

China Church and News Update

by Tripod Staff

Death of Bishop Yang Gaojian, 1913-1995

Bp. Yang Gaojian of Changde, Hunan, a key figure in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, died in Beijing at the age of 81 on January 20. Born in the Hunan countryside on September 28, 1913, he entered the Changde minor seminary and joined the Augustinians in 1931. After his ordination in 1938, he held various seminary and parish posts in the Diocese of Changde. In 1951 he became administrator of that diocese. He joined the Changde CCPA in 1953 and attended the founding conference of the national CCPA in 1956. He was one of the first bishops ordained without Vatican approval in 1958. After a term of hard labor during the Cultural Revolution, he moved to the Beijing CCPA office in 1980. He held leading positions in all three government-sanctioned Catholic organizations: the CCPA, Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission and Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference (*Asia Focus*, February 24, 5).

Death of Father Andrew Lian Mingde, Vicar General of Guangzhou, 1898-1995

Father Andrew Lian Mingde, vicar general of Guangzhou, a priest for nearly 67 years, died on January 20. He was 96 years old.

Father Lian was born into a Catholic family in Dongguan county in Guangdong Province on November 30, 1898 and entered the seminary at the age of 13. He studied philosophy and theology in Penang, northern Malaysia. While studying in Penang, he told *Yi Magazine*, he was so ill that a classmate wrote home to Guangdong that he had died. A requiem Mass was immediately offered for him. He was ordained at 31 in the Guangzhou Cathedral on Lunar New Year in 1928.

He held a number of positions working and teaching in the minor seminary, and teaching and doing pastoral work among the illiterate in remote villages. In 1948 he became the last rector of the minor seminary which was closed in 1952. He was jailed for ten years during the Cultural Revolution. Following the restoration of the religious policy in 1979, Father Lian served in Guangzhou and was appointed vicar general. He had been retired for several years before his death on January 20, 1995.

Beijing's West Church to Reopen after 45 Years

Beijing's Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, popularly known

as the West Church (*Xitang*) will be reopened later this year. It was closed as a church in 1949, and until recently used as a drug factory. The government returned the West Church on December 23, 1994, and local Catholics hastily swept it in time for people to crowd in for Midnight Mass. It was closed after December 25 for renovations (*Asia Focus*, Feb. 17, 5).

Vatican Radio Sends Message to Chinese Catholics

Vatican Radio broadcast a message from eight underground bishops focusing attention on the need for Chinese Catholics to remain loyal to the Pope. The message stressed "that obedience to the Pope is an indispensable requisite to be a Catholic" (*SCMP*, Feb. 11, 1995).

Torture of Catholics Feared

Amnesty International cited several sources backing up allegations that Catholics from two mountain villages, Fengjiazhuang and Longtiangou, in Hebei Province, were being subjected to heavy fines, detention and torture. Many Catholics have fled their homes to escape torture meted out by officials under the Government compulsory birth-control programme. Families with more than one child are either forced to pay heavy fines or have their goods confiscated. Some have even been sent to prison and tortured.

The State Council recently approved a family planning programme for 1995-2000 with more emphasis on education and persuasion. Plans to combine the programme with economic projects are also under consideration. There have been reports of corrupt officials abusing people in implementing the policy.

The priests and leaders of nearby Catholic communities have complained to the county government but so far the matter has not been addressed. When UCA News approached the family planning office of Hebei for information on the matter, the office had no comment (*SCMP*, Feb. 15, and March 16, 1995).

Jiang Zemin Stresses One-Child Rule

Speaking to a national seminar on family planning, President Jiang Zemin stressed that rural cadres and Communist Party members who did not observe the one-child policy would be severely punished. He said that education of rural cadres and Party members had to be strengthened. "Without proper control over the population growth and coordinated development between the population and the economy, society, resources and environment, it is very difficult to realize sustained, fast and healthy national economic development and overall progress of society," said Jiang.

Underground Catholics Accuse Official Church

Underground Catholics in China have accused the government-approved church of refusing to recognize the Pope's supremacy. The accusation was made in a December letter from the underground bishops (cf. Bishops' letter, p. 47 in this issue) in the name of the Episcopal Conference of Mainland China. The claims reflect the tension between the clandestine and official church and the obstacles to restoring diplomatic relations with the Vatican. It was reported that the Vatican did not want to place any more strain on the already strained relationship and played down the allegations made by the underground bishops (*SCMP*, Feb. 22, 1995).

Crackdown on Underground Communities

There are claims that authorities in the officially sanctioned church are informing the police about underground church activities through fear that Sino-Vatican relations might be restored and they would lose their privileged place in the governance of the Church. Priests have been arrested, convents closed down and churches destroyed in Jiangxi, Shaanxi and Hubei Provinces. Mr. Liu Bainian, vice-president of the National Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, said he had not heard about these accusations and insisted that the Patriotic Association would not make allegations against others. He added they did not agree with arresting underground Catholics on religious grounds (*Asianews* as reported in the *SCMP*, March 18, 1995).

Crackdown on Buddhism

Authorities in Tibet have announced a crackdown on temples and monks. The number of monks in each temple is to be regulated. "We must absolutely not allow anyone, especially young people, to be forced to become monks," reported the *Tibet Daily*, "not allow temples and living buddhas to levy donations on the public...not allow incitement to unrest under the pretext of religion,"

Under the regulations new temples may not be built without the approval of authorities and people must not be forced to believe in Buddhism. Communist Party cadres must not display the Dalai Lama's picture, set up altars in their homes or send their children to overseas schools run by the Dalai Lama's supporters (Reuter in the *SCMP*, March 21, 1995).

China Critiques U.S. Human Rights Report

On February 1, 1995, the U.S. State Department issued its *1994 Human Rights Report*, one section of which dealt with China. The Information Office of the State Council defended China's record with a report which begins with the sentence: "The so-called human rights

issue has all along been used by the US government as a pretext for interfering in China's internal affairs and launching unwarranted attacks of China." It considers the cases of some prisoners mentioned in the U.S. report, denied that they were mistreated, and defended citizens' rights to think. "In China, to think of anything only without taking actions in violation of the Criminal Law does not constitute a crime," but those named "were proven to have mailed, posted and distributed leaflets of incitement to overturn the state power" and were guilty of "conspiring to overthrow the government by using force of arms..." Chinese hospitals do not sell the organs of executed criminals. The U.S. should look at poverty, infant mortality, racial inequality, and overcrowded prisons at home, rather than "distorting facts to deceive world public opinion" in violation of UN Resolution 36/103 of December 9, 1981 on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States (*Beijing Review*, Vol. 38, #11 (March 13-19, 1995), pp. 17-22.).

Foreign Minister Qian Qichen also slammed the U.S. for criticizing China on human rights, and defended China's claim to the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, at a press conference during the congresses. (*SCMP*, Saturday, March 11, 1995, p. 6). Qian also said that the 14.6% increase in the budget for the three-million strong PLA (People's Liberation Army) barely covered inflation. But foreign observers say that official figures for the military budget are always understated (*SCMP*, Wednesday, March 8, 1995).

Third Session of the Eighth National People's Congress

China's legislature, the National People's Congress, met for 14 days in Beijing, March 5-18, 1995. The 2811 delegates heard Premier Li Peng's opening address, stressing the need to hold inflation to 15%, compared to 21.7% last year; strengthen the rural economy and increase grain production; restructure state-run enterprises; combat crime, smuggling, pornography, and pirating of goods; increase exchanges with Taiwan; and get into the World Trade Organization. (*Beijing Review*, Vol. 38, #11 (March 13-19, 1995), pp. 4-5).

While Li identified the various problems, he did not have any new ideas for solving the problems of money-losing state enterprises or corruption. Li did not call for a agency independent of the Party to fight corruption (*SCMP*, March 6, 1995, p.7).

By the end of the congress, the NPC delegates had shown some unprecedented independence, unlike the rubber stamp congresses of earlier years. One-quarter of the delegates did not support the Education Law, 32% either voted against the Banking Law or abstained, while three government nominees did not receive the approval of a substantial minority of delegates. Although all items on the government's agenda passed, the nay votes are a sign that delegates want the Party to view them seriously and listen to their opinions (*SCMP*, Sunday, March 19, 1995, p. 1).

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference began its

deliberations on March 3. The CPPCC is "a national advisory organization made up of representatives from China's democratic political parties and the elite of various walks of life". Like the NPC, the CPPCC also met "to review the nation's work - achievements and shortcomings - in the previous year and to discuss the major plans for the current year" (*China Daily*, Monday, March 6, 1995, p. 4).

Grain production has to be a priority, as the population will hit 1.6 billion in the year 2030, so the grain harvest for the year 2000 needs to total 500 million tons - officials are optimistic that this goal can be met (*SCMP*, Saturday, March 18, 1995, p. 6). CPPCC delegates pondered how to increase grain output, perhaps by attacking "deep-rooted feudal ideas" among the peasants, perhaps by consolidating land into larger plots, although this would increase rural unemployment (*SCMP* Monday, March 13, 1995, p. 7).

The NPC delegates spoke about small-scale disturbances in rural areas, concerned that they could spread and grow out of hand unless farmers have adequate supplies of fertilizer, get a better price for their produce, and relief from tax burdens (*SCMP*, Thursday, March 9, 1995, p. 11).

Of 220,000 Chinese students who have gone overseas, only 75,000 have returned after graduation, creating a brain drain. At the level of primary education, 3% of peasant children never get to school, while others (especially girls) drop out before long. Both the NPC and CPPCC see the need to raise teachers' salaries. Yet some elite schools in Guangdong charge 500,000 RMB in admissions fees, something that has no place in the socialist educational system. The government has decided to investigate their exorbitant fees (*SCMP*, Wednesday, March 15, 1995, p. 8).

Executive Vice-Premier Zhu Rongji, China's economic czar, has to balance the interests of rich coastal provinces with poor interior ones on such questions as targets for grain and cotton production and transfer payments to stimulate the development of the poorer regions (*SCMP*, Tuesday, March 14, 1995, p. 10). But raising enough tax revenue to meet all the demands on the national budget remains a long-standing contradiction which will not be resolved shortly (*SCMP*, Friday, March 17, 1995, p. 8).

During national meetings, (dis)unity among the top leadership is always a topic for foreign observers, and for in-house whispers. President Jiang Zemin was reportedly taking precautions to avert any rifts after the pending death of Deng Xiaoping (*SCMP*, Sunday, March 5, 1995, p. 6, and Tuesday, March 7, 1995, p. 9).

Provinces such as Guangdong have instituted unemployment insurance programs, but only half of the laborers have signed up for the safety net. Guangdong's six million migrant workers are especially insecure against the swings of the market (*SCMP*, Tuesday, March 7, 1995, p. 10).

Serious crimes increased 61.9% over 1993, with 688,771 suspects taken into custody nationwide. But neither the number of murders nor the number of those sentenced to death was released (*SCMP* Sunday, March 12, 1995, p. 6). The Judiciary handled 30,793 cases of

corruption, bribery and embezzlement, up 69.8%, with 20,186 convicts sentenced. Feudalism and capitalism both have their decadent aspects, as well as some good traditions, so Guangdong's governor Zhu Senlin said that foreign influences cannot be rejected wholesale. Although the NPC does not accept petitions from ordinary citizens, several such petitions were still given to it, including a call for the release of political prisoners, greater democracy and human rights, and the rehabilitation of disgraced Party chief Zhao Ziyang (*SCMP*, Tuesday, March 14, 1995, p. 8).

Population Tops 1.2 Billion

China's population, not including that of Taiwan, Macao and Hong Kong, topped the 1.2 billion mark on February 15, 1995. According to the *China Daily*, (Feb. 15, 1995), "... the real news is not the arrival of this day, but that it has been postponed for nine years, according to the State Statistics Bureau. According to the State Family Planning Commission, the population would have reached 1.2 billion nine years ago without the introduction of the nationwide Family Planning programme. At the national conference in Beijing, Vice-Premier Zou Jiahua reported that the national birth rate had dropped from 33.43 per thousand in 1970 to 17.7 per thousand in 1994.

According to *China News Analysis*, (No. 1530, March 1, 1995), even with greater control and improved statistical work, it is impossible to assess the precise size of the Chinese population. It is estimated that there are 36,000 births daily in China. Officially, the increase in 1994 was 13.33 million but demographers often quote a figure of 16 million instead. The new target is to maintain the population within 1.3 billion by 2000.

Jiang Warns against Western Influences

President and Communist Party boss, Jiang Zemin, told Guangdong to wipe out decadent influences from the West and to promote patriotic education and traditional culture. He acknowledged that Guangdong is China's richest and most independent-minded region but that it must guard against corrupt ideas from the West. Mr. Jiang said that Guangdong would continue to play a pioneer role in China's reform to provide experiences for the rest of the country (*SCMP*, March 10, 1995).

China's State Education Commission (SEC) Demands Elite Schools Close

The *China Daily*, (Feb. 15, 1995) reports that China's State Education Commission and the Chinese Society for Science and Technology are demanding a stop to all elite schools.

Schools and classes for gifted children have mushroomed in

China during the past few years. These so-called "Olympic" schools burden the students with extra work and cause financial hardship to some families, the circular said.

These schools are to shut down and all courses for gifted students to be canceled beginning with the new February term. Fees paid to these "Olympic" schools are to be returned to the parents with an explanation. "Olympic" schools approved by the provincial education departments may finish their terms but cannot continue beyond that stage. Those found violating the regulations will be punished accordingly. Furthermore there are to be no competitions or awards for students without prior approval from the SEC.

The circular stressed that schools and teachers must focus on improving the quality of normal class teaching and that dropouts, especially from junior middle schools, are to be encouraged to return to school.

Pope's Photo Appears on Back Cover of Official Church Magazine

A photo of Pope John Paul II has appeared for the first time in the official magazine of the government-approved Church, *The Catholic Church in China*, (No. 1, 1995). The contents of the photograph, printed on the back cover, indicate that it was taken in Rome on Nov. 3, 1994, during a session of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Next to the photo of the Holy Father is a picture of Liu Bainian, vice-president of the Catholic Patriotic Association and the only Catholic delegate from the mainland who attended the conference.

The front cover presents two photos of Cardinal John Baptist Wu of Hong Kong while visiting the Catholic Church in China in November 1994. The magazine did not publish any photo of the Cardinal on his two earlier visits to China (*UCAN*, No. 809/B March 10, 1995).

In the Footsteps of Francis Xavier

In the Footsteps of Xavier is "an excellent production of the Kuangchi Program Service, Taipei. According to the Jesuit China Service, "*In the Footsteps of Xavier*" is an entire audiovisual kit for young people on evangelization which includes a video, a cassette tape of the soundtrack, and a companion guide book that suggests various activities designed to help viewers deepen the experiences and insights received while watching the program."

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