

## *China Church and News Update*

*Tripod Staff*

### *Underground Bishops' Conference Seeks to Join FABC*

The bishops' conference set up by the underground Catholics in China (CBCM), has asked to join the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) and attend the FABC plenary assembly next January, 10-19, 1995 in Manila.

The request was made through a letter written in Chinese, dated January 29, 1994, and addressed to Bishop Stephen Fumio Hamao of Yokohama, Japan, chairman of the FABC Office of Human Development.

Bishop Hamao acknowledged having received the letter and said he had sent it to the Hong Kong based FABC assistant secretary general.

Pope John Paul II, who will be in Manila to attend the World Youth Day celebration, is scheduled to address the FABC assembly on January 15, 1995 (*UCAN 770*\A June 6-8, 1994).

### *Young Priests Assume Church Leadership*

Young leaders are emerging in the government-approved church as more and more elderly priests and bishops die. In the month of May alone, China witnessed the death of three elderly bishops, whose ages ranged from 74-90: Bishops Francis Zhang Fengzao of Wuhu, John Li Xuesong of Jilin and Joseph Hou Jinde of Xingtai. By June 1, young priests had been named temporarily to head the dioceses of Wuhu and Jilin; the situation in Xingtai diocese has not been settled.

The average age of the remaining 70 China-appointed bishops is 76 with more than half in their 70s and another 22 older than 80. These 70 bishops head 65 of the government approved dioceses, but there are still 50 empty episcopal sees (*UCAN 770*\A June 6-8, 1994).

### *Update on Arrests and Releases*

Fathers Guo Xijin, Miao Lehua and four seminarians were arrested in Fu'an, Fujian Province, in December 1993. All were released before the Lunar New Year.

Father Xu Guoxin of Langfang, Hebei was arrested in December 1991 and given a three-year sentence. He was freed in April, eight months before his scheduled release.

Father Wei Jingyi, secretary general of the Underground Bish-

ops' Conference, was detained in January but allowed to return to Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province, June 3. Father Wang Xincheng, the young rector of an underground seminary in Baoding, Hebei Province, was released. The date of his actual arrest is not available.

Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding, prominent among unofficial church members, has been confined to a hostel in Jinzhou county since May 14, to "study". Bishop Jia, long restricted to his home village of Wuqiu, has often been taken on "trips" to prevent him from making contacts with the "underground."

Since May 17, 1994, Father Placidus Pei Ronggui, parish priest of Youtong, Zhengding diocese, has also been confined to a hostel "for study". Father Pei has been detained twice since his release on parole in March 1993.

Gao Feng, a Chinese Christian detained in Beijing in early June 1994, was released on June 30. Unfortunately, the police have refused to provide the company where Gao works with proof of detention and so he stands to lose his job.

### *China Announces Release of Religious Activists*

In a bid to secure MFN the government on May 12-13 announced that it would release six religious activists. Three were imprisoned for their involvement in a Taiwan-based Christian cult known as the New Testament Church. They were Chen Zhuman, Yan Peizhi and Xu Zhihe. It is feared that a fourth member of this group, the 32 year old preacher, Zhang Lezhi, died in prison. The government also freed three Catholic priests: Fathers Zhang Ruiyu, Cui Tai and Zhang Li. All were members of the underground church. Three Protestants also won an early release in mid-May (*New China News Agency*, May 13, 1994 and *CNCR*, 2318, May 20, 1994).

### *Justice Ministry Denies Asia Watch Charges*

China's Justice Ministry lambasted *Human Rights Asia Watch* for alleging that there were still about 500 detainees in prison from the June 1989 incident. The ministry asserts that, in fact, only a small number were arrested and that the overwhelming majority have been released either because they had been dealt with leniently or because they had finished serving their term. *Asia Watch* further claimed that Beijing No 2 prison and the Qinghe Reform through Labour Farm were holding 500 new detainees from the June 4 incident. It further alleged that some of the prisoners were being badly treated. The ministry called these accusations "sheer fabrication with ulterior motives". *Asia Watch* also maintained that the prisoners at Beijing No. 2 Prison were forced to be quality inspectors for the production

of rubber gloves exported to the United States. The ministry called this "malicious slander" (*China Daily*, May 25, 1994).

### ***Amnesty International Publishes Report on Human Rights Violations Five Years after Tiananmen.***

*Amnesty International's* June 1994, report is a 48 page carefully researched document entitled *China: Human Rights Violations Five Years after Tiananmen*. The report highlights *Amnesty International's* continuing concern about human rights violations in China, especially as those relate to the Tiananmen crackdown. The report also includes a list of "arbitrary arrests and other human rights violations which have occurred during the last year."

The report identifies 75 people reported to have been killed by martial law troops in Beijing in early June 1989. It also includes an appeal from political prisoners which reveals the use of torture and other ill treatment of political prisoners in Hanyang Prison in Hubei Province. In addition the report lists the names of political prisoners currently held at the Qinghe Farm Labour camp near Tianjin and at Beijing Prison No. 2. It also illustrates a number of cases of prisoners of conscience jailed during the 1989 crackdown who are serving long prison sentences.

The document is a call to the Chinese authorities to introduce fundamental reforms to put an end to human rights violations. (*Copies of the report can be obtained from Amnesty International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom*).

### ***Call to Slowdown Construction of Religious Buildings***

The Communist Party's official newspaper, the *People's Daily* has called for a slowdown in the construction of religious buildings in China. A recent article focused on rural regions where, the *Daily* maintains, temples, monasteries and other churches have been springing up in great numbers and luring Chinese away from the Party. "It is time to bring a swift halt to the blind construction of places of worship," the article said. Such buildings were "a waste of money" (*Eastern Express* June 21, 1994 quoting the *People's Daily*).

### ***Hainan Island Pastor Killed in Bus Accident***

Hainan Island's 82 year-old pastor, Father Thomas Huang Zhongwen, along with ten other persons, was killed in a bus accident on May 16, 1994. His death has left the three thousand Catholics scattered throughout the island without a priest. A request for a priest has been sent to the government approved bishops' conference and the CPA in Beijing. Although the Catholics of Hainan are aware that a replacement will not be immediately forthcoming, they are hopeful that they will not be left without a priest to celebrate the feast

of the Assumption, August 15.

Father Huang studied at the South China Regional Seminary (Holy Spirit) in Hong Kong from 1935 until his ordination in 1943. Later, he taught at Hainan's minor seminary. He also spent a number of years in prison.

A requiem Mass was offered for Father Huang in Guangzhou by Father Joseph Chen Chu but no priest was available for a funeral Mass on Hainan. Father Huang was buried in his home village in Dingan county (*UCAN 773/B*, June 30-July 1, 1994).

### ***Bible May Soon Top "The Selected Works of Mao Zedong" as Best Seller***

Since 1987 the Amity Printing Company Limited, has printed over seven million Bibles. These have been printed not only in Chinese but also in the languages of ethnic minorities, and are exclusively for use in mainland China.

According to Philip Wickeri, the overseas coordinator of the Hong Kong based Amity Foundation, Amity plans to print the Hong Kong version of the Chinese language Catholic Bible at the request of the Beijing diocese.

The Amity News Service reports that the number of Bibles printed is now second only to *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, the book most widely published today in China (*UCAN, 773/B* June 30-July 1, 1994).

### ***Beijing Tightens Control over Publication of Religious Books***

In a move aimed obviously at controlling both the content and the quantity of religious books, the Chinese Government has decided that only a handful of State-owned publishing companies would be given the right to publish religious books. It has assigned one publishing house to each of the five approved religions in China (*CNCR 2343*, July 15, 1994).

### ***Government-approved Religions Set up Peace Committee***

The China Committee on Religion and Peace (CCRP) was formed in Beijing on July 3, 1994. The 39 member committee aims at encouraging believers to work together to promote world peace through uniting religions' individual efforts at peace building and developing exchanges with overseas religious peace organizations. The committee is a joint effort of Buddhist, Catholic, Daoist, Muslim and Protestant leaders. Zhao Puchu, who chairs the Buddhist Association of China, said the CCRP could cooperate to oppose nuclear proliferation, and through peaceful efforts help secure tranquility for peoples everywhere. Bishop Joseph Zong Huaide, head of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China and the Catho-

lic Patriotic Association, is one of the five CCRP chairpersons (UCAN, NO. 775/A, July 11-14, 1994).

### ***China Eliminates Top Post***

In a bid to have the Party exert control over the Army, China has decided to eliminate its highest military rank, the post of first-grade general. Actually, the post has been vacant since its creation in 1988. This change makes Jiang Zemin, Central Military Commission chairman, Party Chief and President, the highest authority over the army (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 19, 1994).

### ***China to Hold Exams for Civil Servant Positions***

In September 1994, the Chinese Government will hold open recruitment examinations for some 462 job openings in 26 Central administrative departments. Civil servants will be hired on the basis of examination results. The government hopes the exam system will help curb rampant corruption and nepotism (*People's Daily*, July 31, 1994).

### ***Archaeologists Discover Names of Xian Craftsmen***

According to Yuan Zhongyi, the head of Xian's archaeological excavation team, the names of 85 craftsmen who created the thousands of clay warriors near Xian have been found engraved in the armpits and underneath the long coats of more than 7,000 soldiers excavated so far. The imperial tombs were discovered in 1974, but their creators' identity had remained a mystery (*SCMP*, July 29, 1994).

### ***Mainland Visitors to Hong Kong Soar***

According to the Hong Kong Travel Association and China Travel Service, visitors to Hong Kong from China are expected to exceed the number from Taiwan, Hong Kong's largest visitor market. During the first 11 months of 1993, the number of mainland visitors to Hong Kong reached 1.58 million.

As of 1993 tourists from the mainland were allowed to bring in HK\$ 6,000 (US\$769) compared to HK\$30. (US\$5.52) the amount previously allowed (*Chinese Around the World*, Feb-Mar 1994).

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