

China Accord Draws Varied Church Response

New York (RNS) — President Carter's announced accords with the People's Republic of China were met to a second shoe being stepped for the people of Communist China on Taiwan.

The first shoe, according to David M. Stowe, executive president of the United Church of Christ Board of World Ministries, was in 1972, when President Richard Nixon signed the Shanghai accord pledging to work toward normalization with the Minister Chou En-lai.

Dr. Stowe said the new agreement fulfills his Board's quest one year ago for "full normalization of relations."

The normalization agreement was a "traumatic," but "expected" blow for the Taiwanese, according to Dr. Paul T. Lauby, head of the United Board of Higher Education in Asia.

Dr. Lauby, who just returned from a special emergency theological consultation sponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, said the agreement represented a "surprising concession" for the People's Republic tacitly to allow continued arms sales by the U.S. to Taiwan's 494,000-member force.

Dr. Stowe called the lack of specific reference to arms sales to Taiwan in the joint communique as "creative ambiguity." Dr. Stowe is a veteran of many years as a missionary to mainland China up until and for a few years after the 1949 revolution.

Also welcoming the announcement was Bishop D. Frederick Wirtz, president of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, which has been advocating normalization of relations for some time.

"I was encouraged by what I heard President Carter say," Bishop Wirtz said. "He mentioned recognition of one China. This is a position that holds some promise for the future."

"It identifies Taiwan as being a Chinese problem and one that the Chinese will have to solve. I hope a solution might come in the new year."

Bishop Wirtz said he plans to visit China in February.

The joint communique states that "The United States recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China."

The agreement, which is to go into effect Jan. 1, goes on to state that the "people of the United States will maintain cultural, commercial and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan."

The communique, read by President Carter in a television address Dec. 15, said the two nations will exchange ambassadors and establish embassies on March 1.

Partisan reaction was swift. Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan), called Mr. Carter's move a "cave in" and called for early hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Sen. Dole said as part of any treaty with the People's Republic "it is essential that our defense commitment to Taiwan remain intact and unquestioned." Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), called the move "a cowardly act," and said it "stabs in the back the nation of Taiwan."

About 400 Taiwanese policemen had to fend off hostile demonstrators at the American Embassy during the weekend following the announcement by President Carter and Mainland China's Prime Minister, Hua Kuo-feng.

The 5,000 Americans who live in Taipei were warned to stay in their homes. A wall poster said, "The dignity of China (Taiwan) has been sold out by the foreign devils."

One immediate benefit of the new accord with China will be trade. U.S.-Taiwan trade, more than \$5 billion in 1978, will likely continue after normalization. Added to that

will be a sharp upturn in U.S. trade with mainland China.

The gross national product of China is about \$120 billion, about one tenth of the U.S., and three quarters of its trade is with non-Communist countries.

China's government is officially atheist. Christians make up a tiny minority in the population estimated to number about 900 million persons. There are some three million Roman Catholics — who have been allowed no liaison with the Vatican — and about 700,000 Protestants. Traditional Eastern religions have also been repressed in China, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam and Taoism.

During the Revolution, Mao Tse-tung's forces expelled more than 5,000 foreign missionaries; arrested native clergy and religious; and forced the closing of nearly 4,000 schools, 216 hospitals, nearly 800 dispensaries, 250 orphanages, 30 printing presses and more than fifty periodicals which had been operated by Churches.

The Presbyterian Board of World Missions (Southern) has filed a \$1.7 million claim against China for reimbursement for confiscated land and facilities.

Over the years a number of Church groups have urged U.S. diplomatic recognition of mainland China.

In 1958, the Friends Peace Committee of Philadelphia urged recognition of the People's Republic by the United Nations and the United States.

Also in 1958, a National Council of Churches-sponsored conference reached the conclusion that Peking was the seat of the Chinese government.

In the summer of 1977, Vatican Radio, in multi-language broadcasts, carried an editorial, the gist of which was that the Holy See would be very willing to establish normal diplomatic relations with Communist China, in the hope of improving church-state relations there. China apparently never picked up the overture. Last February, the late Pope Paul VI received the credentials of the new Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Holy See, a move which was seen as dashing immediate hopes for improving relations with mainland China.

In 1971, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) hired a full time staff member based in Hong Kong to be a consultant to the U.S. Church and find "out what ways there are to promote bridges between people, possibly between mainland Chinese and Formosan Chinese, certainly between Americans and Chinese."



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By Ed Sulewski

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