

China Update

A Review of Significant Events

December 1992-1993

Some Important Events: China 1993

Eighth National People's Congress Elects Top Leaders and Amends Constitution

On Saturday, March 27, the deputies to the Eighth National People's Congress gathered in the Great Hall of the People to elect its country's top leaders. Jiang Zemin, 67, was elected state president; Rong Yiren, 77, state vice-president. Their term of office is five years and they cannot serve more than two consecutive terms. Qiao Shi, 69, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Political Bureau was elected chairman of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress; Li Peng, 59, was re-elected as China's top administrator; Li Ruihuan was elected chairman of the Eighth National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Ren Jianxin, 68, was elected president of the Supreme People's Court; Zhang Siqing, 60, procurator of the Supreme People's Procuratorate of China. The Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress elected vice-premier Zhu Rongji, 64, governor of the People's Bank of China on July 2. This move is seen as needed to tighten control over the country's money market. Zhu is regarded as an economic wizard.

In an overwhelming majority vote, the members of the Eighth National People's Congress, March 15-31, amended China's Constitution to include a socialist market economy. From the new amendment it is clear that China wants to strengthen economic legislation by emphasizing the function of law rather than administrative regulations.

Youth Encouraged to Play Active Role in Market Economy

The 13th Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League was held in Beijing, May 3. According to the Beijing Review, (May 17-23, 1993) there were 1420 representatives elected from the membership of 56 million. The youth were urged to play a more active role in building China's new market-oriented economy.

China Adjusts Eighth Five-Year Plan

The 14th Central Committee of the Communist Party held its second plenary session in Beijing, March 5-7. Adjustments were made to the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1991-95) in view of reforming

the Party and government institutions. Reforms are needed in political development, to deepen economic reforms, accelerate modernization and accommodate the new market economy.

State Documents, 1993

The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China, (August 31, 1993).

The Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China,

Notice on Preventing RAB from Printing Christian Calendars, National Document, No. 180 (93) published by the State Council Religious Affairs Bureau.

Introducing Foreign Experts to China, published by the State Bureau of Foreign Experts (October 1993).

China Releases Some Famous Political Prisoners

Besides releasing many religious prisoners, China, during the course of 1993, also released a number of political prisoners. The best-known are listed below:

Xu Wenli, who served 12 years of his 15 year prison term for setting up an illegal organization, was released on parole on May 26.

The Beijing and Zhaoqing People's Court, on January 30 and February 3 respectively paroled Gao Shan, an official of the Political Reform Research Center of the Party Central Committee, sentenced to four years in prison in 1989 for betrayal of State secrets; and Wang Xizhe, sentenced to 14 years for subversion in 1982.

Wang Dan, 23, and Guo Haifeng, 27, sentenced to four years imprisonment for their role in the Tianamen incident, and the last two students still in prison were released early in the year by the Intermediate People's Courts of Beijing and Kaifeng.

Li Guiren, 49, former deputy editor-in-chief of Huayue Publishing House, Shaanxi Province, arrested in May 1989 for inciting anti-government disturbances, was released for medical treatment. Li had suffered a heart attack.

Wei Jingsheng, 43, China's best known and longest-serving political dissident, was freed on September 14 after having served 14 and one half years of his 15-year sentence. Wei was arrested in 1979 for having "spread counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement and given military secrets" to a foreign reporter.

China Refuses Entry to One of Its Own

After spending 22 months in prison, Han Dongfang, who organized China's first free trade union during the 1989 demonstrations, was allowed to go to the United States for medical treatment. While in prison Han had contracted a rare form of tuberculosis. Han was expelled from China on August 13 on the day following his arrival from the United States. On August 21, the Chinese government canceled his passport leaving him virtually stateless. Every effort to return home so far has been thwarted by China's authorities. Han says he will keep trying. While in the States Han became a Christian. He said, "I prayed every day, hoping that Jesus Christ will always be with me to help me face difficult situations. I want to be able to handle them calmly." There has been an international outcry, but as of now, Han remains in Hong Kong wondering what to do next.

China's Vice-President Dies

Wang Zhen, 85, one of the Chinese Communist Party's "Eight Immortals" died of cancer on March 12 in Quanzhou. He was first elected Vice-President in April 1988.

Of the "Eight Immortals" six are still alive. They are Chen Yun, Peng Zhen, Bo Yibo, Song Renqiong, all in poor health and Deng Xiaoping and Yang Shangkun. Li Xiannian died last year.

The Dalai Lama Invited to Beijing

On August 25, apparently in an effort to win the Olympic bid, a high level functionary of the Foreign Affairs Bureau officially extended an invitation to the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet for negotiations. The independence of Tibet, however, was not a negotiable item. The Dalai Lama refused saying that while there were pre-conditions set for the negotiations, he could not accept the invitation.

Thailand's Buddhist Patriarch Visits China

The patriarch of Thailand's Buddhism, Somdet Phra Nyanamsavara, arrived in Beijing on June 1993. He was welcomed by hundreds of Chinese monks. This was the first visit of the patriarch to China. A ceremony was held in the Guangji temple in Beijing where the monks prayed for world peace. After the ceremony, Zhao Puchu, president of the Chinese Buddhist Association, met with the Thailand patriarch. This visit was a first in the history of relations between Chinese and Thai Buddhists.

The Chinese Buddhist community numbers approximately 100 million members and is less strictly controlled by the government than the Christian churches.

Resumption of direct Mail Service

China and Taiwan resumed direct mutual mail service on June 1, 1993, after a hiatus of more than 40 years.

China Relaxes Regulations on Studying Abroad

In mid-May 1993 the government of China announced that it was relaxing its June 4, 1989 regulation prohibiting college graduates from leaving China within five years of graduation. However, every student planning to leave China within five years of graduation must pay the government 2500 RMB, equivalent to five year's wages. In September, the government also abolished its one year required military training for students entering Beijing University.

China and the Games

Shanghai hosted the East-Asian Games from May 8-18. The Chinese delegation topped the score list with 105 gold, 74 silver and 34 bronze medals.

The International Olympic Committee which met in Monte Carlo, on September 23, to vote on the site for the 2000 Olympics chose Sydney over Beijing. Beijing could not hide its disappointment but it is ready to try again on the next round.

China Undertakes Ambitious Construction Projects

With the construction of the Yangtze River Three Gorges water-control project, China is undertaking the largest such project in the world. It is estimated at least one million people will be displaced. Environmentalists are also critical of the eventual ecological effects of the enterprise.

In a joint endeavor between China and Hong Kong, work has begun on the 52 km-long bridge linking the bank of the Pearl River to the bank of the South China Sea. This is in view of accelerating transportation and the economy between Zhuhai, the west bank of the Pearl River and Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

China Names Top Cities

The following have been selected as China's top cities: Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Nanjing, Wuhan, Shenzhen, Dalian, Shenyang and Xiamen rank as the first ten.. The next five are Chengdu, Hangzhou, Harbin, Kunming and Suzhou.

China has five Special Economic Zones which serve the country as windows to the outside world. They are all located in China's

southern coastal areas. They are Hainan Island, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen. All were set up in 1980.

Statistical Data

China feeds 21.8% of the world's population on 6.8% of the world's cultivated land. The population grows at the rate of 1.4% per year and the land under cultivation shrinks by 0.5% *Wide Angle*, October 1993, p. 64).

According to the SRG SGR (The Survey Research Group) *Researching the Chinese Consumer*:

- * Shell plans to invest US\$2.6 billion in Southern China.
- * Gillette is expanding its blade market by 1 billion per year.
- * Within the next 18 years Yaohan (Japanese department store) will open 1,000 supermarkets.
- * Within the next 5 years Cafe de Coral plans to open 50 outlets in China.
- * Every year, in spite of the One Child policy, the number of births is equivalent to the entire population of Canada.

Most people in China earn less than US\$100 per month.

China's GNP is US\$300 per capita, but in many cities the GNP is in excess of US\$1000 and in some cities in the South, e.g. Foshan, Shunde, Shenzhen and Jiangmen, all in Guangdong, it is in excess of US\$4000.

While rent accounts for only 0.7% of the worker's income, cigarettes and liquor account of 6.0% or nine times the rent.

Changes in Consumer expectations: In the 70s the "3 bigs" were a bicycle, sewing machine and an electric fan; in the 80s: a TV, washing machine and a refrigerator and in the 90s: a VCR, motor cycle and telephone.

Japanese brands dominate the audio visual electronics and office equipment markets. In colour films Kodak and Fuji lead the market.

Hong Kongers Leave and Return to the Territory

With the end of Britain's colonial presence in Hong Kong in 1997, many of Hong Kong's residents, uncertain about the future, have chosen to leave the colony. Since 1989 over 200,000 people have emigrated to other countries. Most of them are between the ages of 30 and 40. The unfavorable economic conditions abroad, however, have now given immigrants second thoughts. It is estimated that approximately 15% are now returning to the territory.

The Church in China: 1993, A Review

Church Related Statistics

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| Number of Catholics (est.) | 10,000,000 |
| Number of converts (yearly, more than) | 50,000 |
| Number of Churches/Chapels | 4000 |
| Number of Seminaries | 38 |
| Major Seminaries | 19 |
| National Seminary | 1 |
| Regional Seminaries | 6 |
| Provincial Seminaries | 7 |
| Diocesan Seminaries | 5 |
| Number of Dioceses | 123 |
| Number of Bishops (open church) | 71 |
| Number of Priests (est.) | 1400 |
| Number ordained since 1980 (open church) | 550 |
| Number of Ordinations (1993) | 70 |
| Number of Seminarians (est.) | 1450 |
| Major (est.) | 1032-1050 |
| Minor | 360-400 |
| Number of Sisters(est.) | 2000 |
| Number professed since 1980 (est.) | 500 |
| Number of novitiates | 40 |
| Number of Sisters in Formation | 1000 |

Arrests and Releases

The year 1993 signaled good news for the churches as many who has been arrested for a variety of "offenses" over the years were, in many instances, suddenly released. While it is difficult to assess the government's motivation for the generous number set free during the course of the year, many have speculated that China's desire to host the Olympics in the year 2000 as well as to encourage economic development could indeed have been strong factors.

Release of Bishops

- Bp. Julius Jia Zhiguo, Zhengdeng, (underground) Hebei, re-arrested on April 5, 1992 and released in May 1993.
- Bp. Song Weili (76) Langfong, arrested in December 1992 was released shortly after Christmas, 1992.
- Bp. Peter Chen Jianzhang, 75, of Baoding, Hebei, arrested in December 1990, was released but confined to his home by police, 18/3/93; fully released, 19/11/93.
- Bp. Philip Yang Libai (77), Lanzhou, arrested in December 1992 was released on parole soon after.
- Bp. Wang Milu, Tianshui, Gansu, arrested in 1983, was paroled on

April 14, 1993.

- Bp. Paul Fan Yufei of Zhouzhi, Shaanxi Province, arrested on April 22, 1992, released as of November 1993, subject to restrictions.
- Bp Shi Enxiang, (79) Daming, arrested around 20/12/92, release in March, 1993, subject to restrictions; fully released 11/93.
- Bp. Luke Li Jingfeng of Fengxiang, taken away by the police in April 1992 was released, subject to restrictions.
- Bp. Marco Yuan Wenzai,(underground), recently released. No other information available.
- Bp. Joseph Fan Zhongliang, underground, Shanghai, released, subject to restriction.

According to certain accounts, there are still a few bishops in some form of detention, however, well-informed people maintain that all bishops arrested because of their participation in the inaugural meeting of the Underground Bishops' Conference have now been released.

Arrests and Releases of Priests and Lay People: Catholics/Protestants. December 1992-December 1993

It is impossible to verify the number of priests and lay people still in prison or in other forms of detention. Well-informed sources maintain that there is still a sizeable number. It is also very difficult to verify the exact number of releases. Below is a list of documented releases: December 1992-1993.

- 100 persons in Guoyang on 8 January, 1993 and soon released.
- 30 leaders of the Jesus Family, March 1993. Zheng Yunsan given 2 year sentence.
- 112 Christian leaders, Wuyang County, Henan, 8 September, 1993 later released.
- 6 Catholics Qingshan Village, Fujian; 4 released after a cadre paid bail.
- 90 Christians in Shaanxi, arrested and then released after paying a fine of 500-700 yuan. 25 May, 1993.
- 10 Priests, 1 deacon and 6 lay people released.

Also:

- Fr. Placidus Pei Ronggui, arrested in 1989
- Fr. Wei Jingyi, arrested in 1990
- Fr. Zhu Vincent Hongsheng, of Shanghai was arrested in 1953, (d.July 6, 1993). Zhu was completely exonerated in 1993 and released on February 17.
- Fr. Li Fangchun, of Shangqiu arrested in 1981 and sentenced for 12 years, released in February 1993.
- Fr. Li Xinsan arrested in 1991
- Fr. Wang Jianxing arrested in 1991
- Fr. Li Zhongpei arrested in 1990
- Fr. Guo Bole, Changshu, Jiangsu arrested in 1992

Fr. Zheng Li, Xuanhua, Hebei arrested in 1992
Fr. Liao Haiqing, Fuzhou, Jiangxi arrested for the 4th time in August 1992
Fr. Joseph Dong Zhenlu, Zhengding arrested in November, 1993.
Fr. Pei Zhengding arrested in November 1993
Deacon Wang Tongsheng arrested in 1990
Zhong Youshen sentenced July 1991
Zhang Guoyan sentenced in 1992
Zhong Dapeng sentenced in 1990
Zhao Zhongyue sentences in 1991
Zhang Weiming arrested in 1990
Zhang Youzhong arrested in early 1991

Deaths of Bishops

Bp. Stephen Liu, 80, Anguo, Hebei, 14 November, 1992.
Bp. Paul Liu Shuhe, 73, Kangzhuang, Yixian, Hebei, Secretary General of the Underground Bishops' Conference, 2 May, 1993.
Bp. Stephen Li Side, Aux. Bp. Shanghai, 9 March, 1993.
Bp. Joseph Qian Huimin, 82, Nanjing, 20, May, 1993.

Episcopal Ordinations 1993

Bp. Peter Luo Beizhen, 82, Chongqing, Sichuan, 14 May, 1993,
Bp. Peter Hou Jingwen, 67, Auxiliary bishop of Cangzhou (Xianxian) Hebei Province.
Bp. Thomas Zhao Fengwu SVD., 73, bishop of Yanzhou, Shangdong, 18 May, 1993.
Bp. John Baptist Liu Jingshan, 80, Yinchuan, Ningxia Autonomous Region, August, 1993.
Bp. Matthew Luo Duxi, bishop of Leshan, Sichuan, 21 September, 1993.
Bp. Han Daoyi, bishop of Kaifeng, Henan, 7 November, 1993.
Bp. Benedict Cai Xiufeng, 80, bishop of Wuzhou, 3 December, 1993.
Bp. Joseph Liu Yuanren, 69, bishop of Nanjing, Jiangsu, 7 December, 1993.

Bishops Appointed Deputies

Two China-appointed bishops, John Cai Tiyan, 73, of Shantou, and Michael Fu Tieshan, 61, of Beijing, were elected deputies to China's National People's Congress.

Other Significant Happenings in the Church in China

China Softens Stand on "Clandestine" Churches

Zhang Shengzuo, the director of the Religious Affairs Bureau and responsible for religious activities in China, lately assured a Catholic delegation from Hong Kong, in Beijing, that the "clandestine" churches, both Protestant and Catholic were permitted to have their gatherings provided "they do not oppose the Socialist regime." According to the report, Catholics and Protestants can hold their meetings and worship in individual houses because religious freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution. Zhang also added that Protestants house churches "are not a real problem" for the government. However, the number of participants at any one time must not exceed 150. Given the history of persecution of the members of the house churches and the Catholics in the underground Church, it is difficult to grasp the real meaning behind Mr. Zhang's statements. Some are of the opinion that China is taking a more pragmatic approach to the whole matter of religion; others maintain that it is China's wish to re-establish relations with the Vatican. Whatever may be the motivation, if indeed, there is a change of attitude, such attitudes filter slowly down to the provincial and local levels. The energy with which Zhang's words are implemented will prove the truth and determination behind the words.

Progress in Sino-Vatican Relations

There were some indications during the course of the year that Sino-Vatican relations are improving: On June 19, 1993, Pope John Paul indicated a strong desire to visit China; later, both China and the Vatican confirmed that some negotiations have taken place between them. Cardinal Etcheagaray's visit to China at the invitation of Sports Minister, Wu Shaozu, to attend the National Games in Beijing, would also seem to augur favorably for a relaxation in tension between the two parties.

Many bishops in the underground Church find reasons for hope in these recent developments. According to one underground bishop from Shaanxi, "The Pope, however, must remain firm on certain matters." Among these "matters" is the election of bishops without Rome's approval and Rome's insistence that married priests must renounce the exercise of the sacramental and pastoral ministry. Another clandestine bishop of the same province maintains that, "There can be no normal relations between the Holy See and China if the Vatican is forbidden from supervising the affairs of the Church." The two prelates also believe that it will be very difficult for the Vatican to bring about amicable relations between the two segments of the Church in China since the perspectives of each have given rise to many problems between them. However, according to Bishop Joseph Wang Zhenye, government approved bishop of Yan'an, "Present

conditions are the best yet for possible normalization. I hope that both parties will seize the opportunity. We know that the Holy Father continually expresses his concern for the Catholics and the Catholic Church in China." The bishops feel that Taiwan will understand the condition of the Church in China and will not oppose moves towards reconciliation. A priest, knowledgeable of religious affairs both in China and in Taiwan, expresses doubt that Taiwan will be immediately amenable since so far, a major condition for renewed diplomatic relations requires the Vatican to break ties with Taiwan. The priest expressed dismay at China's stand since, last year, China renewed diplomatic relations with South Korea without demanding that it first break its relationships with the Vatican.

Benedictine Sisters Prepare to Open Hospital

A team of Benedictine Sisters from Korea, Germany and the United States, in conjunction with the Jilin Provincial government and the Religious Affairs Bureau, are preparing to open a 600 bed hospital in Jilin in 1995. The work seems to be progressing on schedule.

Publication of One Volume Bible

The first 50,000 copies of the Chinese Bible printed in simplified characters has rolled off the China Catholic Press. Projected number of copies: 200,000.

Mother Teresa Returns to China

Mother Teresa, 83, in spite of hospitalizations and heart problems returned to China in October 1993. She is reported to have said, "I must go to China; the Holy Father wants me to go." Mother Teresa, who has already visited China, has often expressed her desire to open a house there to care for the destitute and dying.

Catholics Received Awards

So far 300 priests, Sisters and lay Catholics have received the Advanced Workers or Model Workers award in State, Provincial and city levels.

Holy Spirit Study Centre Update, 1993

Delegations and Groups from China Visit Holy Spirit Study Centre

Throughout the year the Centre hosts many visitors, groups and delegations from a number of countries around the world. Some

come for briefings before going to China; some come both before and after their China visit. Others come to do research or to seek information about the Church in China. Space does not permit us to list all groups and individuals who have visited the Centre during the year. However, in 1993, due to China's increasing openness, and its new regulation permitting any Chinese citizen, allowed to go abroad, to spend seven days in Hong Kong on their return, the Centre has enjoyed the visits of more and more China Church related personnel. These have come to observe the Church in Hong Kong and to visit its various works and institutions. Because these visits are indicative of something new happening within the Church in China, it seems important to record them.

--A nine-member Catholic delegation from Shanghai from January 7-15, 1993. The group consisted of 3 priests, 3 Sisters and 3 lay people.

--Thirteen priests, all lecturers in 8 of China's open Church seminaries, participated in a theology study program sponsored by the Catholic Institute for Religion and Society and the Hong Kong Theology Association, August 13 to September 4.

--Five young priests from Jilin came to Hong Kong from June 20-23, 1993 to visit Catholic institutions.

--Two officials from the Shanghai Security Bureau, July 19, 1993

--A six member delegation from Hankou, including Bishop Dong and 3 officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau visited the Centre as a part of their two week visit to Hong Kong and Ireland, September 15, 1993

--Two young priests from Fujian Province, Yuan Guozhang and Huang Lehe, on a tour had time to visit the Centre and various works of Caritas and other Church institutions.

--Fr. Dai Shouchuan of Yueyang diocese, October 11-15, 1993.

--Bishop Pius Jin of Shenyang visited the Centre on his return from the ecumenical meeting in the Philippines, November 21. Bishop Jin was educated at the Holy Spirit Seminary. This was his first visit since his graduation from the Seminary.

Also:

--Thirty lay Catholics from Macau came to the Centre to discuss lay participation in Church work, May 1, 1993.

Centre Personnel Make Visits to China

Individuals with special interests in the Church in China as well as groups often requests Centre personnel to accompany them to China to visit the Catholics and churches. Many bishops also extend invitations to the Centre to come to China for special occasions: ordinations, church blessings, religious professions, etc.. During the course of 1993, Centre personnel made many such trips.
