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**Carter Reveals Private Talks
On Religious Liberties In China**

By Clay Brown

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Former President Jimmy Carter revealed for the first time June 18 details of his private negotiations (1979-78) with Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping for the return of Western missionaries to the mainland and other religious liberties in China.

Carter appearing on the television program, "Life Today," on the American Christian Television System (ACTS) said the negotiations were part of the long process of normalizing relations with the People's Republic which took "two solid years" of effort to achieve.

Because of the need for secrecy in the talks, "We didn't even let the State Department handle any of the dispatches," Carter said, so "the negotiations, in effect, were between me and the vice premier." It was during this one-on-one dialogue Carter was able to express his concern for religious liberty in China.

"The first evening I spent with Deng Xiaoping," Carter said. "I told him there were three things I wanted him to do. One was to permit Western Christian missionaries to go back into China, the second was to permit the distribution of Bibles and the third was to permit religious freedom."

Deng's answer, according to Carter was immediate. "Without hesitation he said, 'I'll do two of them,'" Carter said. Deng would do his best to allow absolute freedom of religion in China and the distribution of Bibles, but he could not allow missionaries to return because "it puts a connotation of domination by Westerners on Chinese," Carter said.

Carter said he believes the promises by Deng are being kept so far. "When I went to visit some of the Protestant churches in August 1981, they said they had no interference at all with their religious services," he said.

When the Chinese Christians experienced some difficulty in obtaining the proper paper for printing Bibles, Carter said they "contacted Deng indirectly" and obtained the necessary materials.

Carter was cautiously optimistic about the future of the new religious freedom in China. "I don't think anyone would dispute the fact that there's been a burgeoning of Christian evangelism and faith in China," Carter said. However, he added "no one can predict what the Chinese Communists will do, whether Deng's policies will prevail, but I assume his promise to me will be honored at least as long as he is in charge."

"Life Today" is a one-hour talk show aired daily at 9 p.m. (EDT) on ACTS, a network of family Christian entertainment sent by satellite to cable TV systems and TV stations nationwide. The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission operates the network.

(Clay Brown is a freelance writer in Fort Worth, Texas.)

Simultaneous Revivals
Could Win 600,000

By Orville Scott

Texas
Business - N

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptists can baptize a record 600,000 people in 1986 if 90 percent of the churches join in simultaneous revivals with commitment to personal soul-winning, according to Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Evangelism Director Bob Hamblen.

Hamblen met in Dallas with Texas Baptist Evangelism Director Carlos McLeod and pastors of a dozen large churches from across the state to help lay the groundwork for simultaneous revivals in 1986. Theme of the revivals is "Good News America, God Loves You."

Hamblen told the pastors that Southern Baptists had about half as many church members in the early 1950s as they do now. "But they baptized 396,000 in one year. Last year, we baptized just over 394,000."

One of the reasons the churches baptized so many people 30 years ago is that there were simultaneous revivals all over America, said Hamblen.

The evangelism leader said he is amazed in his travels across the country to hear people say, "The day of revivals is over."

"The day of revivals will never be over 'till Jesus comes back," said Hamblen.

Every state Baptist convention, executive director and evangelism director are committed to the simultaneous revivals, Hamblen said.

"What can we do to impact this country in simultaneous revivals?" he asked the large-church pastors.

The immediate past Southern Baptist Convention president, James T. Draper Jr., called for a united effort to make funds available to vocational evangelists to preach in pioneer missions areas.

Draper said First Church, Euless, where he is pastor, has 26 evangelists and an agreement that the church will pay their expenses wherever they preach in a pioneer area.

"Some churches can't afford a plane ticket for an evangelist," Draper said. "Why not spread it out over many churches?"

The need for assisting in pioneer areas was also confirmed by James Semple, pastor of First Church, Paris, and chairman of the Texas Baptist administrative committee. "We need old line churches to go into pioneer areas," said Semple.

Hamblen said he sees "a real moving of the Holy Spirit for revival in America. There is a great hunger all over America to come back to God.

"We can't print materials fast enough to meet the demand of Prayer for Spiritual Awakening.

"We're encouraging everybody in the State Convention and our institutions to be involved in going to share Christ," said Semple. "In togetherness, we find greater power with God."

Ronnie Yarber, pastor of Gross Road Church, Mesquite, said there must be a great emphasis on "shoe leather" evangelism. "We need to get back to outreach."

Yarber said the goal of the church that he pastors is to have at least 25 percent of the members out knocking on doors each week. Continuing Witness Training and WIN (Witness Involvement Now) are important tools in evangelism, said Yarber.

Evangelism is not just knocking on doors, but knocking on doors and telling them what Jesus has done and giving them an invitation to receive him as savior, said Hamblen. "Unless we present the gospel and ask them to accept Jesus, it's not evangelism."

W. Winfred Moore, pastor of First Church, Amarillo, and president of the 2.3 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas, urged pastors to lead people to "pray as earnestly as we can for the simultaneous revivals."

McLeod urged the pastors to lead out by contacting other churches and seeking to enlist them in simultaneous revivals.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Dallas bureau of Baptist Press.

Courtney Has Reason
To 'Celebrate Life!'

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
6/19/84

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Thirteen years ago, Ragan Courtney discovered Jesus' love is real.

In 1971, the aspiring Broadway actor and writer's big break occurred when a play he had co-written opened at the Billy Rose Theatre on Broadway. But success was temporary and when the play closed within the week, he found himself facing what he considered his biggest failure in life.

To remove himself from this disappointment, Courtney flew to Antigua in the Caribbean.

As a young boy, he had grown up attending Temple Baptist Church in Ruston, La., where he had learned all about God's love and had even surrendered to the ministry. But walking along the Caribbean beach, Courtney did not remember the warmth and love he had so often experienced in his home church.

His only thought that night was how inviting the sea looked and that perhaps he could let it rally drown the ruins of his life.

A few months earlier, the Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department had approached him about writing a youth musical entitled "Celebrate Life!" But he hadn't given the project much consideration because, "I was caught up in my own fame of the moment." Then after the humiliation of a career failure, celebrating life was hardly what he had in mind.

Obsessed with thoughts of death, he took one step into the water, but before he could go any farther, a memory from somewhere in the past flooded his mind. "As I stepped into the water, all I could remember was the song 'Jesus Loves Me.'"

"I knew he loved me even as a failure. I knew that I was weak and that he was strong. It was then that Jesus became a reality to me. I discovered a living God in my heart, which until then I had only known in my head," said Courtney.

Filled with a new sense of excitement, Courtney became aware of the things around him which all seemed to echo "God loves you."

As he rushed back to the house to start writing he kept thinking, "He's the wind that I soar on, he's the grass that I run through, he's the light of my world, a priceless pearl, he's the one that I turn to when I have to laugh or cry."

Courtney's thoughts eventually became one of the opening numbers in "Celebrate Life!", the best-selling youth musical ever produced by Broadman Press.

Now, 13 years later, the musical still holds deep personal meaning for Courtney.

Astounded that "Celebrate Life!" has sold nearly 700,000 copies since its release, Courtney says he wrote the lyrics with the thought that Jesus makes life worth celebrating.

"In just two weeks I wrote what had suddenly become a very personal revelation to me. It dawned on me that if I had gone through life missing the elementary truth of the gospel that Jesus loves me, so had others."

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Buryl Red, whom Courtney had met through the Manhattan Baptist Church in New York, set the lyrics to music. The music was then premiered during the 1972 Winter Youth Celebration at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Over the last decade, Courtney has gotten responses from people throughout the world. "It's a humbling experience to know that lives have been changed," he said. "But I can only give credit to the Holy Spirit."

The musical holds special memories for Courtney not only because it is the outpouring of his own experience, but because during the premiere he met a young singer named Cynthia Clawson.

Clawson had been enlisted by Red to sing one of the solo parts. "I knew from the moment I saw her that I wanted to marry her," said Courtney. Within the year Courtney had asked her to marry him. Today they have two children, Will, five, and Lily, three.

This summer "Celebrate Life!" is being reintroduced during the church training-sponsored weeks at Glorieta and Ridgecrest.

Several of the original cast members including Courtney, Clawson, Tim Seelig, and Raymond Brown are participating in the musical.

Today, Seelig is associate minister of music at First Baptist Church, Houston, and Brown is a recording artist based in Nashville, Tenn. Brown frequently accompanies Clawson on her concert tours.

In May, the Courtneys and their two children moved from Nashville to Louisville, Ky., where he will begin teaching church drama at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Years ago when I surrendered my life to God, I thought I had to be a preacher or a missionary, but my craft was writing and acting," he said. "Now that I have become what God wants me to be, I can see how he can use my life as a ministry to reach people throughout the world. I truly am the missionary that I surrendered to be years ago," said Courtney.

He said his goal in life is to teach people "something that I learned 13 years ago, Jesus loves me and there's nothing else worth living your life for."

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Korean Christian Ranks
Grow At Explosive Rate

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
6/19/84

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--It was a familiar scene: more than one million people jammed the streets in May to greet Pope John Paul II when he toured Seoul in his "popemobile."

But there was more at work than the globe-trotting pontiff's vibrant personality. As Korean Catholics celebrate two centuries of existence and the nation's Protestants observe 100 years of work in 1984, they behold one of the fastest growing Christian communities on earth.

South Korea now reports more than nine million Christians, about a fourth of the population. That represents 900 percent growth since 1950. By the end of the century, claim some church observers, the total could double.

The famous Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul counts a staggering 370,000 members, the world's largest congregation. Baptists can point to smaller but no less exciting success stories. Yoido Baptist Church in Seoul, for example, began with 18 members in 1972 and now has more than 3,000. Almost anywhere a church begins, it grows.

By late 1983 Baptists were approaching 900 churches with 60,000 baptized believers and some 200,000 regular attenders. They aim for 2,000 churches by 1990. Working with them are 113 Southern Baptist missionaries promoting (and struggling to keep up with) the growth. So much for the numbers.

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Evangelical leaders around the world know how fast Korean Christians are growing. They want to know why--especially leaders in less responsive Asian countries like Japan. What's behind the Korean boom?

"The obvious answer is the Holy Spirit," says Southern Baptist missionary Milton Womack, an associate to the Foreign Mission Board's director for East Asia. He believes the country is experiencing an ongoing spiritual revival that is part of God's plan and cannot be explained in nonspiritual terms. But Womack and other observers see factors in Korean history, culture and character that have profoundly influenced the development of Christianity as a national force.

For one thing, China and Japan have dominated the Korean Peninsula for many centuries, often using it as a staging ground for military assaults on each other. The trend continued into this century, as Japan brutally ruled Korea for a generation ending with World War II. The Korean War followed, tragically dividing the peninsula (and countless families) into the Chinese and Soviet-backed north and American-backed south.

Koreans have suffered long and deeply, but their repeated struggle with the wider world has made them open to outside influences. Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity all entered Korea from without; only the folk belief in spirits invoked by the shaman (holy man) goes back to Korea's earliest recorded history.

"They're willing to attempt new things; they're not as tradition-bound," explains Womack. "The first Christians in Korea were Koreans. (They) went to China and had contact with a Catholic priest and came back as Christians and shared the gospel." Missionaries came later.

Womack also sees Koreans as "bold and outgoing," even emotional, in contrast to their traditionally reserved Chinese and Japanese neighbors. "You get into a taxi in Japan and tell him where to go and he drives and you get out there. You get into a taxi in Korea and the driver may just break out into a song.... The Japanese would never, never do that."

Koreans responded to the Protestant missionaries of the 19th Century, who generally taught self-support and self-government for churches and encouraged national independence.

Two other factors have built the Korean church: martyrs and prayer. Hundreds of priests, pastors and believers have paid for their faith with their lives--under the old Korean royal dynasty, under the Japanese and under communism.

(Organized religion virtually ceased in northern Korea when communists seized power there in 1945. But reports filtering out indicate that the government allows limited home worship among some 5,000 known Christians. No church buildings exist.)

In South Korea today, perhaps one million Christians from all denominations gather in churches every morning as early as 4 a.m. to pray. Many sponsor all-night prayer meetings on Fridays. The practice, according to Baptist leader Stephen No, is "not easy either for pastor or people, but Korean churches are never lazy about their prayer meetings."

Baptists--and their missionary co-workers--put evangelism and starting churches as first priority. South Korea has developed into one of the most productive fields for partnership evangelism projects involving Southern Baptist pastors and lay teams. Planning for the projects is now an integral part of most Korean church calendars. Protestants and evangelicals do have some problems. Success itself has become a problem. So popular is evangelical religion, reports Asiaweek Magazine, that many Koreans are joining churches simply to gain social acceptance or to identify with Western values.

Critics also charge that a strong strain of materialism lurks behind the evangelicals' ritual prayers for "spiritual prosperity, physical health and secular prosperity." Further, a rift has opened between the majority that supports the government and a minority that demands expansion of social freedom.

Still, Korean Christians seem to have the vitality and commitment to reach their own country and beyond. "God wants Korea to evangelize Asia," said Catholic Cardinal Stephen Kim during the pope's visit. Though they might define evangelism in a different way, Baptists heartily agree.