 active Protestant churches, 11 in the city proper and four in its outlying rural counties. Church attendance at all fifteen churches exceeds 20,000 persons each Sunday. In addition, one or two churches are now undergoing repairs for opening later.

Sketch of the History of the Protestant Church in China

Today the Protestant church in China is entirely independent and indigenous. In the past, however, there were many foreign missionaries in China, many of whom came from the United States. Unfortunately, the missionary enterprise was involved in certain colonial activities. Some missionaries helped draft the unequal treaties, themselves became diplomats, or were otherwise involved in colonial expansion. Therefore, the church had a bad image and was seen as a foreign religion or agency.

In the early 1900's some Chinese leaders advocated an independent Chinese church, and a few such congregations were formed. The foreign missionaries were fundamentally in control, however. According to the terms of the unequal treaties, not only foreign missionaries and their churches but even their Chinese Christian converts were placed under colonial protection.

After Liberation in 1949, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement arose. The three "selves" are self-government, self-support, and self-propagation of the Gospel. The movement's aim is to root the church in Chinese soil, to create an indigenous church identified with the Chinese people. This movement is thus realizing the hopes of those early predecessors that the Chinese church stand entirely on its own, close to the people. As a result, the image of the church in China is changing and the church is now steadily growing.

Protestant Organizations in China Today

China has two national Protestant organizations, the Three-Self Movement of the Protestant Churches of China, which is headed by a National Committee, and the China Christian Council (CCC). The former, in which most Chinese Protestants take part, seeks to advance the Three-Self goals and build up an indigenous church. The CCC is a coordinating organization of which the individual churches are members. The churches elect representatives to local CCC councils which, in turn, elect members to the national CCC. Through its system of local Christian Councils, the CCC coordinates church work, publishes Christian literature, and organizes theological education and conferences of pastors to discuss problems of church work.

Asked about relations among the various denominations, Rev. Shen noted that, before 1949, there used to be many different denominations in China, introduced from the outside by foreign missionaries. In fact, it was a joke that China had Southern Baptists in the north and Northern Baptists in the south. However, denominationalism was never strong among the Chinese, who looked upon themselves as Christians, rather than as Methodists, Presbyterians or Baptists. By 1958 all the denominations had joined together and were conducting services jointly. This is the situation now; the denominations are not yet united, because of differences in practice and doctrine, but the differences are secondary in importance. For instance, baptism is done by either immersion or sprinkling, according to the individual's choice. (Sprinkling is practiced at the International Church.) The denominations respect each other; for instance, some churches hold services on Saturdays, for those who work Sundays and for Seventh-Day Adventists. If they wish, those people are free to attend Sunday services as well. Although the church in China is now in the "post-denominational era," diversity persists because of differences in liturgy, church organization and sacraments. An example: two terms are used to translate "God:"

Shangdi (上帝) and Shen (神). Rev. Shen himself uses both terms and feels that church members generally do not care too much, but the difference is important to some pastors.

The Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is a government department, not a church organization. Its task is to see that the policy of religious freedom in the Constitution is implemented. It helps restore churches and buildings which were occupied by other organizations during the Cultural Revolution. The International Church, for instance, was taken over by a Peking opera troupe which was difficult to remove. Rev. Shen and his members negotiated

with the troupe itself, while the RAB helped by negotiating with authorities above the opera group for arrangements for it to move out. The church was finally restored to its congregation in the summer of 1980. The RAB also helped with the subsequent renovation, as certain building materials were not easy to obtain. In reprinting Bibles, the RAB helps secure the special, thin, strong paper needed, which is usually reserved for dictionaries (Rev. Shen believes the paper is produced domestically). The RAB also helps in finding printing houses to print the Bibles.

Bibles, Other Publications and Seminaries

As in the United States, Catholics and Protestants in China use different translations of the Bible. After the reopening of the churches, Bibles were printed in Shanghai, Nanjing and Fuzhou to fill the need. In all, about 1.3 million Bibles have been printed in various Protestant versions. Most are full Bibles; others are New Testaments, or Testaments plus the Psalms. In Shanghai the supply is almost sufficient, although inland provinces may be short. The Bible most widely used is a photo offset of the 1919 version which is in the old style, or full Chinese characters. Young people would prefer a version in the simplified characters now in use on the Mainland, so the CCC is working on a new edition. Scholars at the Nanjing seminary are laboring on a new translation of the New Testament made from the original Greek. They will profit from Biblical scholarship since 1919. At a recent meeting of the National Committee of the CCC, which convenes annually between the triennial sessions of the national CCC itself, Rev. Shen heard a report on the progress of the translation work. The four Gospels and Acts have been completed; work on the Epistles is now underway.

Asked about church periodicals, Rev. Shen said there is no church newsletter in Shanghai, although there is a national Christian magazine TIANFENG (天风), published by the CCC in Beijing.

The Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, which was originally formed from the merger of thirteen or fourteen smaller denominational seminaries, reopened in 1981. It is financed by the local Christian Council and local churches through rents received from church properties. The seminary accepts about 50 students each year from among more than 300 applicants. When there are students in all four years of the course, there will be more than 200 all together. As of this Fall, 120 students are studying there in the first two classes, four of whom are from the International Church. These numbers, however, will not be adequate to meet the need, so the CCC has established some "secondary seminaries" to train lay leaders and ministers of a lower level. Later, these

graduates will be able to return to Nanjing for further training to become fully qualified pastors. Rev. Shen hopes to establish in Shanghai such a secondary seminary with a two- to three-year course.

Conditions for Proselytizing and Relations With Other Religions and Foreigners

Asked about conditions for proselytizing, Rev. Shen stated that church members are free to witness to friends and relatives and to bring them to church services. The church does not conduct open-air preaching, however, to avoid debates and conflicts with non-believers and to avoid affecting public order. Another aspect of the membership question is the shortage of pastors. More than 2,000 persons visit Rev. Shen's church each week, making the pastors' duties very heavy. For inquirers the church has some literature explaining its basic teachings; Rev. Shen hopes for more.

Asked whether there is any prospect that China's Protestant and Catholic churches might unite, Rev. Shen noted that he had heard no discussion of the topic. However, he characterized the two communities as "friends" and noted that, through joint meetings to discuss religious policy and in the CPPCC (China People's Political Consultative Conference), there is now more contact between the two groups. Although there is now no ecumenical movement in China, one cannot tell about the future; chances are now more numerous and the two churches do not attack each other.

Buddhism has many adherents who are active in their own way. The Buddhist association in Shanghai recently started a seminary to which quite a number of youth applied. Thirty young men are now studying to become Buddhist monks.

Asked about synagogues in Shanghai, Rev. Shen noted that none had reopened. He explained that this was so because the Jews who lived in Shanghai before Liberation were foreigners who have now all left China.

Foreigners frequently call at the International Church; its guest register records visits by groups from the U.K., Australia, Germany and Hong Kong, in addition to the United States. A Christian group from Japan was due to visit on October 23 and preach (presumably in English); Rev. Shen had been appointed to interpret the sermon.

Bio Note: Rev. Shen, who appears to be about 50 years old, graduated from a college in Nanjing. He speaks clear and fluent English and has acted as an interpreter. In the early 1980's he visited Canada for an international conference in Montreal at which the Chinese delegation met representatives of more than 20 countries. Subsequently that trip took him on a swing into the United States.