



## CONCERN IN CHINA ABOUT ATTEMPTED PAPAL ASSASSINATION

On May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul, at his weekly public audience in St. Peter's Square, was hit by three bullets. The assassination was attempted by a 23-year-old, Turkish extremist. The Holy Father was seriously wounded in the abdomen, causing intestinal lesions. After five and one-half hours of surgery, the bullets were removed from his body. At the time of publication, he is in intensive care at Gemelli Hospital in Rome. He has made satisfactory progress but has not yet passed the danger point.

The assassination attempt shocked the whole world. Numerous messages of sympathy and hopes for his speedy recovery from Arab and Western leaders, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, are abundant testimony to the respect and affection he holds. They were shocked to see how this world has become so savage that it does not respect even this angel of peace sent from heaven.

Ming Pao in its editorial of 13th May stated, "The Pope, soon after his election, through his deeds and speeches, won much love and affection from the people within the church and outside the church. He himself is a Pole. When the political situation of Poland was extremely dangerous and unstable, the Pope not just once showed his sympathy and concern for the desparate situation of his own people. The support of the Holy Father to Poland is one of the reasons that Russia refrains itself from stepping onto Polish soil. We are led to give more affection and respect to him when we think of this issue."

In Hong Kong, Ta Kung Pao and Wen Wei Po reported the news of the attempted assassination in great detail on the front page. It also reported that Chinese Catholics denounce the attempt on the Pope's life as "immoral" and wish him a speedy recovery. Fr. Lawrence Shi Yukun from ~~Nantang~~ Nantang Church in Beijing said, "We agree with the fraternity and charity of Jesus Christ, but we never agree with attempts on life, kidnaps and other deeds of terrorism. We are praying for the Holy Father."

Wen Wei Po remarked that Fr. Shi's comment was the first statement from China after the attempted assassination.

Ta Kung Pao had a very detailed report on the Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Hong Kong, together with some forty priests of the diocese, to pray for the recovery of the Pontiff. These two papers also carried interviews about this tragic event with Sir Murray MacLehose, the Governor of Hong Kong, Bishop Canon Kwong, Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong and Macau, and Rev. Kwok Kwong, leader of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.

Xinhua news service on 14th May reported the news of Western news agencies and included a brief news item on the front page of Renmin Ribao.

The concern and sympathy expressed by the Chinese Catholic Church to the attempted assassination of the Pope, and the detailed reporting and friendly attitude shown by Ta Kung Pao and Wen Wei Po, left-wing newspapers in Hong Kong, make China-watchers think that China is more positive and friendly towards the Vatican, compared with when Pope John Paul made his Manila speech to Chinese Christians. Observers also predict that it is possibly a sign heralding the reconciliation of China and the Vatican.