



February 27, 1979

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China's Easing Presents
'Dangerous Opportunity'

By John Rutledge

DALLAS (BP)--The apparent easing of restrictions on speech in China presents "a dangerous opportunity," according to a Southern Baptist missionary to Hong Kong.

George Wilson, who just returned to Hong Kong after teaching several years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said the term "dangerous opportunity" reflects the Chinese philosophy of seeing both the good and the bad in everything.

"As far as China is concerned, there certainly has not been a change of direction," he said. "This is just a step to something right now that is beneficial to the government."

"There is a lot of danger right now" for Christians in China, he said. "There would be a danger if we tried to rush in and find all the Christians, for instance. That might just help the government to exterminate them."

Wilson said there is a chance that the loosening of restrictions might get out of the control of the government and "end up somewhere maybe even China has not thought of."

Millie Lovegren, a former missionary to China, left there in 1950. In August she became the first Baptist missionary who had worked in China to return there. Her two-week tour took her to four cities in eastern China.

"I don't think President Carter's recognition of China will make a difference to the witness of Christians in China, but it will cause many more people to pray, and that always has an effect," she said.

"I think it might be dangerous if we tried to push China" in the area of human rights, she said. "If we don't upset the apple cart and just let God work, I think it will come out more Chinese."

The recognition of China by the United States and Chinese Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing's much publicized tour in January have focused the attention of Americans on that nation of more than 800 million.

But most Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan cannot forget the past, and see little evidence of a "new day" in China, said Wilson.

"They are first concerned for survival," Wilson said. "Many of the older Christians in Hong Kong came out when the changeover took place. They have relatives in the mainland, some of whom have been mistreated. They are going to be colored somewhat by their relatives' situations."

Wilson's wife Beth said that on Taiwan, "everybody's scared," and that letters from the island indicate "great groups of people (are) trying to get out." An SBC Foreign Mission Board spokesman said a group of Taiwan Christians which recently visited the board mentioned nothing of an exodus from the island.

Most observers agree that there is little hope for China to allow foreign missionaries back in to operate as they did in the past.

However, the Foreign Mission Board still retains deeds to millions of dollars in property abandoned in China in the 1950s. But Baker J. Cauthen, president of the board, said, "We are not seeking any kind of settlement of property matters with China at this time. We stand ready to reproject mission work in China at the earliest time possible."

Winston Crawley, director of the board's overseas division, said no indication has been given that missionaries would be welcomed into China, but the new developments open up some possibilities for worship to begin again. There have been no attempts to contact the Chinese government about the possibility of entry of missionaries, he said.

The Foreign Mission Board left 392 churches with 123,000 members in China, as well as more than 60 schools, four seminaries, four orphanages, seven hospitals, a university, a home for the aged, and many missionary homes.

The number of Christians in China cannot be known, Wilson said, "because it is all underground." Some estimate as few as 150,000. Others say three or four million. The only estimate given by a Chinese Christian has been from Episcopal Bishop Ting Kuang Shun of Nanking, who told a visiting Methodist group in April 1978 there were 700,000 practicing Protestants and 2.3 million Catholics in China.

From reports brought by those who escape and from letters from Chinese Christians, a picture of the Christian life in China is being pieced together.

"It has been a very silent church," Miss Lovegren said. "They have very little contact with one another and very little fellowship."

She knew of one person who had escaped from China who had not met another Christian in six years, but his faith was still strong. Religious radio broadcasts from South Korea and the Philippines give solace to many believers, she said. In some places, because of the lenient local authorities, Christians have been able to meet in the open. One report last spring told of 150 Christians in one city being able to meet together in fields. But most gather only in groups of three or four, if at all, she said.

Bibles are scarce. Wilson said he knew of one man who receives Bibles from visitors and then tears each page out to give to people as a witness.

"Many pastors are unable to do anything, and have no Bibles," Miss Lovegren said. "But there are many old ladies who do have Bibles. They are going from house to house, conducting small Bible studies."

Miss Lovegren said that during her tour, when she asked if there were any Christians in the city, people would say "yes, but we don't know where they meet."

"I think it is similar to the catacombs and the early Christian movement in Rome," Wilson said. "There will come a day when it will become known."

Miss Lovegren agreed. "For us, as a strong denominational group, it's really not easy to consider the fact that we might be working with a group that has dropped back to the first century and never heard of the word Baptist," she said.

"I think when we can speak face to face with the believers, we'll find that God has really blessed them a lot."

In China, she said, "The believers are true believers."

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Federal Agency Reports
On Drinking and Driving

Baptist Press
2/27/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--Society's acceptance of drinking and driving is the main obstacle to solving the drinking-driver problem, according to a report issued by the General Accounting Office (GAO) of the United States.

A 1977 Gallup Poll, cited by the report, showed that 71 percent of American adults identified themselves as "drinkers" as opposed to "abstainers." Per capita consumption of alcohol has been increasing steadily over the past 20 years, according to the poll.

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State and local government officials interviewed by the GAO investigators commented that "drinking is often associated with positive concepts in our society, such as maturity, glamour, and good times."

Some government officials reported that most people believe that drinking and driving is unacceptable only when it results in an accident that affects a friend or relative. Juries tend to be sympathetic to convicted drinking drivers because conviction and revocation of license may lead to hardship.

The GAO report also said that advertising programs of the alcohol industry may make drinking more socially acceptable.

Other obstacles to a successful anti-drinking-driver campaign cited by the GAO report are shortage of money and manpower, inadequate judicial support, crowded court systems, poor educational programs, and the lowered drinking age in many states.

By late 1973, the GAO reported, 24 states had lowered their drinking age, generally to 18 years of age. About 63 percent of the state highway traffic safety officials interviewed by GAO said the lower drinking age was not an obstacle to solving the drinking-driver problem. Studies which GAO surveyed, however, indicated that the lowered drinking age had contributed to increased alcohol-related collisions involving young drivers.

State and local governments reported to GAO that the most effective measures they used in combating the drinking-driver problem were special patrols to detect and apprehend drinking drivers, rehabilitation programs to reduce the recurrence of the problem, and specialized equipment to aid in detecting and prosecuting drinking drivers.

Foreign countries also have a drinking-driver problem, according to the report. Robert F. Borkenstein, professor at Indiana University and president of the International Committee on Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety, said that alcohol involvement in fatal crashes was about 50 percent in Canada, 25 percent in Great Britain, and 70 percent in Australia. This compares with about 50 percent in the United States. The U. S. figure represents about 25,000 deaths annually in alcohol-related traffic accidents.

The GAO report concluded that the secretary of transportation, as part of his responsibility to improve traffic safety, should lead an educational effort in cooperation with state and local governments to fight the drinking-driver problem.

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Turlingtons Now In India,
Hope for Return to Iran

Baptist Press
2/27/79

BANGALORE, India (BP)--The Henry E. Turlingtons, the last Southern Baptist missionaries to leave Iran, have arrived in Bangalore, India, where they will be temporarily assigned to evangelism work.

J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia, said the Turlingtons will work with church and evangelism ministry of Baptists in Bangalore. They also will explore the possibility of teaching at a theological college in India.

Both assignments will be considered temporary, said Hughey, who hopes that the Turlingtons may return to Iran.

~~"We hope that (the Ayatollah) Khomeini will be able to maintain a stable government,"~~
Hughey said. *"If Americans can go back, the Turlingtons will, too," he said.*

Southern Baptists began work in Iran in 1968 as a ministry to growing numbers of American personnel and other English-speaking people working in the country. By last fall, six missionaries, a journeyman and a volunteer were leading English-language congregations in three cities.

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But as anti-Shah sentiment increased, it became apparent that the two civil factions were on a collision course. Violence mounted in outlying areas, including the towns of Shiraz and Ahwaz where Southern Baptists had work. Missionaries left these towns as other personnel evacuated.

Southern Baptist missionaries remained in Tehran, the capital, as long as possible. One couple left in early January, a missionary journeyman in late January and the Turlingtons with the final evacuations in mid-February.

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Educators Set National
Meeting on Bold Missions

Baptist Press
2/27/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Baptist educators and mission leaders will join in studying how Christian education can give practical support to Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust at a National Conference on Bold Christian Education and Bold Missions at Galveston, Texas, June 7-9.

The conference will be sponsored by the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools.

Besides examining the theology of Christian education and missions, the educators and denominational leaders will discuss both the challenge of religious pluralism and the Third World to the Christian faith.

About 120 education and mission leaders will participate in the addresses, position papers, and reactions at the conference. The material developed by the program personnel will be published as a part of the follow-up program of the conference by the Education Commission, according to the commission's executive director, Arthur L. Walker Jr.

Addresses in the general sessions will include the task of missions as it particularly relates to the activities of the Baptist college. Pope Duncan, president of Stetson University, DeLand, Fla., will address the conference on "Educating for a Christian Witness," and Jesse Fletcher, president of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, will speak on "Preparing the Student for Contemporary Missions."

Participants will be involved in discussion groups related to academic disciplines and the practical applications to mission involvement. Each discussion group will center its attention on a position paper written by Baptist educators and mission leaders.

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Uganda Missionaries
Clear of Battle Zone

Baptist Press
2/27/79

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries to Uganda were in Kenya when Tanzania-based invaders reportedly captured Southern Uganda's two major towns in late February.

Davis L. Saunders, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's area secretary for Eastern and Southern Africa, received a letter indicating Mr. and Mrs. G. Webster Carroll were in Nairobi for mission business. The Carrolls mailed it several days before battles occurred in Masaka and Mbarara.

Other Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Uganda, Mr. and Mrs. Jim L. Rice of Virginia, are in language school in Nairobi.

Wire service reports indicated that the fall of Masaka and Mbarara gave forces trying to topple Ugandan President Idi Amin almost total control of Southern Uganda.

The Carrolls, natives of West Virginia and Florida, will wait for future developments before making a decision about returning to Uganda.

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Missionaries Bundle Clothes
While Awaiting Indonesia Visa

By Maxine Stewart

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--When Eddie and Judy Neese were appointed as Southern Baptist missionaries to help start churches in Indonesia, they never dreamed socks, sweaters and disposable diapers would become part of their daily routine. But they've learned that adaptability is a key word in a missionary's vocabulary.

Everything had gone smoothly--their appointment process, orientation and preparation to go overseas--everything but visas for Indonesia.

All primed to begin their missionary careers, they couldn't bear the idea of just waiting for their visas. They learned that missionaries frequently fill temporary positions while waiting for visas to their assigned country. Told of a need for missionaries to work with Indochinese refugees in Thailand, they decided to help out until their visas were approved.

In September 1978 Eddie, Judy and their three children arrived in Thailand for an indefinite stay. There they bundle warm clothes for Vietnamese refugees, approved for resettlement in a third country, who have come to one of the two refugee centers in Bangkok to wait for departure.

Each bundle contains a cap, disposable diapers and bootee socks for each baby; a sweater for each family member; socks, underwear and sometimes a shirt, trousers, blouse and skirt.

Clothes bundling is a family project for the Neeses. They all help pack bundles laid out in their living room. They usually prepare and distribute 30 to 50 bundles a day, but once the number reached 126.

Each bundle contains a packet of Christian literature, including a copy of the New Testament book of Mark in Vietnamese, and a note explaining that money to buy the clothes came from Christian friends in Baptist churches in the United States and Thailand.

The Neeses also are using songs to help the refugees learn English and about Jesus.

But even in a temporary position things don't always go smoothly. The climate, the culture, the job--everything was different from what they had prepared for.

They live in a compound with several close Thai neighbors, and after a misunderstanding last November with some of them, the Neeses' morale hit a low point. They discussed packing up and leaving.

"God broke our hearts," Neese says. "Then he used that experience to fill us with his love. We learned human love is not adequate. We were able to go to our neighbors and talk with them about the problem.

"God dealt with them and with us. It turned out to be a beautiful experience and we had been used as God's vessel. We can thank him and praise him for bringing us here at this time."

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Note to Editors: Neese is a native of Linden, Texas. Mrs. Neese, the former Judith Pulis, is from Manderson and Thermopolis, Wyoming.

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

