

FACTS CONCERNING LILY HSU

Readers of a self-published book by Lily Hsu that accuses Watchman Nee of immoral activities should know the story behind the book. Lily Hsu was a new serving one among the young people in the church in Shanghai in the early 1950s with little direct knowledge of the things she claims as “memories.” When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, one of its strategies to consolidate power was to launch “struggle campaigns” against real and perceived enemies and rivals. Mass rallies, mass media, and trained propagandists were used to stir up hatred toward “class enemies” that were to be eliminated. When sufficient fervency was produced, carefully scripted public accusation meetings and show trials were conducted to precipitate action against the state’s “enemies.” The strategy was successful in breaking down old loyalties, as neighbors, co-workers, and even family members accused one another of disloyalty to and crimes against the state. Millions of ordinary citizens and even party members were falsely accused, imprisoned, and even executed.

In 1951, following the entry of China into the Korean War the previous October, a widespread accusation movement was launched with the aim of expelling all foreign missionaries. Propaganda campaigns consisting of trumped up charges were carried out against these missionaries based on manufactured evidence of heinous crimes, including espionage, rape, and murder. As the missionaries left, the numbers in the local churches in China exploded. In the political mindset of the CCP leaders, this posed a threat, so on April 10, 1952, Watchman Nee was arrested and imprisoned under the guise of claims of financial crimes. Internal government documents show that PRC officials wanted to curb the spread of his work and the increase of the local churches.

In January 1956 the PRC seized the meeting hall of the church in Shanghai and arrested many co-workers and leading ones among the churches throughout China. Concurrently, a large-scale propaganda campaign against Watchman Nee was launched, including mass accusation meetings across the country to condemn “the anti-revolutionary sect of Watchman Nee.” On February 2 *Liberation Daily* published “I Accuse” by Lily Hsu, which began, “Recently the government uncovered the counter-revolutionary group of Watchman Nee which has long been clothed with religion but has undertaken counter-revolutionary activities. My heart is filled with indescribable joy and relief. I would like to thank our government heartily for removing such a great evil for us.” At the time Hsu described the cause of her change of heart: “For several months the officials patiently educated me. I have finally become awake; I abhor them and I will uncover their many ugly counter-revolutionary details. I feel deeply that the counter-revolutionary group of Watchman Nee is not a group of ‘senior brothers and sisters’ but a group of ferocious wolves in sheepskin, chief criminals who were poisoning our young people.” She reveled in their imprisonment, saying, “Now that the government has arrested all the members of this counter-revolutionary group, it is such a satisfying news!” In her book Hsu describes the excruciating pressures exerted upon her to accuse Watchman Nee but skips the shameful substance of her accusations. Her accusations at that time were entirely political in nature and included none of the salacious matters she has later claimed as memories.

Those “memories” originated from a Public Security Bureau exhibition of the evidence of the “criminal activities” of “the counter-revolutionary group of Watchman Nee” on February 8. The exhibition included a handwritten “confession” and Watchman Nee’s name written on illicit materials. These items shook the faith of some members of the churches. At Watchman Nee’s show trial in June, eight church members, including Lily Hsu and Zhang Xikang, joined the accusations. In a 2296-page indictment, the PRC accused Watchman Nee of a litany of crimes. The accusations were absurd: stockpiling weapons to overthrow the

government; dealing drugs; enslaving women as prostitutes; seeking to bomb water and power plants; advising Chiang Kai-shek to drop conches filled with leeches from airplanes into rivers and lakes; assisting in carrying out germ warfare; embezzling billions in public funds; and raping numerous women.

Large parts of Lily Hsu's book are based on the first draft of a memoir by Zhang Xikang. However, after writing that first draft, Zhang examined the "evidence" against Watchman Nee and reversed his earlier assessment. As a manager in Nee's pharmaceutical company and of Nee's personal library, Zhang had personal knowledge of Watchman Nee's handwriting and signature. He recognized that the handwriting on the confession and the "signatures" on the illicit materials were forgeries. Zhang was himself arrested and imprisoned in 1983.

Because of a seeming plethora of televangelist and megachurch pastor scandals, as well as the reprehensible behavior of many high profile members of American society, many are inclined to take accusations of immorality at face value. In the case of allegations emanating from China in the 1950s, this is unwise. Intense pressure can imprint false memories or cause a person to become invested in an accusation that has no basis in fact, and denunciations elicited through coercive tactics are notoriously unreliable methods of establishing truth. The crimes attributed to the missionaries were politically motivated to justify their expulsion. The Chinese government later admitted that three million Party members were falsely accused during the Anti-Rightist Campaign of the late 1950s. The PRC viewed Watchman Nee as a rival for the hearts and minds of the Chinese people and for that reason sought to cut off his influence. To give the PRC's accusations against him credence is to ignore history.