

China Church Update

Study Seminar for Religious Personnel from Northern Provinces

A study seminar for Chinese Catholic religious personnel from the northern provinces was held in Shunyi county outside of Beijing from November 15-30, 1990. There were 61 participants: 26 bishops, 15 priests, 6 lay persons, and 14 government officials. The seminar was organized principally for the religious personnel of the seven northeast and northwest provinces of China. During the seminar Zhang Shengzuo, deputy director of the Party's United Front Work Department, stressed the following four points:

1) The revolution against communism in Eastern Europe can never happen in China because the situation in China is completely different from that of Eastern Europe.

2) The Church in China must stand firm in its position of being an independent, autonomous and self-governing Church.

3) The government's policy on religious freedom must be implemented.

4) A way must be found to educate underground Church personnel to make them change their thinking and join the Official Church.

Government Officials Attend National Meeting on Religious Policy

A national meeting concerning religious policy, attended by 200 government officials responsible for religious affairs, was held in Zhongnanhai, Beijing, from December 5-9, 1990. The purpose of the meeting was to review and to consolidate the Party Central Committee's 1982 Document Number 19, *The Basic Position on and Policy toward the Religious Problem during the Socialist Period in our Country*. The document was studied (1) because some government officials had not understood the document's spirit even though the document had been in existence for 9 years and (2) to correct the phenomenon of infringement of religious rights of citizens and the legal rights of religious bodies.

Some Church leaders expressed hope that the meeting would enable the government's religious affairs officials to reopen more churches and restore Church properties at a quicker pace.

Premier Li Peng addressed the officials assembled at this national meeting. Three points were emphasized: 1) Party leadership must be retained; 2) Infiltration by "foreign hostile powers in church affairs" must be resisted; 3) Leadership within the Church must be strengthened.

Communist Party Secretary General Meets with Top Religious Leaders

On January 30, 1991, Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin met with top leaders of China's five religious bodies; viz., Mr. Zhao Puchu, Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association; Bishop K.H. Ting, Chairman of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Movement and President of the China Christian Council; Bishop Zong Huaide, Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and Acting President of the Chinese Bishops' Conference; Mr. Li Yuhang, Chairman of the Chinese Taoist Association and Imam Shen Xiayi, Chairman of the Chinese Muslim Association.

Jiang Zemin said the government wanted to reinforce the implementation of the laws, regulations and policy on religion; to protect normal religious activity and the rights of religious groups. He also said religious bodies must be on guard against illegal elements using religion or religious activities to create disorder and foreign hostile forces from using religion for purposes of infiltration and subversion within China.

He said stronger administration and supervision over the implementation of the policy of religious freedom did not mean that the government had tightened its policy toward religion or that religious freedom would be affected.

He commended the religious leaders for their patriotic support and the participation of religious bodies in building up a socialism with Chinese characteristics, upholding the principle of autonomy and independence.

Also present at the meeting were Mr. Ding Guangen, Director of the United Front Work Department and Vice-Director, Zhang Shengzuo; the Communist Party Standing Committee Vice-Director, Jiang Minkuan and the Religious Affairs Bureau Director, Ren Wuzhi.

Statistics

According to Zhu Shichang, General Secretary of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, there are presently more than 3000 churches in China conducting religious activities; there are also 12 major seminaries and more than 30 Sisters' formation centres. In

Shanghai alone more than 40 Catholic Churches are now opened for worship.

In 1990, 4 bishops from the "Official Church" died. They were Bishop Chen Duqing of Nanchang, Jiangxi, 1990-8-25; Bishop Paul Deng Zizhou of Leshan, Sichuan, 1990-8-10; Bishop Wu Guohuan, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, 1990-1-3; Bishop Joseph Ye Yinyun, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 1990-3-13.

1990 also witnessed the ordination of seven new bishops bringing the number of bishops in the "Official Church" to 64. Six bishops consecrated by Pius XII are still alive although two are no longer living in China. There were also at least 75 ordinations to the priesthood.

Women Religious

After their profession 20 Novices now studying in Dangshan county, Anhui Province, will be assigned to several dioceses according to the church's needs.

On December 8, 1990, 11 young women made their religious profession in Bengbu. Two are presently working in Wuhu Diocese, Anhui Province; 2 at the Wuhu Church and 2 have been assigned to the famous pilgrimage shrine at Shuidong Church.

Recent Arrests

Around Christmas 1990, approximately 30 Catholics including bishops, priests and laity were arrested in Hebei Province. Father Han Dingxiang of Handan and Bishop Paul Shi Chunjie, Auxiliary bishop of Baoding were among them. Bishop Chen Jianzhang, bishop of Baoding, also "disappeared" in mid-December. Bishop Chen, who has been in a wheelchair for years, was ordained bishop in 1982.

Church Property to be Returned

The authorities in Youtong, Hebei Province, have promised to return 5 acres of church property and provide 150,000 rmb to build a new church for local Catholics. The church will have a seating capacity of 1600. The original church property site was 13 acres in size.

Injuries and even deaths, occurred among the Catholic community in Youtong in April 1989 when security personnel attacked them for occupying the site of their former church which is now used as a school.

Third Centenary of Beijing, Nanjing Dioceses

The 300th anniversary of the establishment of the Beijing and Nanjing Dioceses passed without any special celebrations by the dioceses themselves. The Editorial Board of the Catholic Church in Beijing, however, published a pictorial book depicting various church activities. 10,000 copies were printed. The Vatican marked the anniversary with special commemorative stamps.

Hong Kong Priests Study Church in China

Approximately 100 priests gathered at Holy Spirit Seminary from January 7-11 to study the situation of the Catholic Church in mainland China today. The daily participation of Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung, bishop of Hong Kong, in the seminar manifested both his interest and support. The importance of reconciliation in the Church in China was stressed throughout the sessions.

New Catholic Church Opened in Nanhai

Delegations from Macau, Hong Kong and Guangzhou attended the blessing of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Lutang, a farming village in Nanhai county, Jiangmen Diocese, Guangdong Province. Approximately 400 people crowded into the small new church and outer court to participate in the Latin liturgy presided over by Bishop Li Panshi, Bishop of Jiangmen Diocese.

The pastor, Father Ye Yaomin, is a native of Nanhai City. Father Ye was born in 1913 and educated in the South China Regional Seminary, Hong Kong. He was ordained in 1945 in Guangzhou. Arrested in 1953, Father Ye spent more than 20 years in a labour camp in Qinghai, western China.

Hong Kong Priest Detained

On January 23, Father Louis Ha Ke-loon, director of the Hong Kong Catholic Social Communications Office and editor of the diocesan Catholic weekly, *Kung Kao Po*, was detained in Beijing for approximately four hours by Chinese Security personnel. Father Ha was concerned about the trials of the leaders of the pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Bishop's Ordination

On February 2, 1991 Xiamen born Father Joseph Cheng, 58, was ordained bishop on Taiwan by Bishop Paul Cheng. Bishop Joseph will replace Bishop Paul as ordinary of the Tainan Diocese. The Vatican has accepted Bishop Paul Cheng's request for retirement.



Youtong, Hebei Province, where members of the Catholic community were attacked by security personnel for occupying the site of their former church.