

The Jesus Family in Communist China - Part 6

by Dr. D. Vaughan Rees

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees shares poignant experiences of the Christian community in Communist China, illustrating their struggles and unwavering faith amidst oppression.

Scripture: Psalm 23:4, Isaiah 41:10, Micah 7:5, Philippians 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Persecution", "Divine Intervention"

Description

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees shares harrowing experiences with Communists, highlighting the cruelty and brutality faced by many, including being subjected to horrific methods of execution. He recounts encounters with Communist officials, showcasing the oppressive atmosphere of suspicion and control, where even simple questions could lead to life-threatening situations. Despite the challenges, he witnesses the power of prayer and divine provision, experiencing miraculous interventions that enable his escape from dangerous circumstances.

Transcript

Some Experiences with the Communists We know something about Communism! What hope is there from such a system? Think of the cruelty and brutality of Communism, and the notorious village trials, when mob passion is made the pawn of the judge. An accused person has little hope of anything but death by one of their four methods: being buried alive; being repeatedly dropped from a height of about fifteen feet; being dragged by an arm or a leg by a galloping horse until pulled to pieces; being beaten to death.

This is devilish, but horrible to relate the judges are sincere. What terror to fall into the hands of these callow youths, most of whom are quite uneducated! A district coroner brought me part of a sheep's head and a bone from a sheep's leg, and asked me if these were human remains. He had, he said, a man under suspicion of murder, and these bones were part of the evidence against him. Poor accused! I wondered what was the other part of the evidence and what were the ulterior motives.

The coroner was not convinced by my statements, so I suggested to Dr. Bessie p103 that we show him the illustrations in Cunningham's Anatomy. "I beg of you not to," she said. "He has never seen such a book, and will immediately borrow it, and that is the last we will see of it." Another of these youths corrected my knowledge of Australia, first by making the most outlandish and unbelievable corrections, and then telling me straight out that I was ignorant and didn't know. No series of descriptions of treatment by people who have passed through Communist hands are alike except in this -- that they contradict one

another.

Take a few personal experiences. The China Inland Mission hospital in Kaifeng was treated very reasonably, while the Seventh Day Adventist hospital in a nearby town was looted and burned to the ground. Thus force was used in the one case and gradual infiltration in the other. This infiltration of the C.I.M. hospital was a gradual process, which we were very slow to recognize. In 1948 Mr. Liu the Chinese business manager was taken off for indoctrination. His later report showed that missionary work in China would soon be at an end, but at that time the missionaries were still being treated reasonably.

When Mr. Liu and Elder Kung told us that soon there would not be a missionary left in China, there were very few missionaries who were inclined to believe them. One of our number even said they were maligning the Communists. "I've been in their hands and they are not bad at all," said he. Events have proved them worse than our blackest pessimist predicted. I myself was not badly treated by them -- the Japanese were far worse -- yet others have been beaten to death. Dr. Li, the Chinese medical superintendent of the C.I.M. p104 hospital, and the lady almoner were both taken off for interrogation.

Neither of them fully recovered, and Dr. Li died shortly afterward from treatment received. This was quite simple. Each of them was made to sit in a chair for a month. Effective cruelty! At the end of the time neither of them could walk, and both were dropsical. Terms such as religious liberty, true democracy, women's rights, no censorship, and so on are on everybody's lips and painted on every wall. But China and Russia have never known democracy. They have no conception of what we mean by the freedom of the individual.

The country Chinese accept what is given them; their highest wish is peace and enough food to keep alive. Censorship in our sense is not needed. The atmosphere is so electric with spying, that everyone is on guard. The situation is exactly adumbrated in the Minor Prophets: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the door of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom" (Mic. 7:5). "Religious liberty" is in banner headlines in every village. Yet it would be as much as one's life is worth to attempt to preach.

The words, "True Democracy," are printed everywhere, but there is only one candidate, one party, and one square for your vote. Stalin declared that they alone have true democracy. About July, 1949, I applied for a Communist pass out of China. After four months of anxiety and hope deferred, three secret police came to say that it had been granted. "But we wish first to examine your political opinions. You might, of course, easily be a spy. We want to find out all about you, and so tomorrow three commissars will examine p105 IMAGE

You. You have nothing to fear. You will not be confined, nor detained, but will be allowed back to your friends almost immediately." This, and a lot more like it was said, and I p106 began to get ready for the worst. I did not feel at all like an innocent man on a routine application for a pass. The next day Heng-shin and I set out for the first Communist commissar in a Peking cart, drawn by a beautiful mule. On arrival, we found the youthful commissar and his companions at breakfast.

No bourgeois manners for them! They were all squatting on the floor eating. They took scant notice of me and my companion. When they had finished their leader motioned us to follow him. His office was dressed with a red flag and a high seat for my questioning. The high seat was his! On my left sat three young men on a bed. They were the commissar's assistants; on my right lay a wounded Communist soldier. The commissar first asked what were the relative distances of England and Australia from China.

I had used a hearing aid for some years. I thought it wise to leave this in the cart outside the village. He therefore had to leave his "throne" and shout in my ear. If my answers did not satisfy him, he simply contradicted me and told me I did not know. He did this when I said Australians spoke English, and pitied my ignorance when I said Australia, a continent, did not contain many countries like Asia. I knew that all this was but preliminary jockeying for the right atmosphere.

Suddenly he paused, and I sensed the crisis coming. He came closer and shouted, "Do you love us?" To reply in the negative was impossible; it would probably have cost both our lives. On the other hand, a simple "Yes" was also impossible. I said, "Eh?" Then before he could repeat the question, I said, "Your voice is very hoarse." This produced an unexpected reaction. His three assistants, who had been silent so far, suddenly found their voices. p107 "He is our political speaker, and we are afraid he will lose his voice.

Can you do anything for him, Doctor?" one of them said. I immediately saw this as my way of escape and gave the young commissar the most thorough overhaul possible. After about an hour of my pummeling and questioning -- I went thoroughly into his family history -- he suddenly looked at his watch. "Why our time is gone," he said, "I must write my report, and send you on to the next commissar." I prescribed for him and he was more than satisfied, Then he sat down to write. Not one political question had he asked me.

As China is constituted, there was no difficulty in Heng-shin's looking over the young man's shoulder as he was writing. Heng-shin is a Chinese scholar, the communist wasn't. At first Heng-shin only corrected the commissar's "white characters." A "white character" is a sure sign in China of lack of education; it is one with a similar sound but different meaning. Then later he began to correct the grammar and style. For this the Communist was truly grateful. Suddenly, much to my delight, he handed over pen and paper to Heng-shin.

I noticed that Heng-shin continued with a brush, which few of the modern Communists can use. I was in no way responsible for what he wrote, but his report took me through the next two commissars with scarcely any further questioning. On my arrival in Shanghai, it was almost immediately instrumental in procuring me a pass out of China. The third and last commissar lived in Taian, near the famous Confucian mountain of Tai-shan. When eventually, I stood before him, he took no notice of me, but continued reading a brochure in which he was engrossed. p108 My report was on the table beside him -- apparently he had already read it.

Suddenly he looked up and said to Heng-shin, "This is not what I wanted to know, but for all that it is very interesting. I asked you for a statement of your numbers, your organization, and your distribution, but you have given me a testimony." Heng-shin answered, "Our numbers we do not know. We are growing like the seed planted in the earth, we know not how. Our beliefs and organization are all in this book," and he drew a Bible out of his pocket. "As to our distribution, we stretch all across North China."

The commissar said nothing, but turning to me he apparently recollected that it was with me that he had to do, for he said, "Your pass is granted, and you must leave for Shanghai tomorrow night." "Could I not go to Tientsin?" I said, "Shanghai is blockaded, and it may be impossible to leave China from that port." "Of course, I will give you a pass to Tientsin. On arrival there you will be met by the police, who, on my authority, will give you a pass to Peking. In Peking you will see the chief commissar of all China, who alone can give you a pass on a ship leaving Tientsin.

But you will go to Shanghai tomorrow night." Nonplussed I said again, "But I do not want to go to Shanghai; it is blockaded. I would rather go to Tientsin." "Of course," he replied, and repeated what he had just said word for word, ending as before with, "But you will go to Shanghai tomorrow night." What more adequate method for bewildering one could have been thought of? Logical thought and language itself become useless. For p109 the first time I realized that drugs were not necessary thoroughly to confuse and bamboozle a person.

The commissar went on, "We have prepared a place for you in Jail. You cannot leave the city tonight." This made me really tremble; anyone who has seen a Chinese jail knows why. Another of the remarkable occurrences of that remarkable day then happened. The commissar turned again to his brochure. Some Chinese standing at the door beckoned. Immediately I was in the cart and was soon outside the city gates on the way to Tai-shan. No one was more astounded than I. Why had he allowed me to go?

Every moment I expected to be followed and brought back. Nothing happened, and soon night descended. We took a side track and began to ascend. Lights and lanterns appeared, and on all sides there were shouts and laughter and cries of welcome. We had reached another Home of Jesus, this one on Tai-shan itself. A few years before, on the mountain spur, the Japanese had been preparing gun emplacements for the protection of the railway yards down in the valley. An immense amount of grading, road building, and rock work had been done, and all this fell into the hands of these Christians of this Home Of Jesus.

They had done wonders, and were transforming this wilderness into a paradise. On this mountain they had five establishments, for farming, orchards, dairying, sheepfolds, and piggeries. Never was there a more interesting and delightful place. The chapel of hewn stone was nearing completion. Their stonework was good, and they had abundant supplies "presented" to them by the Japanese! After the anxieties and fatigues of the day, we had the p110 most loving of Christian welcomes.

A bath and change prepared me for such a meal as only rural China can produce, flavours that our "gross and uneducated palates" cannot appreciate, sea foods and fish that we do not know exist. During this love-feast I said to the pastor, "The commissar says that I must leave for Shanghai tomorrow night." "That is unfortunate," he said, "we just happen to be out of money; thus there is none for your ticket." I thought of the beautiful mule that had drawn our cart that day; not long before they had paid \$200.00 gold for it.

I thought to myself that these people must be living literally from hand to mouth. It was so, as the sequel proved. The pastor immediately formed two plans for getting the money. Two train tickets would be necessary, for they were sending Heng-shin with me. By next morning the two plans had come to naught. These were the plans. "Catch the night train," he said to Mr. Ting-shui-chi the treasurer, "go to our brethren in Tsinan: perhaps they can give us the money." Then he said to Mr.

Chow, a deacon, "Go tomorrow morning and ask the commissar for a day of grace." The night train was crowded and Mr. Ting could not buy a ticket. The commissar sneered at Mr. Chow. He would not believe that the foreigner did not have enough money for his train fare, so Mr. Chow reported that there must be no change of plans. "Here's an impasse," I thought. "What will they do now?" I was in their hands and they had assumed full responsibility. What a wonderful position for a missionary to be in!

The pastor's way out of the difficulty was to call us to p111 prayer. There were about twelve Chinese and two foreigners at his prayer meeting, for Miss Syltevik, a Norwegian lady, was staying there at that time. "Can God spread a table in the wilderness? This must prove to be a case of Elijah and the ravens," I

thought. Our little community was isolated on the mountain; not a soul lived near. There could be no expectation or prospect of getting anything. Yes I was very doubtful, and when I went out I looked up into the sky to see if haply there might be ravens about.

Afar off down in the valley I could see the road from Peking and the North, but in these disturbed days there was little traffic on it. I continued my walk in the orchard. About noon I returned and was met by Helen Tso. "We have the money for your two tickets, elder brother," she called out. She introduced me to a young Chinese, whom I had not seen before, and said, "He brought it." As far as I could gather, the story was this. He had left Peking two days before, and on the road below, just out of sight, his bus had broken down.

From below he could see this place as a green patch on the mountain. He wondered what it was and climbed to investigate. "When he saw the chapel and surroundings, he was so impressed that he gave us this, and it is just enough for your two third-class tickets to Shanghai." And that is the story of how I said good-bye to the Ye-Su Chia-ting in Shantung. The train was late and crowded that night. For two days and nights Heng-shin and I sat cooped up and crowded. We dozed and talked, and looked at the passing scene.

Two things we noticed particularly: the crowded closed troop trains, and the myriads of men, women and even children, p112 doing forced labour on the mined bridges and railway lines. This was in November, 1949. Often since I have wondered about those crowded troop trains. Why were they hurrying North? Was Korea in mind even then? That was nine or ten months before the trouble there actually started.

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