

# Letter to the Editor

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Hong Kong Christians with a missionary spirit might wonder at some of the dazzling ideological juggling now taking place in the Peoples' Republic in relation to Marxism. The *South China Morning Post* recently reported that a leading ideologist, Mr. Yu Guangyuan, wanted to "set the record straight" on some of the basic theoretical questions related to China's economy. According to Mr. Yu, "The theory of planning has been something left for us to invent and create," but the thinking of the 19th Century German philosopher Karl Marx still underlies the economic theory of the Chinese state. My questions about the missionary future of the church in Hong Kong have to do with the response of the average Hong Kong Christian to the possible application of Marxist principles which appear to loom on the 1997 horizon. Is it possible that part of the missionary vocation of the church is to broach these subjects when opportune moments arise?

The questions about Marxism and Christian humanism and their conflicts and convergences were raised with masterful clarity by Arthur McGovern in his article "Marxism and Christianity: On Human Nature and Humanism" in *Tripod*, #18 in 1983. If we Hong Kong "belongers" take McGovern's presentation with the serious attention it deserves, we will be well on the way to a balanced, historical perspective on China's ideological problems. Dr. McGovern in his article demonstrated that much of the Marxian corpus, especially the earlier writings, have much in common with Christian humanism.

I was sufficiently awakened by the McGovern *Tripod* article that I dug out a copy of his *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* (published by Orbis in 1980) to see what light it could shed on recent developments in China. McGovern wrote:

*Almost all foreign observers who have been to China in recent years agree that the average Chinese citizen lives substantially better than at any time before the Communists came to power. Basic human needs have been met. The people are better fed, better educated, better cared for medically.*

But where do we go from here? Are food, clothing and shelter enough? If as Party member Yu Guangyuan says, Marx leaves the actual economic planning up to us, and basic needs have been supplied, what now? Christians should be able to help find the answers to these questions. Peter Neu