

China Church and News Update

Church News

Arrests, Detentions and Releases

Xia Zhaowu, unofficial priest in the Yujiang area of Jiangxi was arrested on December 29 with a lay Catholic.

Fr. Gu Zheng, 50, arrested in October (cf. TRIPOD, #84, Nov.-Dec. 94) was detained in Urumiqi until December 1, 1994.

Fr. Vincent Qin Guoliang, arrested, Nov. 3, 1994 in Xining, Qinghai Province (cf. TRIPOD, #84) according to reports has been sentenced to three years of education through labor. No reasons for his imprisonment have been given (CNCR 2383, 30 Dec. '94).

Zeng Jingmu, 75, unofficial bishop of Yujiang, arrested on August 14 and released was re-arrested on September 17. (cf. TRIPOD, #84, Nov.-Dec. 94). According to reports the bishop is being detained at the Congren Detention Center in Jiangxi Province (CNCR 2383, 30 Dec. 94).

China Sends Catholic Priests and Officials to World Youth Day

China sent a delegation of 24 priests, Sisters and Catholics, along with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau, to attend the Roman Catholic World Youth Day in Manila, Philippines, on January 15. This was the first time the official Catholic Church in China had taken part in any Papal visit to Asia.

According to Jesuit Ismael Zuloaga, head of the Jesuit Conference on East Asia, Cardinal Sin sent a letter to authorities in China inviting them to send a delegation of young Catholics to Manila for the papal visit. Chinese officials responded enthusiastically saying, "This visit (of the Chinese youth) is very important as this is the first time for our Church to take part in such an event and it will carry its effects into the future."

Anthony Liu Bianian, vice-president of the government-approved Chinese Patriotic Association in Beijing, said that no Chinese bishop would be in the group because "all the bishops of China are above the age limit of 40."

Vatican officials in Manila reported that the Holy Father was "very much moved by the participation of the Chinese youth," according to Fr. Zuloaga (Asia Focus, 13 Jan. '95).

Christians Critical of Persistent Western Prejudice

When Liu Bainian, Secretary General of the China Catholic Church Affairs Commission and the representatives of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in China, attended the Second European Ecumenical China Conference (EECC) in London, December 1-4, 1994, they were critical of certain misunderstandings and prejudices they encounter in the West, according to a Brussels newspaper report.

They maintain that the West fails to see that the openness that grew since the end of the Cultural Revolution and the new economic reforms have substantially changed the face of the Catholic Church inside Chinese society. In the past ten years about six hundred new priests have been ordained. The proportion of elder priests to their young colleagues has been reversed. Churches are full and celebrations well attended. For the first time a Catholic translation of the Bible was published and distributed last year. The Chinese Catholic Church received visitors from about ninety countries and Chinese bishops in their turn were welcomed as guests in more than twenty countries.

"The autonomy of the Chinese Catholic Church does not mean a reduction of unity with the universal Church", Liu Bainian continued. "At every Mass we pray for the Pope, the Vicar of Christ. When I listen to some pronouncements of Catholics in the West, I submit that we are often more loyal to him than all those so called true faithful. The difference between the official and the unofficial or underground Church is for us not a question of faith but of politics, of another conception of society.

"The first task for the Chinese Catholic Church is the formation of priests in the twenty-four seminaries all over the country," Liu Bainian said. "An annual growth of two hundred new priests is too little to satisfy the urgent spiritual needs of about four million Catholics. Seminaries have a lack of professors, manuals and finances. The Chinese Bishops Conference is working out a plan to adapt the period of formation without affecting the quality of the teaching. In the same line a new infrastructure for the formation and the activities of more than a thousand religious Sisters has to be set up."

Liu Bainian did not exclude a continuation and even an enlargement of the contacts with Churches abroad. "But we expect that the Churches should fully respect our own historical evolution and our option for a specific kind of social system. They have to take into account the unique situation of our country. The Catholics are only 0.4 percent in the total population of 1.2 billion Chinese, most of whom do not believe in any religion."

Liu Bainian further stated, "We insist on more exchanges. We are able to learn a lot from each other and to complement each other. I consider the shortage of vocations in the West as a subtle kind of Church persecution. We will do our best to avoid that evolution in the present reform of China. So it will be possible for us to

make a humble contribution to the revival of the Catholic Church in other countries" (*Standaard*, Brussels, December 6, 1994).

General News Update

China Daily Lists Top Domestic News of '94

The following are the *China Daily's* selection of China's ten top events in 1994.

Monetary reforms: China replaced the dual-track foreign exchange practice with a "unitary and controlled floating exchange rate system." It also introduced a new tax system based on value-added tax, under which the central and local governments split the taxes and each collects its own. China, in addition set up three policy banks designed to provide longer-term, subsidized credits for key State projects in line with government industrial policies. The banks are: the State Development Bank, the Export and Import Bank of China and the Agricultural Development Bank of China.

Three Gorges project: The Three Gorges Dam project in Hubei Province is the world's largest water conservation undertaking. It is slated to be completed by 2009 at a cost of 90 billion yuan.

Party building: The Fourth Plenary Session of the 14th Central Committee of the Communist party of China was held in Beijing from September 25-28. The plenum adopted a decision to strengthen Party building focussing on improving the Party's leadership, raising the standard of the Party as a ruling Party and promoting reform and socialist modernization.

Gatt talks: The Gatt Working group failed to conclude substantive negotiations on China's re-entry into the world trade organization. China accuses a small number of Gatt signatories of lacking sincerity and putting excessive demands on China during the negotiations.

Deng's works: The second edition of the first two volumes of the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* was published and became available in bookshops across the country on November 2. The Party Central Committee issued a circular urging all party members to study the two books to learn what socialism is and how to build socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Labour Law: The Eighth Session of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress adopted a new labour Law on July 5. The law spells out the rights and obligations of business managers and employees. It is considered the most significant piece of legislation to date to protect Chinese workers' interests.

Hong Kong Issue: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, blaming Britain for a break in negotiations regarding Hong Kong's future, made it clear that any system forged under the Patten plan, including the Legislative Council, would be terminated when China resumes sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. At the closing meeting of the Ninth Session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on September 1, legislators endorsed a bill to terminate Hong Kong's last legislative council, city government, district government and district boards on June 30, 1997.

Diplomatic activities: Top Chinese leaders, including Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng, visited more than 20 countries and attended many international conferences. These activities promoted understanding and good will between China and the rest of the world and expanded trade ties.

Fire tragedies: On November 27, a fire killed 233 people in a dance hall in Fuxin, Liaoning Province. On December 9, another fire killed 325 people and injured 130 others in Karamay, in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Most of the victims of the first fire were students and most of the victims in the second were school children.

Qiandao Lake case: On March 31, 24 Taiwan tourists, along with eight mainland guides and pleasure boat crew members were robbed and killed on Lake Qiandao, Zhejiang Province. China has reported that the criminals were caught, convicted and executed.

China Sets Up First Morals and Culture Research Institute

The Beijing Eastern Morality Research Institute (*Beijing Dongfang Daode Yanjiusuo*) was recently set up in the Beijing Youth Politics College (*Beijing Qingnian Zhengzi Xueyuan*). According to *Ming Pao* (7 Dec. '94), the purpose of the Institute is to find out how to educate the nation's youth in traditional Chinese morality. In addition the organizers wish to learn how to adapt these teachings for today (CNCR 2377 9 Dec. 1994).

State Puts Curse on Superstition

Scientific education is being promoted to stem the recent national resurrection of superstitious practices, (cf. documentation, p. 46). The central government is planning to establish a nationwide science promotion program as a part of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000) for economic development.

According to the reports, illegal activities connected with feudal superstitions and pseudo-science have been running rampant, particularly in the countryside.

The major beneficiaries of the campaign will be adolescents, farmers and administrators.

Intellectuals Given Key Role

According to an article in the *China Daily* (Dec.14, 1994), the government is once again emphasizing the importance of the development of science and technology and the role of intellectuals.

"To enable China to achieve rapid and sound economic growth, take up a favorable position in the world and promote overall social progress in the country," said Hu Jintao, a member of the Party Central Committee secretariat, "it is imperative to pay closer attention to the development of science and technology and give full scope to the role of intellectuals."

Hu called on Party and government leaders at all levels to make friends with intellectuals, solicit their opinions and suggestions. Guang Li, author of the article, added, "We should emphasize the importance of the role of intellectuals, not only in words but also in deeds. To invest in intellectuals is probably the most efficient and profitable investment we can make to boost our economy."

Research Group Lists China's "Three Bigs"

According to the SRG China 1994 report, there is a new diversity evident in the "Three Bigs" which are what the Chinese consumers aspire to have and will eventually work to achieve. In the sixties and seventies the "Three Bigs" were: bicycles, sewing machines and watches. In the eighties they were: colour television, refrigerators and washing machines. The "Three Bigs" today are air conditioners, water heaters and telephones. Before the start of the next era, the research agency predicts that the "Three Bigs" will be cars, private housing and video cameras (SRG China 1994 report).

Chinese Language Popular Abroad

According to the *Wenhui Bao* (Sept. 12, 1994) and reported in the *Beijing Review* (Dec. 5-11, 1994), the Chinese Language is gaining more and more popularity abroad. The article maintains that at present 1,000 colleges and universities in more than 60 countries have set up departments or offer majors in the Chinese language. The Chinese Department of the University of Paris (France) is the largest outside China mainland, with a current enrollment of 1,800 students--more than the number enrolled at the Chinese Department of Taiwan University. The Chinese Teaching Center at Beijing Normal University provides Chinese language training to foreign students studying in China. At present, some 1,000 students from Europe, America, Africa and Asia study in this institution. In addition, over 1000 foreigners are currently studying Chinese at the Beijing Language Institute and Beijing University.