



News in Brief

CHINA AND THE VATICAN VOICE MUTUAL CONCERN FOR WORLD PEACE

Representatives of both the Vatican and China were in attendance at the Fourth International Conference of Religion and Peace, held in Nairobi, Kenya, during August. Pope John Paul II sent a written statement, stressing human dignity, rights and freedom. Chinese representatives joined with Japanese delegates in proposing that the conference send delegations to all Nuclear Powers to persuade them not only to avoid initiating nuclear war, but also to take serious steps towards total nuclear disarmament.

FIVE ASIAN BISHOPS' TOUR TO CHINA

In late September five Asian bishops met in Hong Kong and visited China where they were given a hospitable reception. The visitors included Indian Archbishop H. D'Souza, General Secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, and the chairman and former chairmen of the Office for Human Development of F.A.B.C., Archbishop Fernandez of Kuala Lumpur, Bishop Mansap of Thailand, Bishop Labayen of the Philippines and Sri Lankan Bishop V. Fernando.

During their journey, they visited the Xujiahui Catholic Church, Sheshan Seminary, Xingjing Township (新涇鄉) in Shanghai, Nanjing Catholic Church, Jinling Union Theological Seminary, Shishi Catholic Church in Guangzhou, and the Protestant Dongshan Church. The bishops called on Bishop Zhang Jiashu (張家樹), Bishop Qian Huimin (錢惠民) and Bishop Ye Yinyun (葉蔭雲). They also met with many other Church leaders.

POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ON THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG

The "Statement on The Catholic Church and the Future of Hong Kong" issued by Bishop J.B. Wu of the Diocese of Hong Kong received positive response locally. The South China Morning Post, Hong Kong's leading English language daily, in an editorial entitled "A Servant of the

Community" praised the social contributions made by Hong Kong Catholics. An editorial in the Wen Wei Po hailed the statement as a welcomed "spiritual encouragement for all religions." It also mentioned that at a time when the issue of 1997 is to be settled, the sincere cooperation of all religions is very important in maintaining Hong Kong's stability and prosperity.

The statement also won warm support from within the Catholic Church. Mr. John K.L. Wong, President of The Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity, commented that the statement was issued at the proper time, and the Bishop clearly identified the concerns and reflected the thoughts of Hong Kong Chinese Catholics facing 1997.

Luke S.K. Wong, Chairman of the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, said the statement offered the diocese a clear direction for concrete action. Archbishop Lokuang, Chairman of the Taiwan Bishops' Conference has also sent a letter to Bishop Wu praising his stand on freedom of religion.

RT. REV. LAM ATTENDS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

The Rt. Rev. Gabriel Lam, Vicar General of the Hong Kong Diocese, attended China's 35th National Day celebration at the invitation of the Chinese Government. Fr. Lam was one of seven religious leaders invited. Other well-known religious leaders who also attended the celebration included Bishop Peter Kwong of Hong Kong Anglican Church, Pastor Kwok Nai Wang of the Hong Kong Christian Association and Rt. Rev. Domingo Lam, Vicar General of the Macau Catholic Diocese.

The invitation, given by the local office of the New China News Agency, was originally for Bishop J.B. Wu, but his previous commitment to attend the Missionary Pastoral Meeting held in Rome made his northward trip impossible. N.C.N.A. then requested Rt. Rev. Gabriel Lam's presence in Bishop Wu's place.

Fr. Lam returned to Hong Kong on the October 4th. He reported that the leaders of the State Council and Bureau of Religious Affairs had shown the greatest courtesy and hospitality, and it was an opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue with the Chinese leaders.

GUARANTEED FREEDOM OF RELIGION FOR HONG KONG

A Hong Kong Protestant delegation led by Bishop Peter Kwong visited Beijing in September and was received by Ji Pengfei, Director of the

Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. Ji reiterated the Chinese government's guarantee of freedom of religion for Hong Kong after 1997.

Ji stressed that churches in Hong Kong shall exchange as equals with churches in China, will continue to administer their own church and will not be subject to rule by mainland churches. After 1997, both Non-Chinese and Chinese Christians in Hong Kong will be able to continue their foreign contacts and maintain international relationships.

No local Bureau of Religious Affairs or institutes of such a nature will be established in Hong Kong.

During the meeting, the Acting Director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, Ying Wuji, was also present.

XIAN CATHOLIC SEMINARY UNDER PREPARATION

A new Catholic Seminary will be opened in Xian to serve the needs of Shanxi, Gansu and Qinghai Provinces, as well as Ningxia and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions.

Candidates must be over 18, be high school graduates, and pass the entrance examination. They are expected to be patriotic, willing to dedicate their lives to the priesthood, and have a sound knowledge of Catholicism.

The seminary will enroll about 80 students. During their four-year training, seminarians will take courses in religion and culture. Lecturers will be recruited from priests and lay college lecturers working in Northwest China.

Bishop Ji Huairang (姬懷讓) of Xian Diocese, is in charge of the preparatory work. Expenditures for construction of the seminary will be covered partly by donations from local Catholics. The Central and local government will also provide financial support.

THE THREE-SELF MOVEMENT CELEBRATES 30th ANNIVERSARY

The Chinese National Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee celebrated its 30th Anniversary in early August. A tea party, held in the National Cultural Palace in Beijing, was hosted by Bishop Ding Guangxun, President of the Committee. Yang Jingren, Director of United Front was in attendance to offer his congratulations. Yang also urged Christians in China to keep close contact with their foreign co-religionists.

The celebration also marked the publication of the first Miao language (苗文) translation of the Gospels. It will be used by Miao minority Christians throughout Southwest China.

19 NEW PASTORS ORDAINED IN GUANGZHOU

Guangdong Protestants reaped a rich harvest on the 16th of September when 19 Protestant ministers were ordained at the Dongshan Church, Guangzhou.

The new pastors come from Hainan, Shantou, Mei Xian, Dongguan and Xinhui. Two are women. Officiating at the ordination was Pastor Xiong Zhenpei (熊眞沛). Over a thousand Christians attended the ordination ceremony.

THE DEATH OF DR. JIANG WENHAN

Dr. Jiang Wenhan, Vice-President of the Chinese Christian Council, died in Shanghai on September 7.

Dr. Jiang was also the Associate General Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association and special research fellow of the Institute for Historical Research in Shanghai's Academy of Social Sciences. He had published many influential works including a book on Christianity in Ancient China and the Kaifeng Jews. At the time of his death, he was working on his latest book, a research study of Protestantism in China during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

NINGXIA CHAIRMAN MEETS WITH HONG KONG MUSLIMS

The chairman of China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Haji Hussein B.L. Hei, leading a delegation of 7, visited Hong Kong in mid-August to promote and improve economic and religious ties between Ningxia and Hong Kong.

The delegation held meetings with Hong Kong's Islamic Association and visited the Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre. Mr. Hei donated ten thousand dollars and a hand-woven carpet to the new mosque where he attended a worship service together with Mr. Wilson Tuet, leader of the Hong Kong Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association.

Mr. Hei mentioned that there were about 1.3 million Muslims and some 1,420 mosques in Ningxia, and that the Muslims enjoyed freedom of religion there.

QINGHAI PAYS TEN MILLION FOR COMPENSATION

Qinghai Provincial Government has budgeted RMB¥10 million to be used for "Cultural Revolution Compensation". Half of this sum will be used to restore damaged monasteries and temples and compensate for loss of property.

On the other hand, the self-support policy encouraged by Lamaist monks in Qinghai has met with a certain amount of success. The monasteries of Dequan, Longwu, Zhizha, Xiaqun and Gongba in Qinghai have become economically self-sufficient by operating clinics, managing estate properties, farming and raising livestock.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS APPOINTED TO CONGRESSIONAL POSTS IN TIBET

Tibet's sole woman Buddha, Samding Dojepamo, and the well-known Lamaist, Lhunzhub Tabkyai, have been elected as Vice-Chairpersons of the Standing Committee of the Autonomous Region People's Congress.

Samding Dojepamo, who is 43 years old, was born in Nino County, Tibet, and has been recognized as a Buddha since her early childhood. Since 1965, she has held important positions in the Buddhist Association of Tibet, as well as nationally.

Lhunzhub Tabkyai, aged 77, was born in Molin County in Tibet. He received his vocation when still quite young. Having attained the highest academic status possible for a Buddhist of the Yellow-Sect, he was appointed as head of Sela Temple at the age of 47. Since 1956, he has played a leading part in the Tibet Autonomous Region government and the Buddhist Association of Tibet.

DEATH OF LI WEIHAN

Veteran theoretician of the Chinese Communist's United Front Li Weihan, died in Beijing in August. Mr. Li was 88 years of age.

In 1918, Mr. Li along with Mao Zedung and Cai Hesen formed the New People's Society. He returned from studies in France and joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1922, when it had just been established. He held various important Party posts throughout the following decades and had great influence in shaping the Party's religious policy. However, during the Cultural Revolution he was branded a counter-revolutionary and dismissed from all his positions. In 1978, he was reinstated and returned to work.

MASTER MA ZHENWU REINSTATED

The Ningxia Hui Nationality Committee of the Communist Party announced recently that former Muslim leader, Ma Zhenwu has been reinstated. In 1920, Ma became the eighth grand master of the North-West Chinese Islamic Community. In 1958, he was charged with being a rightist and "using religion" as a cover for "organizing rebellion". The local Committee of the Communist Party recently re-examined the charges and found them to be groundless.

CARDINAL SIN ON THE WAY TO CHINA

Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, is going to China in late October at the invitation of the Chinese People's Association For Friendship with Foreign Countries.

Sin's ten-day trip will cover Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjung, Xiamen (Amoy), and some rural areas if he wishes to visit Catholics there. Although his trip is private and not public, Sin is expected to meet and informally exchange ideas with political and religious leaders in China on "issues of common interest."

Sin's father was born in Xiamen, Fujian, and later emigrated to the Phillipines where he married a Filipino, Sin's mother. Sin had once gone to Xiamen in his early childhood, but this time, his visit will be seen as "an important milestone in Sino-Philippine relations."

INSTITUTE FOR CHINESE-WESTERN CULTURAL HISTORY

The Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, opened on August 29th. Sponsored by the California Province of the Society of Jesus and affiliated with the University of San Francisco, it is an independent, non-profit corporation, specializing in the history of cultural relations between China and the West. Father E.J. Malatesta, S.J., is its first director. Initially, the institute will concentrate on publishing studies concerning cross-cultural contact up to the period of the Chinese revolution of 1911.

The Institute is chartered to promote contact among specialists in the field by sharing information; favoring scholarly exchange through seminars, panel discussions, and symposia; and serving the wider community by way of public lectures, special courses and exhibits.