

## II. Adventism in China: The Communist Takeover

by S. J. Lee

The year 1951 was a turning point for Seventh-day Adventists in China. The Communist liberation ushered in a new experience not only for Adventists but also for Christians of every denomination. All religious organizations, Catholic and Protestant, severed their connections with foreign missionaries and embarked on a program of self-support, self-administration and self-propagation—the “Three-Self Movement.” In churches throughout China, missionaries were denounced for raising a wall between Christians and non-Christians, for teaching the Chinese people to be unpatriotic, and for serving as spies and foreign agents.

The first inkling of change came in May 1951, when the government’s Bureau of Religious Affairs summoned leaders of every denomination to Peking for a one-week meeting. The first two days of the session were devoted to speeches by leading government officials on the traitorous activities of foreign missionaries from the time of the Opium War in 1840 down to the present. After the speeches, the participants broke into groups to discuss the hypocritical activities of missionaries, and then listened to a series of “denunciation meetings” by representatives of the YMCA, YWCA and various denominations. At the close of the meeting, it was resolved to inform all Christians, as well as the non-Christian public, of the facts that had been revealed during the week. Adventist representatives at the meeting included Brethren Hsu Hwa, Tan Hsin Hsu, H. C. Shen, Lee Su Liang, Ho Ping Duan, Chen Ming and myself. None of us took part in the accusations.

A month or so after this meeting, Brother Hsu Hwa received a telephone call to report

immediately to the Office of the Bureau of Religious Affairs. On arrival, he learned of plans to hold a public “accusation meeting” the following day. Along with the heads of every denomination in Shanghai, he was required to start at once writing out accusations to be read the next day. He later reported that he had been detained from morning till late in the afternoon without even a lunch break. The next day, Christians of every persuasion were asked to meet in the Canidrome, and many attended without knowing the nature of the meeting. The accusations made that day were broadcast to the world. We learned weeks afterwards that Elder W. H. Branson, the last foreign president of the China Division, was sick and fasted for two days after hearing Hsu Hwa’s accusations (which Brother Hsu claimed had been doctored by the officials).

Following this session in the Canidrome, the various denominational leaders were to conduct similar accusation meetings throughout the country, starting with mission headquarters and the principal churches of Shanghai. A schedule of meetings was drawn up, with the Adventists appearing in the middle of the list and being responsible for only one meeting. But shortly after the list was issued, a sudden change occurred. Instead of being in the middle of the schedule, the Adventists now appeared at the top. Instead of holding one meeting, they were to hold three. Instead of denouncing their foreign missionaries, they were to accuse their Chinese leaders. The reason for these changes, we learned later, was the fear of other denominations of being first. They wanted the Adventists to be the scapegoat, reasoning that our church, with a publishing house in Shanghai and

churches, schools and hospitals scattered all over the country, and being part of a worldwide organization, would be the ideal denomination to lead out in the proposed reforms. This plan received ready support from radicals within our ranks like Nan Hsiang Chien, a typesetter in the publishing house and the chairman of the Press Workers' Union, and Peng Hsien Seng, chairman of the Students' Union. The authorities approved this plan.

Now all attention focused on the Adventists. The government and the Three-Self Movement Committee selected experienced men and women from the YMCA, the YWCA and other Christian organizations to train our students and workers in conducting accusation meetings. By this time, the students from our China Training Institute (C.T.I.) in Chiao Tou Tseng were encamped in the Ningkuo Road compound, the division headquarters. Allied with them were the publishing house workers (who by now had stopped working), former colporteurs and virtually the entire staff of the China Division—all now under the direction and control of specially trained men and women known as the "Accusation Committee." The press compound became emergency headquarters, with press workers guarding the compound entrances and even the doors to the main office building. When we, the accused, went to the office building to be lectured or questioned, we had to show the guards special written permits.

For a couple of months, the entire mornings were spent listening to lectures and collecting information to be used against us and the foreign missionaries. Bulletin boards at the division office and publishing house publicized the crimes and misdeeds allegedly perpetrated by us and the foreigners. Ironically, the workers gathered around these bulletin boards to read the morning news just before meeting in the chapel for worship. At the close of chapel, they went immediately to their rooms to continue gathering information against us.

The accusation meetings were held during August and September 1951. The first one, held at the Range Road Church, was for the China Training Institute; and the students accused David Lin, H. C. Shen and Ho Ping Duan. The second one, held at the church of another

denomination to provide more seating space, was for the Signs Publishing House. The accused were Hsu Hwa, Lee Su Liang and Gia Shou Dz, the superintendent. At these two meetings, the accused brethren were arraigned on the platform like criminals before the bar of justice. The ceremonies opened with Communist songs blaring over radio sets belonging to the Voice of Prophecy, and shouts for punishment and even death for the accused often interrupted the proceedings. At intervals, the audience yelled Communist slogans like "Long live Mao Tse Tung and the Communist Party." Songs especially composed for the occasion ridiculed and made fun of the accused. At the second meeting, the police took precautions to protect the accused from possible bodily harm.

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The third accusation meeting took place in October in a non-Adventist church with a seating capacity of over 3,000. Here the Chinese Adventist leaders were to be arraigned in what was hailed as the biggest affair of the year. Events did not turn out as expected, however, because the accusers feared they might make an unfavorable impression on visitors from other denominations. Instead of accusing all the Chinese leaders, they selected four—Hsu Hwa, David Lin, Lee Su Liang and H. C. Shen—who remained in police custody at division headquarters for their own protection. (We learned afterward of plans to attack the accused, so that the police could intervene and arrest the church leaders.) The Accusation Committee withdrew charges against Chen Ming, Tan Hsin Hsu and me on the basis of insufficient evidence. Ho Ping Duan, Gia Shou Dz and Dr. Paul Lee made public confessions.

Every day, except Saturdays, for almost three months, the accused ministers remained confined to an office of the Signs Publishing House

from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. During this time, they were required to write out confessions about themselves since they were nine years old. The authorities particularly wanted any evidence that might be used against foreign governments or secret agents. Before the close of 1955, millions of Chinese men and women passed through a similar ordeal.

While the four accused brethren were preparing their confessions, the rest of us also were writing about ourselves and our activities. Whenever I was at the office, guards would drop in now and then or watch me through the windows. They searched everything taken out of the building. At night, a guard watched my house, and my wife and I were always shadowed when we went to town. When this farce was over, friendly workers told us of all that had gone on behind our backs, including plots to harm us. Thank God for His intervention on our behalf and for blocking the devilish plans of our enemies.

Those of us in Shanghai fared better than those accused elsewhere. In Hankow, where he was taken from Shanghai, Brother A. F. Tai and another former worker were stripped of their clothes, shoes and socks and made to kneel on the cold cement floor (during winter) while being accused. At the conclusion of the proceedings, they were taken to prison, where they remained for an entire year without trial.

Near the end of October 1951, a special three-day meeting was convened at division headquarters for the purpose of appointing new division officers. Those invited to attend included some publishing house workers, students and a few older ministers. Nan Hsiang Chien, the typesetter, chaired the meeting, run jointly by the government and the Three-Self Movement Committee. Delegates appointed a new division committee composed of several members of the Three-Self Movement Committee, a handful of radical students and publishing house workers, two or three ordained ministers, one woman evangelist and the division office janitor. Nan Hsiang Chien was elected division chairman (president).

The delegates passed several resolutions: to pledge allegiance to the government and the Communist Party, to support the volunteers fighting with the North Koreans, to adopt and promulgate the Three-Self Movement program,

to abolish the China Division Working Policy and to excommunicate the four accused church leaders. At the banquet celebrating the close of the meeting, alcohol, cigarettes and unclean foods were freely served. The new division chairman freely indulged in these things and soon had a goodly number of colleagues at the division headquarters following his example. The practice also spread to other places.

Those attending the meeting condemned strict Sabbath observance and the church's dietary restrictions as the poisonous teachings of the American missionaries, not in harmony with the Bible. This action received the strong support of representatives of the Three-Self Movement Committee. The writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White and Adventist hymnbooks at the publishing house and division headquarters were destroyed. Several of our leading ministers gave up their copies of Mrs. White's books with their allegedly imperialistic and poisonous teachings.

By the time the accusation meetings were over, practically all who had taken an active part in them had given up the truth, and the denomination was split in two. The progressives wanted to throw off all restrictions and adopt the modern outlook on religious matters. The diehards rejected all the new teachings and refused to listen to any politics preached from the pulpit, which the government required. The *old* church members tended to side with the latter group, while many young workers and ministers joined the former group.

Much of what happened might not have occurred had not the authorities brought about 100 C.T.I. students down to Shanghai. These students had begun "reorganizing" the college shortly after a resident government cadre organized a Students' Union. This cadre came down to Shanghai with the students. The most radical student was Peng Hsien Sheng, chairman of the Students' Union. Like many of the radicals, he was the son of an old-time worker and had been dismissed from the college the previous year for misconduct and radical thinking. At the request of a respected missionary and family friend, the school had given him another trial. But he had only used this opportunity to seek vengeance against the school and the China Division.

Shortly after the students arrived in Shanghai, they occupied the offices of the China Division and disrupted a meeting of the division committee. They pasted slogans on the walls calling for a purge of the denomination and a cleansing of the church of all rubbish. "Down with foreign imperialism," "Long live Mao Tse Tung and the Communist Party," they read. The students presented us with a list of demands and then barred the door to the committee room until late in the afternoon, not even letting us out for lunch.

The Division Committee during these days worked under great strain and severe handicaps. Many workers became discouraged as a result of

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insufficient funds to pay salaries, exorbitant taxes and constant government interference. Committee discussions leaked out and were used by workers and students against us. At the last few meetings of the committee, hardly anyone spoke, and the three officers were forced to make almost all decisions. Office personnel grew increasingly restless. Many lost their trust in God and took government positions in exchange for taking part in the accusations. Most of these later abandoned their faith altogether.

Through 1957, the China Division continued to operate with division and union headquarters at their traditional locations. But the unions lost most of their former usefulness. Instead of carrying out division policy, as they once had done, they began taking their orders from the government. Lack of funds restricted travel and made stationery and postage stamps a luxury. The division office itself turned into a mouthpiece of the government and the Three-Self Movement Committee, and contributed nothing toward improving conditions in the church.

Of all the unions, the Central China should have remained the strongest, but today [1957] there remains nothing of which to be proud. The work has gone to pieces and few old-time workers remain. Radical students and workers have wreaked havoc on the field. Dr. Li Tien Hsi lost his life after being accused by the staff of the Wuhan Sanitarium of stealing medicines and supplies and shipping them out to Singapore. He was gagged and shot without ever having a chance to defend himself. Later, when his wife convinced the Peking authorities to investigate the death of her husband, it was discovered that the doctor had been falsely accused. (He had been charged with stealing property several times the combined value of all hospital equipment and supplies!) To compensate for this miscarriage of justice, the government elevated him to the rank of martyr of the revolution, gave his widow a job, and educated his children.

Following the Communist take-over, severe restrictions were imposed on church activities throughout China. Pastoral visits and home Bible studies were prohibited, and in some rural areas church services were banned altogether. However, by the close of 1954, when the turmoil of land reform and purges of counterrevolutionaries were ending, many restrictions were lifted. Services resumed and church workers traveled about freely. By that time self-support, self-administration and self-propagation were firmly established and promoted in the local churches.

For many years, the Communist government was very suspicious of Seventh-day Adventists. Some of our leading workers and students had reported that the church was a secret service organization whose missionaries served as agents of the United States. When Elder Branson moved to Washington, D.C., and assumed the General Conference presidency, it was said that he had gone to the capital to head up the worldwide network of agents and to be close to the State Department. The police eventually made a thorough investigation of all charges against us and concluded that our church was a purely religious organization. The police officer who examined David Lin decided that Brother Lin was not a secret agent but only a very backward fellow who needed to catch up.

And officials of the Bureau of Religious Affairs told Pastor Shan Lo Tien that there was nothing wrong with me, except that I was still pro-American.

Pastors Chen Ming, David Lin and I were the last Adventists called in for police questioning. Between June and December 1956, Brother Chen had four interviews, David Lin more than six, and I nine, each lasting from two to four hours. In addition to our verbal replies, we had to submit written documentation. The interrogators were especially eager to know about my activities in Hong Kong after the liberation and about what went on at division meetings. Practically every Adventist in China was thoroughly questioned, and some were confined for months or even years. My own son was once questioned from 7 p.m. until 2 a.m. about my work and visits to Hong Kong.

After the liberation, the Communist government continued to operate all hospitals, clinics and schools. The denomination was able to retain use of churches, workers' quarters and other essential buildings, but had to turn over all other property to the government. Today [1957] all the fine, large buildings in which the church invested about 40 percent of its funds, and all the missionaries' houses which consumed another 45.3 percent, are in the hands of God's enemies. They stand as a monument to the former wealth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China. The churches and chapels, which represent only 2.3 percent of the denomination's investment, remain in the hands of God's people. These buildings, many in a state of disrepair, stand as a monument to God. What irony!

In January 1951, the China Division had about one-fourth of the year's operating budget available in cash and readily convertible assets. About one-third of these funds was deposited in banks and two-thirds remained in the division office safe, having been placed there at the outbreak of the Korean War in case the banks failed. This proved to be fortunate, because our other assets were frozen by the government.

Much of the cash, however, was diverted to the hundred-odd students who came down from C.T.I. and camped on division grounds. For the six months they remained, we were forced to provide them with food and expenses. Frequently, they spent their allowances on enter-

tainment and propaganda work—and then complained that they did not have enough money for food.

The press workers, after joining the Workers' Union, were a constant source of irritation and trouble. At the close of 1949, they demanded salary increases and a three-month bonus, and a year later they demanded still another raise. The division committee was then in session and appointed several representatives to negotiate with the workers. After wasting two full days, we finally had to agree to their terms, which took another large slice of division funds.

I could write at length about the hardships and suffering of our faithful workers, but will not do so. Their lot can better be imagined than told.

About mid-1952 David Lin, Lee Su Liang and I, together with our wives, formed a small business to make slide rules. We wanted to keep ourselves occupied and make a living. We resolved to employ as many loyal Sabbath-keepers as possible and to assist faithful workers struggling to carry on the work. The Lord prospered our efforts, and we were able to do as we had resolved.

We all agreed that David Lin should spend half his time translating Ellen G. White's "Conflict of the Ages" series, while my wife and I would continue giving Bible studies and visiting English-speaking believers, whose church had been closed in late 1951.

All went well until some of the workers we had befriended reported to the police that our business was a cover for underground missionary activity. Before long, the police were making friendly visits to the house where we worked and asking discreetly why so-and-so was not at his job, etc. When Brother Lin was obliged to quit working, Mrs. Lee and I continued to support him and his assistant Chen Ming in their work of translation. Despite many difficulties, the two men persevered. Several times, the police went straight to David Lin's room and examined all of his writings and books, but they never stopped him or seriously interfered with his work.

The youth of the Central Shanghai Church at Changshu Road actively cooperated in holding Young People's Missionary Volunteer meet-

ings, revivals and youth conventions. Their zeal spread throughout the country, and by 1955 youth meetings were being conducted in all churches. The young people gave Bible studies, conducted Sabbath afternoon meetings, and publicized the translations of Mrs. White's writings in the local churches. Before long, the church members were contributing generously to the publication of these translations in mimeograph form for circulation among believers. The young people worked from early morning till late at night copying the translations and preparing stencils, eager that these works be placed in the hands of members.

Their activities antagonized the officers of the China Division and the East China Union, who asked the Three-Self Movement Committee, the Bureau of Religious Affairs and the police to help stop this work. As a result, all activities at the Changshu Road Church ended and the young men and women were ordered to go home. It was announced that David Lin and his associates would be prosecuted for secretly subsidizing and circulating poisonous matter. Thus, the translation of Mrs. White's books came to a temporary stop. But, just before the police ordered the post office to confiscate all her books, the completed "Conflict of the Ages" series had been mailed out.

Because of his translating work, David Lin was branded the ringleader of the anti-revolutionary clique. When he refused to condemn Mrs. White and her writings as imperialistic and poisonous, he incurred the wrath of the Three-Self Movement Committee, which called him the most dangerous man in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Brother Lin had gone to America for his training and had served on the staff of the YMCA since returning to China.

Just when things looked the darkest and everyone felt that David Lin and others would certainly be arrested, a very influential Christian member of the Three-Self Movement Committee, a bishop of another denomination, arose to defend us. He pointed out to the authorities that there was nothing wrong with Mrs. White's writings and that it was not against the law to translate any book, religious or secular. David Lin's only transgression was that he had circulated his translations through the mail without

first having obtained permission from the authorities. Consequently, the police dropped the case and later returned all confiscated books.

At a recent meeting of the China Division [circa 1957], Pastor Liu Chang Li, superintendent of the Manchurian Union, testified that the authorities in Shanyang had read all of Mrs. White's works and pronounced them excellent. There would be no problem, they said, in circulating her writings in Manchuria. Furthermore, they declared that Seventh-day Adventists, unlike other denominations, had truth that did not change with the times; that is, they still taught and observed what Mrs. White taught years ago.

From the time I joined the work in China in the late 1920s, I heard of plans to have the "Conflict of the Ages" series translated and published in Chinese. Yet *The Great Controversy* was the only book published before the libera-

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tion, and only half of it. Twenty years were spent translating and editing *The Desire of Ages*; but when it finally appeared in Hong Kong in 1956, it was of no benefit to our members on the mainland.

What could not be accomplished in times of prosperity—with men, money, and our own publishing house—was achieved in a time of adversity, hardship and danger. In China today [1957] the ten bound mimeographed volumes of "The Conflict of the Ages" series are in the hands of a limited number of members, and there is a great demand for more copies. According to the testimony of our workers, which I heard before leaving Shanghai, many have found in these books an immense wealth of spiritual food. Had they been available before the liberation, they no doubt would have given our

workers the courage to go through the testing time and would have provided them with much-needed sermon material, which they were forced to obtain from the literature of other denominations.

Why were the "Conflict" volumes never published in Chinese? The answer is very enlightening: "There is no profit to the Publishing House from the publication and sale of these books."

This was the explanation given by an old American missionary to China who once sat on the board of the Signs Publishing House in Shanghai. The loss of our publishing house, with all of its personnel, equipment and stock, was no loss to the cause of God in China.

I close with another question: What literature are we giving our workers and members in colonial lands today?

### III. Years of Heartbreak: Lessons for Mission by A China Insider

by David Lin

About ten years ago, I left the United States and set out with a group of missionaries for China. It was just after the Second World War; I had been away from the China field for about nine years. Like many other recruits, I was young and inexperienced but looked forward to doing great things in the mission field.

The unexpected developments of the following years have been packed with stirring and sometimes heartbreaking experiences. No better statement can be applied to this period of trial than the words, "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house." And true to the words of our Lord, the house that was founded upon the rock fell not, but the house built on sand fell, and "great was the fall of it."

For some time, I have felt that the hard-earned lessons of these years should be shared with others who might face similar situations. It might help them to avoid the mistakes made by others in the past. While it is true that we should never say a word of discouragement, it is equally true that we should never call a mistake a success. A common failing among us has been to lean toward blind optimism and to minimize our own shortcomings. But if we could judge ourselves by what we might have become if we had

fully followed our Lord, we would rend our hearts in repentance.

In the past, much has been written concerning the necessary qualifications of the foreign missionary, such as adaptability, humility and tact. It is, therefore, not necessary to repeat these admonitions. It is my purpose to apply these general qualifications to concrete problems and suggest practical methods which might help to get us out of the rut most of us are in.

On the rising tide of nationalism that has engulfed the colonial world, China was the first great experiment. A people that had long been under the yoke of feudalism and imperialist exploitation asserted their independence and took their rightful place in the family of nations. Other countries followed in China's wake. Hence, what happened to Adventist missions in China could be repeated more or less after the same pattern in other former colonial areas.

We do well to take Paul's principle to heart. When he started to build, he first laid the only sure foundation, "which is Jesus Christ." Perhaps every missionary will claim that he had