

# RELIGION & DEMOCRACY

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Democracy

July / August 1989

The Continuing Crisis:

## Latest Changes Fail to Heal the NCC's Wounds

Oldline, structural ecumenism, already in shock from declining denominational membership and decreasing funds, has received more blows. On June 27, the Rev. Dr. Arie Brouwer, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, resigned from his post. This followed developments at the mid-May Governing Board meeting in Lexington, Kentucky -- a disquieting spectacle which shook even those most committed to the NCC's causes.

As Board members began the task of reorganizing the NCC, a major conflict surfaced between Dr. Brouwer and unnamed "church bureaucrats." In his address to the 275-member board, Brouwer lambasted his opponents and claimed they were out to destroy him and the NCC.

Given the current shipwreck which is the NCC, its leaders appeared in Lexington like a band of hungry, desperate survivors whose only outlet for frustration was each other -- an ecumenical *Lord of the Flies*.

### The Brouwer Analysis

Brouwer's words, as well as his manner, need no amplification as a description of the current state of the NCC. In a calm, exhausted monotone, unadorned with feeling or emphasis, he nevertheless described a desperate situation within the council:

The air in our meetings is polluted with veiled language, with loaded words. They are code words like "hierarchical," "authoritarian".... These are words intended to destroy. They are weapons; instruments of ideological warfare, of character assassination and of derision.

Thus we have lived for these two years. It is a life of death. It is time now, past time, for the community this week, to choose life.

The problem is neither ... style nor ... substance. The problem is the intractability of the structures and the enraged resistance of the powers. And here as [in the Soviet Union] the only way out of the morass is through *glasnost* and *perestroika* -- and democratization too -- by freeing the Council from the grip of a few powerful bureaucrats and returning it to the whole people of God.

The powerful are not accustomed to such behavior, and they are outraged. They will not have it. They will not be thwarted. They will pursue their will to power. They will readily destroy me and this Council ... itself if necessary to pursue their will to power....

Already, this crisis has been for me and my colleagues..., and for many of you, a crucifixion and a journey through Hell.

### The Council's Response

The Governing Board's response to Brouwer reflects the fratricide within the NCC itself and of the old bureaucratic ecumenism in general. After the speech was given, the Executive Committee of the NCC urged the board to adopt a resolution calling for Brouwer's resignation. His tone and message led many to lose confidence in his leadership and judgement. The vote was a 57-57 tie. (Many of the 275 members had left or had not bothered to attend the meeting. Council President Patricia McClurg declined to break the tie.)

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RNS Photo / Wide World

# Religious Liberty Alert

## From the Square to the Sanctuary

By The Rev. Stan DeBoe

*During May 10-21, Father Stan DeBoe, Director of the Trinitarian Ministry to the Persecuted Church and an IRD associate, participated in a fact-finding mission to the Peoples' Republic of China with Anna Tapay, an international human rights lawyer and the Program Director of the Puebla Institute.*

As my luggage was placed on the conveyer belt and started to move toward the X-ray machine I began to worry. Then it happened. The customs officer removed the luggage from the belt, called over a superior, and asked me to open my bags.

As part of a fact-finding team put together by the Holy Trinity Fathers and the Puebla Institute, I spent 10 days in May in Hong Kong and China, researching the status of religious freedom in China. This day, however, was not so much research as it was an opportunity for ministry -- and a day to test the limits of China's religious policies. We were traveling from Hong Kong to Canton with the express purpose of delivering Bibles to Christians. Now, as we waited in customs, my entire trip seemed to be jeopardized.

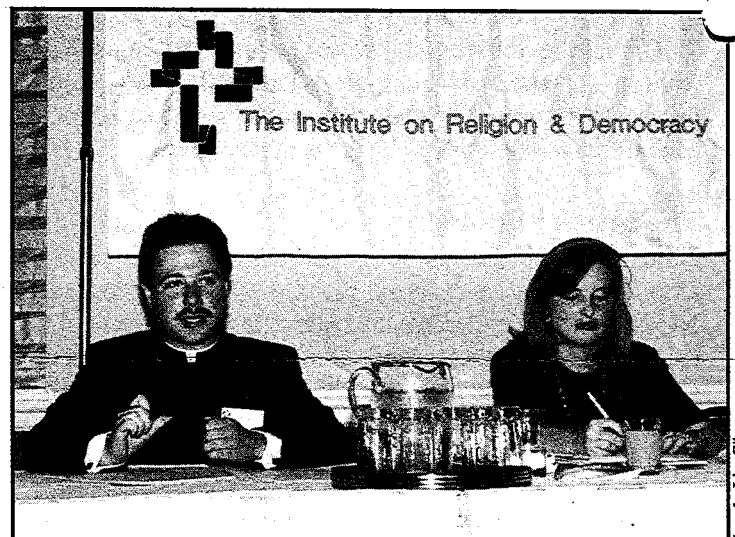
I opened my luggage, as requested, and removed the books. The official asked if I was carrying Bibles. I said yes and was then told in no uncertain terms that I was not permitted to carry Bibles into China. Not wanting to cause any trouble, I explained that I was a Roman Catholic priest and that I was bringing these Bibles to my brothers and sisters in China. I said that Chinese officials had reported that there was complete religious freedom in China and so I had assumed there would be no problem with carrying in some Bibles. The customs agent told me that I could not carry such "counter-revolutionary" materials into China. She gave me a voucher for all but a couple of books and I was then allowed to leave customs and spend time in China.

A few hours later I was able to use the books that I had been permitted to take with me. When we visited a church in Canton, I saw several elderly women praying in the front of the sanctuary. I approached one of them and placed the Bible next to her. She looked at me warily and then examined it. But when she realized that it was a Bible, the expression of joy that filled her face made this one of the most moving experiences of my life. As we left the church, we could see the flurry of activity that surrounded the gift which we had left with these sisters.

These two experiences stand in contrast to what I was told at a meeting later that day with Father James Leung, a priest at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Canton, which is an official (registered) church. The meeting was completely unplanned but helped our fact-finding team better understand the religious climate in China. Father Leung claimed that in China there was complete religious liberty, that the churches were functioning, that people could receive Bibles and religious literature and that he could meet freely with visitors. When pressed further about the distribution of Bibles and religious literature, he told us that the Bibles were available, if needed, from Beijing. He also said that the people could hear the Bible read and preached on in the churches. Father Leung's assurances sharply contradicted my own personal experience.

The policies toward religion are controlled by the central Chinese government through the "patriotic associations" for both Protestants and Catholics. These associations control the registration of congregations and clergy, the publishing of religious literature, and the types of ministries that religious groups may perform. In this way they can limit the functioning and influence of the religious communities and individuals within them.

(Alert, continued on page 8)



Father Stan DeBoe and Nina Shea lead a press conference sponsored by the IRD to publicize the findings of the Trinitarian/Puebla fact-finding mission to China. A complete text of Father Stan's press comments and the team's prisoner list is available by writing the Rev. Stan DeBoe, c/o IRD, 729 15th Street, N.W., Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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# China's Christians Bracing for Onslaught

By Ron MacMillan, a foreign correspondent based in Hong Kong for News Network International (NNI). The following is excerpted from news reports he submitted following the June 3 crackdown in the pro-democracy demonstrations.

HONG KONG (NNI) -- China's Christians are bracing themselves for the worst in the wake of the Beijing massacres of June 3, when hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators were killed by troops apparently under orders from hard-line elements in the Communist Party. Christians are convinced that if the hard-line elements win the current power struggle, the church will be one of the first communities to be victimized.

Revenge constitutes one reason why the church can expect to be victimized. As a Christian leader in Canton said apprehensively, "It will not have escaped the notice of the hard-liners that Christian leaders were rather eager to support the students in their call for democracy."

On May 23, Bishop K.H. Ting, head of the official church known as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, issued a statement on behalf of the entire official Protestant leadership unequivocally supporting the students. Part of it read, "We wholeheartedly affirm the student demonstrations in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities in recent days ... and call upon the top level leaders of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council to carry on a dialogue with the students as soon as possible." The official Catholic church was swift to follow suit, with Vice-President Liu Bainian declaring to Catholic journalists on May 30: "The students have good intentions.... They want to give the country a better future."

But the defiant mood went all the way to the grass roots of the state church. Half of the 70 students studying at the Beijing Theological Seminary skipped classes to join the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square despite being warned by Religious Affairs Bureau personnel that it could mean expulsion. "Do your worst," replied the students, "we are going to call for freedom."

House church believers are not so numerous in Beijing, nor indeed in any city in China, as most are located in the countryside. However, one house church leader led his congregation to Tiananmen Square carrying a ten-foot-high cross. Other house churches made a special point of bringing food to the students, especially when interest began to wane in their campaign toward the end of May.

Nevertheless, the sizable Christian community was not at the forefront of the "democracy fever" that swept China's cities in May. The attitude of believers breaks into one of three groups.

First, there is a group that is only mildly interested in the movement. For the most part, they tend to be out in the countryside. Yet this attitude is based not only on isolation, but a very cogent theological basis, as well.

A house church leader in central Henan Province said: "In China we have had a marvelous revival, but it has come from and remained among the poor, the persecuted, the uneducated. We see no value in petitioning the so-called great and powerful people of this world. Change only occurs when an individual finds Christ, lives the life of Christ, and leads those around him to Christ."

A second group of Christians would class themselves as "very supportive" of the demonstrators. They would be city dwellers, more educated, and above all, usually under 40 years of age. The age range is crucial. They missed the terrible experience of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), where those who dared to differ from Mao were hounded mercilessly, often to the grave.

But a third group of Christians professed themselves firmly opposed to the demonstrators. Though sympathetic to their aims and feelings, they took exception to the students' tactics, fearing that to defy the government so openly was to court a government crackdown, which in time would bring trouble to the church.

Interestingly, these believers are more elderly, many of whom suffered during the Cultural Revolution. One 75-year-old house church leader, who had spent 20 years in jail for his faith, said, "In China, a leader is judged not in terms of the freedom he brings to the individual, but in terms of the stability he brings to the nation." He feared that the worse events became, the more the stage would be set for a hard-liner to act tough, thus restoring revolutionary platforms which would inevitably oppress minorities once again -- especially the church.

Events have proven him correct.

## UPDATE

As this issue of *Religion & Democracy* goes to press, we have obtained the following China updates:

\* After publicly supporting the students, Bishop K.H. Ting was required to *affirm* a June 9 speech given by Premier Deng Xiaoping, which justified reprisals against the students. Bishop Ting's refusal to endorse the speech probably would have meant severe punishment.

\* The Chinese Communist Party has issued a policy paper which attacks the unregistered Catholic Church. The paper calls for isolating "underground Catholic forces" and "attacking the individual reactionaries." The document, apparently adopted early this year, reached Hong Kong only recently.

\* The Puebla/Trinitarian monitoring team has identified 12 Protestant and seven Catholic Chinese prisoners. In late June, two additional Protestant house church leaders were arrested. A source in Hong Kong wrote, "I personally believe all the signs are in place for a major persecution of Protestant and Catholic 'dissident' groups and probably for much tighter control, even repression of the officially-recognized State churches."

# Oldline Church Responses to China: Then and Now

## A Record of Shame

Recent church statements condemning the suppression of the Chinese democracy movement seem particularly remarkable in light of the oldline's record of past political commentary on China. None of the latest statements reflects on that record. But if ecumenical and denominational officials would review their past attitudes toward China, they might find much cause for the "godly sorrow [which] produces repentance." Until now church pronouncements have paralleled the current line of the People's Republic government, ignoring the need for democracy in China, overlooking the sufferings of persecuted Chinese Christians, and even investing religious significance in supposed achievements of the totalitarian dictatorship.

In 1975, with the catastrophic and bloody "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" still raging, the National Council of Churches issued a study booklet entitled "China: People-Questions." It opened with an exhilarating panorama of continuing revolution:

With the Communist victory, the revolutionary process did not stop. Indeed, it was accelerated.... Land reform continued. Mutual aid teams, cooperatives and finally people's communes were formed. For the first time, the peasants pooled their land, labor, tools and know-how. Working for themselves and not the landlords, they were able to conquer the hunger, disease and poverty that had stalked them for years. In the cities, the foreigners left, the gangsters were crushed, drug addiction was eliminated, industry was nationalized and the urban working class took control of its own affairs, backed by a government that was working for the interests of the ordinary people.

"People-Questions" directly endorsed the purges of the Cultural Revolution, repeatedly holding up the "socialist road" of Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong as morally superior to the "capitalist road" allegedly favored by his opponents. "In time the road of Mao and his followers clearly emerged as the one that humanized the social relations of the society," the NCC booklet declared. It also gave a shockingly sympathetic portrayal of the communist attempt to destroy the Church:

The Chinese official view of religion today is one of supreme disregard. The last known public statement was made by Premier Chou En-lai ten years ago. The Red Guards closed down all temples, mosques and churches in 1966, not as a particular attack on religion but as part of their campaign to eradicate all the "four olds." Religion, in China's collective society, at best is seen as superfluous, at worst as subversive.... Christians there, like their secular neighbors, have doubtless been converted from the "four olds," including the old-style church.

The authors of this 1975 booklet must have been quite embarrassed to discover later that hunger, disease, poverty, and corruption had not, in fact, disappeared from China -- and that Christ's church remains very much alive there.

(Record, continued on page 5)

## A Refreshing Sense of Outrage

What a heartening change! Elsewhere -- Afghanistan, Poland, Nicaragua -- too many church leaders have vacillated and equivocated in condemning communist oppression. But this time, in response to the Chinese communist crackdown, they got it right. Within hours of the assault on Tienanmen Square, the chorus of ecumenical and denominational voices rang out loud and clear -- squarely on the side of democracy. Following the example of their favored Chinese churchman, Bishop K. H. Ting, they unambiguously backed the students' demands for greater freedom. And they sharply denounced the government's violent suppression of the democracy movement.

● The Rev. Emilio Castro, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, said that he had "received with shock and profound consternation" the news of the killings in Beijing. "The council is disturbed by this action, which also caused grievous injuries to thousands," added Castro. He expressed the WCC's "hopes that peaceful means will be found by those in power to respond to the demands of the people for more freedom and democracy."

● General Secretary Arie Brouwer of the National Council of Churches credited the student demonstrators as speaking for popular "aspirations for a more democratic China," which "had been indeed encouraging to all freedom loving peoples of the world." He described the repression in graphic terms: "Without apparent warning, government troops called in from outside of Beijing turned their automatic weapons and fired indiscriminately on helpless civilians, bulldozed them with armored tanks, incinerated their bodies on the spot ...." Brouwer commended President Bush's suspension of military aid to the People's Republic and urged the president "in no uncertain terms to register with the Chinese government the indignation of the American people."

● Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, said, "The brutal suppression of students, workers and others dedicated to a patriotic and non-violent struggle for increased democracy in their homeland must be condemned by all who are genuinely committed to peace, freedom and justice." He called for the Chinese government "to bring the present tragic and bloody slaughter to an immediate end." "A national dialogue between all concerned ... must be effectively created to bring about reconciliation and unity within the country," Staalsett suggested.

● Similar protestations have been issued by leaders in the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Methodist Church.

-- Alan Wisdom



NNI/Chris Wehr

Elderly Christians such as this Beijing woman have endured many past government crackdowns.

(Record, continued from page 4)

In 1978, after Mao's death had allowed China to pull back from the Cultural Revolution, the NCC published a mission study book, *China: Search for Community*. Yet this study remained as enthusiastic as the earlier booklet about the Maoist notion of "permanent revolution." *Search for Community* treated the Cultural Revolution as a sort of Chinese Great Awakening:

A system of campaigns for moral renewal has characterized the Chinese scene. These campaigns are not dissimilar to renewal movements which have taken place in the church throughout the centuries. The most outstanding campaign came in the late 1960s, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as it was called.

In apparent justification of the Cultural Revolution's violence, the NCC book approvingly cited Mao's chilling saying, "The Revolution is not a dinner party." It pointed to one western political pilgrim who found mandatory "self-criticism" sessions "stimulating": "He looks on it as accelerating the weeding out of his undesirable bourgeois liberalism."

Just as the cult of Mao was beginning to decline in China, the NCC study added a Christian twist to it, with a curious retelling of the parable of the Good Samaritan:

Finally the Samaritan arrived on the scene, one who was despised by the political and religious authorities, an outcast with no respectability. In Chinese eyes, he could be no other than Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Communist Party. The

wounds made by the imperialist robbers were healed, national dignity was restored, and armed protection was given. Here was the neighbor, the comrade, who was willing to go down into the ditch and lift the robbed and wounded from below. Here was the one deserving the love of the people and setting the example of a life style and a political program.

The study turned to British scientist Joseph Needham for the ultimate sanctification of Chinese communism: "I think China is the only truly Christian country in the world in the present day, in spite of its absolute rejection of all religion."

*Search for Community* conceded briefly that "past years have seen periods of local repression and hardship" for Christians in China, but assured readers that religious believers now "quietly but openly practice their faith." And, besides, "for China's secularized society today religion is not a threat; it's simply irrelevant." Today the authors of this 1978 NCC book might reconsider whether Chinese communism has indeed proved a successful substitute for religious values.

By the early 1980s, Chinese government leaders were frankly admitting the "mistakes" of Mao and opening up greater economic and religious freedom. A 1981 policy statement by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries gave a more cautious, although still overwhelmingly positive, appraisal:

New China has brought many good changes to the Chinese people.... Food, clothing and medical care have been made available to the masses, as national priorities have focused on the basic needs of China's one billion people. A visit to China today reveals that although it is a poor country struggling with immense problems of development to meet the needs of one quarter of the human race, the accomplishments of these 30 years can be a source of pride and should not be underestimated.

While the statement acknowledged past suppression of the Church, it greeted warmly the reconstitution of the state-controlled Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). The UM board spoke coldly of persecuted underground believers who avoided the Three-Self Movement: "There may be now or in the future 'dissident Christians' in China, as there are in every country, but churches outside China ... should not promote such separation."

This attitude toward China has continued largely unchanged up to the present crisis. Since 1985 the World and National Councils of Churches have publicized guidelines for Christian mission work drawn up by the TSPM-linked Amity Foundation. These guidelines specify, for instance, that foreign Christians aiding China should: be "in general sympathy with China's socialist modernization"; avoid "random distribution of Christian literature, fund-raising for church building ... (or) the training of Chinese church workers"; and inform Three-Self officials of any evangelistic activities not sanctioned by the government.

Are our church leaders going to learn anything lasting from the current crisis of legitimacy in China? Will they truly forsake their past policies? We hope that there is a whole lot of re-evaluation going on at 475 Riverside Drive and kindred church headquarters.

-- Alan Wisdom



(NCC Crisis, continued from page 1)

In early June, a consultation of heads of the major denominations in the NCC coordinated by Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning expressed the view that Brouwer should resign. The denominational heads said they want the council to have "new leadership" to carry it into a new era, but they have not indicated what leadership qualities would be necessary. Whether pushing Brouwer out will prove to be a positive, restorative move -- or simply a scapegoat device -- remains to be seen. Brouwer himself was appointed in 1985 as a strong, reform-minded leader who might restore the NCC.

### Restructuring Rather than Reformation

The delegates had come to the Lexington meeting primarily to deal with their financial and organizational crisis by putting into effect a major restructuring plan that was developed by the "Committee of Fifteen" appointed last November. This new structure was supposed to "save" the NCC by streamlining and making more efficient what is now a cumbersome and topsy-like creature which cannot be sustained. Shrinking resources have led to conflicts over priorities and allocations among the agencies and units of the NCC in recent years, forcing retrenchment to prevent bankruptcy. The new structure was at the same time to be more open and accountable, in order to frustrate the emergence of bureaucratic fiefdoms and bailiwicks characteristic of the current structure.

At one level, the current trouble appears to be a classic case of institutional decline, with resulting battles to control what remains of the resources and reputation of the council. Given the typical profile of institutional cycles, it might have been anticipated. Council officials typically had denied the conflicts which now have broken out into virtual civil war. The Committee of Fifteen was appointed, according to its chairman, United Methodist Bishop Melvin Talbert, "at the eleventh hour."

The evidence was overwhelming, from the 53 percent decline in the real value of contributions to the NCC, to the staff reductions, to the spectacle of its headquarters -- the once renowned "God Box" at 475 Riverside Drive in New York -- now dusty, dingy, with empty floors and offices. Lutheran commentator and IRD board member Richard John Neuhaus describes the NCC as "near comatose." Under the mandate to restructure, and in spite of its potential derailment by Brouwer's speech on the first day of the meeting, the NCC board voted to institute a modified version of the Committee of Fifteen plan, including:

- a stronger Executive Committee, with greater control over budgets, nominations, personnel and policy, and with heavy representation from program units and denominational officials;
- a weaker General Board (changed from Governing Board), which is supposed to represent proportionally the member denominations and churches, meeting only once a year to set broad policy;



Arie Brouwer, who recently resigned as NCC General Secretary, fired back at council critics during what proved to be his last Governing Board meeting in May.

- consolidation of the current eleven program units into four (increased from the three detailed in the original plan), with powerful unit committees of their own;
- a new program unit, created by an amendment offered by the minority caucus, to be called the "Prophetic Justice Unit," designed to confront society and government and support radical solutions.

The primary result of the new structure is to concentrate authority and resources in the hands of a small network of NCC and denominational officials who will dominate the unit committees and the Executive Committee. This move may further alienate NCC constituents, since the church bureaucrats will dominate these bodies, and will become even less accountable to the "legislative branch" embodied in the General Board.

### International Policy Activity

Even in the midst of the restructuring and turmoil, Belle McMaster, Presbyterian mission staffer and Chair of the NCC International Affairs Commission, claimed that "it just ain't so that the NCC is in decline." Her evidence: overseas recipients of NCC funds love the NCC. While the United States is "often a force for ill in the world," the NCC acts to create justice and bring aid to those in need, according to McMaster.

The future international policy activities of the NCC -- if it survives -- were announced at the Lexington meeting. These include continued efforts to influence U.S. policy toward South Africa in the direction of comprehensive sanctions and support of radical groups. Another major focus will be to achieve Korean reunification before the 1995 "Jubilee" anniversary of the division of the Korean peninsula. Syngman Rhee, the emigre Presbyterian of-

ficial heading this effort, indicated that the key to solving "South Korean injustices" and reuniting the Koreans was to remove the "false liberators" -- U.S. forces still stationed there.

McMaster also announced that future NCC studies would focus on three issues: (1) "the third world debt crisis," which will be considered a result of unjust economic practices and heavy-handed Western efforts to redistribute wealth back into U.S. and European banks; (2) U.S. "militarism" as a factor in international politics -- particularly the U.S. military presence in the Philippines, due to be renegotiated by 1991; (3) and "racism as a factor in international politics," which was left unexplained as an apparently self-evident condition.

### **The Future of Ecumenism?**

Officials in Lexington never considered whether the adoption of such agendas could be one major source of many of the NCC troubles. A typical response to the crisis evidenced by the hard-core supporters was to see the drop in support and membership as confirmation of the rightness of the radical agenda -- either as persecution for righteousness' sake, or the flight of the discomfited. The "prophetic" calling of the council was proclaimed over and over in Lexington -- the call to stand against the structures of injustice, racism, and militarism within both society and the Church, whatever the cost. One participant attributed Brouwer's behavior to his qualities as a "stubborn Dutchman, who dug in his heels"; the characterization might apply to the NCC as a whole.

Most observers and members agreed that the NCC has become ossified. It is run by denominational bureaucrats who use the churches' contributions for projects most members do not support. It does not represent most Christians or churches in the United States, though its

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### **The new structure approved at Lexington only perpetuates and even exacerbates the old problems.**

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legacy is that of "mainstream" religion. Its role in the church world has been to strive for bureaucratic ecumenism -- structural and result-oriented. As such a federation it has lacked the resources and vision of itself which would inspire and motivate believers -- a vision of God's work in the world, with the Church as His servant. The structural approach clearly has not overcome the organizational disunity of the Church; recent developments raise the question of whether such a national council is any longer viable or even necessary under the rich diversity within Christianity in the United States. The new structure approved at Lexington only perpetuates and even exacerbates the old problems.

Those church members across the United States who looked to the NCC professionals for spiritual and moral leadership in these troubling times had to strain to find examples of repentance, prayers for guidance, or a search of the scriptures for direction in Lexington. These may

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### **Council officials typically had denied the conflicts which now have broken out into virtual civil war.**

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well have taken place in private, but the public face was one of discord and desperation. Christian believers who are distressed over the historical divisions in Christ's church and seek its unity in worship and service to Him might wonder whether such unity can be achieved in this age.

It is hard to see how the NCC version of "unity" in Christ can survive any more such hits. Officials and members of the NCC have realized this and have characterized their current restructuring efforts as the final attempt at recovery. It might be possible that some boiled-down version of the NCC will emerge from the crisis and start over again on the same radical agenda.

Is the NCC the only avenue for ecumenism? Other options are now emerging. While at Lexington, the delegates heard about a new attempt by the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) which will in the next few years attempt a "federation" of at least nine major denominations, organized for ecclesial and sacramental interaction, rather than in a large structure for social action. In a different theological framework, the National Association of Evangelicals represents 46 growing denominations which are conservative in theology and oriented toward evangelism in their mission activity. More importantly, Christian believers all across the country are achieving their own practical ecumenism, finding that denominational categories matter little as they meet before work for Bible study and prayer, join together on evangelism projects, or contribute to parachurch mission organizations.

One sermon given at Lexington challenged the NCC to see that it needs the "ordinary folks of God who understand the ways of God." Perhaps, given the recent history of true renewal in the Church and the new ecumenism of practice, a new form of unity is emerging. Clearly, neither the gospel nor the Church are dependent on earthly vessels. Forms are corruptible and means are fallible. Through 2000 years of corruption and renewal, the Church has survived and flourished. It will be no different in our own era.

-- Lawrence Adams

## What You Can Do

For more information on the Church in China, you may want to contact the following:

Chinese Church Research Center  
P. O. Box 312 Shatin Central P.O.  
New Territories  
HONG KONG

Overseas Missionary Fellowship  
Mr. Anthony Lambert  
China Department  
P.O. Box 70505  
Kowloon Central Post Office  
HONG KONG

To protest religious repression and the violation of human rights in China, write to:

The Honorable Zhu Qizhen  
Ambassador of the People's  
Republic of China  
2300 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20008

The Honorable Angelo Vida  
d'Almeida Ribeiro  
The United Nations Special  
Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance  
Provencor de Justica  
Avenue 5 de Outubro 38  
1094 Lisbon  
Portugal

(Alert, continued from page 2)

Clergy who are not registered in the patriotic associations are targets of particular persecution and harassment. Many of them have spent several lengthy terms in prison. Following their imprisonment, they are denied their civil and political rights and many are placed on strict house arrest. One purpose of our fact-finding team was to compile as complete a list as possible of Christians who are imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs. (The list, which includes some jailed since the June 3 crackdown, is available upon request.)

Sometimes repression is more severe. In Youtong, a village in Hebei province, the Catholics of the unregistered church had petitioned that their tent-church be recognized and that they be allowed to freely worship. When the government denied this request and ordered the tent-church closed, the people steadfastly refused. On April 18, one month after the order to close, police entered the village and began a ten-hour rampage that resulted in two confirmed deaths (and eight others reported), the arrests of about 30 people, and hundreds of people injured (over 160 severely). I saw photographs, which I will never forget, of the aftermath of the bloody raid.

Although the church in China is not a center for political dissidents, it is for many people a place where they can feel some freedom from control of the government and the party. Despite the severe repression that the unregistered churches experience, the Christian communities in China are experiencing growth, especially among the young. We were told that these young people were seeking to fill a spiritual vacuum that the communist system has left in China.

China has had a history of religious repression and persecution that continues even now. The new violence that the government has directed toward its own people almost certainly indicates a renewed effort by the government to control all aspects of the life of the people. The interest in China and the visibility of the actions of the people and the government could be a great opportunity for Christians in the West to reach out to a church in need.

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