

China Church Update

Major Events in the Church in China, 1991

Government Conferences Related to Religious Activities

--General Secretary Jiang Zemin met with top leaders of China's five religious bodies on January 30, 1991 to reinforce the need to implement the laws, regulations and policies governing the freedom of religious belief. During the week following this meeting, Document 6 was issued (cf. *Tripod*, p.17).

--Twenty-three bishops and 17 priests of Southern China met in Beijing at the government's request, from April 24 to May 10 to study the government's religious policy, the condition of religion in the country and trends in religion throughout the world. The meeting was similar to the one held for Northern bishops in November 1990.

--A survey conducted by the Religious Affairs Bureau revealed that approximately 70% of Catholic and Protestant church activities take place "outside of government guidance". This was announced at the above mentioned conferences for the northern and southern bishops and other church leaders. The Bureau of Religious Affairs attributes this to the lack of information and knowledge on the part of the cadres in the departments concerned with religious matters.

There were also a number of provincial conferences regarding religious work:

--Henan Conference on United Front and Religious Work, held in Zhengzhou, March 17, 1991

--Sichuan Conference on Religious work, March 19, 1991

--Shandong Meeting on Religious work, March 20, 1991

--Heilongjiang Religious Work Conference, April 15, 1991

--Qinghai Conference on Religious Work, June 11, 1991

Government Documents Related to Religious Activities

The government of China published several significant documents during the year:

-- *A Circular from Party Central and The State Council Concerning Certain Problems in Further Improving Religious Work*, in February (cf. *Tripod*, p. 17 for entire document),

--*White Paper on Human Rights in China* in November 1991 (cf. Editorial of this issue of *Tripod* for commentary).

--*Vigilance Against Infiltration by Religious Forces from Abroad*, March 1991

Bishops Elected/Consecrated during 1991

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Zheng Shouduo, | Bishop of Jianzhou, | Shanxi Province |
| Sun Yuanmo, | Aux. Bishop of Hongdong, | Shanxi Province |
| Huo Cheng, | Bishop of Fenyang, | Shanxi Province |
| Wang Yutian, | Bishop of Yuci, | Shanxi Province |
| Zheng Changcheng | Bishop of Fuzhou, | Fujian Province |
| Xie Chaogang, | Bishop of Xichang, | Sichuan Province |
| Wang Zhenyi, | Bishop of Yanan, | Shaanxi Province. |

Death of Three Bishops

--Bishop Joseph Huang Ziyu, 80, died in his native village, Fujian Province, April 8, 1991. He had been Bishop of the Diocese of Xiamen, Fujian Province.

--Bishop Li Depei, 90, elected bishop of Tianjin by the CCPA in 1958 and consecrated in 1963, died in Beijing in August, 1991.

--Bishop Shi Chunjie, Auxiliary bishop of Baoding, Hebei Province, November 1991.

Seminaries Opened or Expanded

--National Seminary of Philosophy and Theology, new location: Haidan district, Beijing.

--Xian Regional Seminary, Shaanxi Province, new building and location behind the North Church, and adjacent to the historical city hall.

--Fuzhou Minor Seminary, raised to level of provincial seminary, Fujian Province.

--Guangzhou Minor Seminary, located in Sacristy, formerly occupied by the Sisters during the building of their new convent, on grounds of Sacred Heart Cathedral, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province.

--Anhui Minor Seminary, opened in September on grounds of Bengbu Cathedral, Anhui Province.

Church Related Statistics: December 1991, and General Information

The following statistics have been taken from a variety of sources and are as accurate as can be obtained at this time.

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|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Number of Catholics in China | 3,600,000 |
| Number of Churches | 3000 |
| Number of National Seminaries | 1 |
| Number of Regional Seminaries | 5 |
| Number of Provincial Seminaries | 8 |
| Number of Diocesan Seminaries | 7 |
| Number of Priests | 1000 |
| Number of Sisters | 1200 |
| Number of Seminarians | 800 |
| Number of Sisters in Formation | 1000 |
| Number of Ordinations in 1991 | 106 |

Regarding the Number of Priests:

The following information regarding the number of priests in the future is taken from *Catholic Church in China*, Issue #4, 1991, p. 23-29, published in Beijing by the Catholic Patriotic Church Association's Administrative Committee.

1. The 1000 refers to priests within the open church. The number in the underground church is not known. The average age of more than 800 of the total is 71.

2. It is estimated that by 1997 only 300 of the present 800 will still be alive.

3. It is estimated that, because of space and other factors, it will be possible to ordain only 400 seminarians in all seminaries combined in the next 6 years.

According to an article entitled, *Opinion on the Work of Seminaries* by Lin Ke, published in the same issue of *The Catholic Church in China*, the priority in seminary education should be the formation of a correct ideological and political orientation. Political indoctrination should be combined with the teaching of patriotism, modern Chinese history, the history of missions, antibourgeois liberalization, and must not be subordinated to training in spirituality.

Arrests and Releases

There have been numerous arrests of religious personnel during the past year. These have been mostly within the underground church. Some of those arrested have been imprisoned; others have been placed under administrative detention and still others, under police surveillance and/or house arrest. There have also been a number of releases. We list here the names of those who have been released from prison or administrative detention during the past year.

--Joseph Fan Zhongliang, 73, clandestine bishop of Shanghai. Bishop Fan was arrested on 11 June, 1991, while on his way to Wenzhou, Zhejiang. He was released on August 19. He is living in Shanghai.

--John Yang Shudao, bishop of Fuzhou, Fujian Province. Bishop Yang was released from 3 years of detention in February 1991. He remains under surveillance.

--Wang Ruoshan, priest and brother of the Bishop Wang Milu of Tianshui, was released recently. He was arrested because of his involvement with the establishing of the ECCB (Episcopal Conference of Catholic Bishops) in November 1989. His movements are still restricted.

--Wang Ruowang, another brother of Bishop Wang Milu, imprisoned in Pingliang, Gansu Province, for "illegal religious activities" and taking part in the events that resulted in the founding of the ECCB, was also recently released.

--John Baptist Liang Xisheng, 68 clandestine bishop of Kaifeng Diocese, Henan Province. Arrested in 1990 and accused of illegal religious activities, he was released in February 1991.

--Stephen Li Side, clandestine bishop of Tianjin, was arrested on 9 December, 1989 and released in June 1991. Since July, 1991, he has been allowed to celebrate Mass publicly, but remains under surveillance.

--James Xie Shiguang, 74, bishop of Fuan Diocese, Fujian was arrested on 27 July 1990. Bishop Xie was released in March 1991 and is restricted to his own village,

--Vincent Huang Shoucheng, bishop of Fuan Diocese was arrested on 27 July, 1990 with 2 deacons who were soon released. Bishop Huang returned to his village in March 1991.

He remains under surveillance and is restricted in his movements.

Other People and Events that Made News in 1991

--The Beijing and Nanjing dioceses celebrated their 300th anniversary. The Vatican marked the occasion with a special commemorative stamp.

--Bishop Gong Pinmei, bishop of Shanghai, now in residence in the United States, received the red hat in Rome on June 28, 1991. He had been made a "secret cardinal" in 1979.

--Wang Mingdao, prominent and revered Protestant evangelist, died on July 28, 1991 in Shanghai. Wang had spent 22 years in prison before being finally released in 1979.

*The "unity"
which we emphasize
does not mean "conformity" or "unification".
The "post-denominational" nature
which we emphasize
does not deny or obliterate
the traditions and backgrounds
which have formed in each
Christian denomination over the last 400 years.
(Taken from Wang Weifan.)*
