

China Church and News Update

RAB head visits Hong Kong

Ye Xiaowen, China's Religious Affairs Bureau head, led an eleven member delegation from Beijing to Hong Kong on June 20-29. He was invited by Hong Kong's main religious bodies: Buddhists, Catholics, Confucianists, Muslims, Protestants Taoists. Each religion hosted the delegation for one day.

The Catholics hosted the delegation on June 21. The members were received by Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung and other diocesan officials. The delegation visited the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the Catholic Diocese Centre, Holy Spirit Seminary and the Holy Spirit Study Centre

At a dinner reception on June 21, Ye, addressing some 60 leaders of the six major religions in Hong Kong, made some interesting points:

- The regulation issued by the State Council on January 31, 1994 on administration of religious venues will not be implemented in the post-1997 Hong Kong Administration Region (SAR).
- Ye reiterated that the RAB will not interfere in or administer religious affairs in Hong

Kong, because it observes the state policy of "one country, two systems".

- The RAB will respect the Basic Law and the constitution that will take effect when the SAR comes into existence with the July 1997 handover.
- Hong Kong religions are not required to support the socialist system; but they must respect the nation and motherland, not undermine Hong Kong's stability and prosperity, and love the country, Hong Kong and religion.
- The religious sector can help build a stable and prosperous society in Hong Kong.
- The relationship between Hong Kong religious bodies and their counterparts in China should be based on the three principles or non-subordination, non-interference and mutual respect laid down in the Basic Law.
- Mainlanders should not try to make Hong Kong people conform to mainland ideas, nor should Hong Kong people attempt this with mainlanders.
- Hong Kong people's religious activities in China are governed by the "Regulation on the Administration of the Re-

ligious Activities of Foreigners within the Borders of China”, No. 144, issued together with No. 145.

At a forum hosted by Protestants on June 24, one Protestant asked what procedures are necessary to enable Hong Kong preachers to preach in China. Ye replied by referring to the two documents regarding foreigners mentioned above.

When asked about the future of the Church-in China research centres in Hong Kong, Ye said that any Hong Kong-China Church exchange should follow the Basic law.

Father John Tong Hon, vicar-general of the diocese and director of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, presented the delegation with an overview of the diocese’s Catholic educational and social services.

Father Tong said the RAB director seemed interested in church-run and seminary education, asking if Catholic students receive preferential treatment in church schools and if the government subsidizes the seminary.

Father Tong responded that Hong Kong’s nine-year compulsory education applies to all students equally and that the Catholic seminary was self-financed.

Ye was also interested in the Internet asking whether church bodies are linked with the Vatican through such means, Father Tong responded that some church or-

ganizations do have access to the worldwide computer network.

The delegation also went to Lantau’s Po Lin monastery to see the statue of the Great Buddha.

In the delegation were RAB deputy director Losang-cheniei, Wang Manting, deputy director of the Second Bureau of the United Front Work Department under the Communist Party and An Baozhi, deputy director of the RAB’s foreign affairs division (UCAN/Sun Ex, 7/5/96).

First Theological Congress of the Church in China

News has just reached us that from Nov. 8 to 10, 1995, the Theological Research Center of the Chinese Bishops’ Conference in Beijing hosted the first Theological Research Conference, which focused on two topics: “A Theological View of How the Catholic Church in China Should Treat the Question of Birth Planning,” and “Reflections on Actualizing the Self-Construction of the Catholic Church in China in Present Day Society”. The meeting was chaired by Bp. Tu Shihua, with a total of 14 clergy and laity attending.

In addition, the RAB Research Centre met in Beijing from Nov. 28 to 30, 1995, for a symposium on “Church and State Relations in All Nations”. Some 40 religious scholars, religious personnel and RAB cadres attended.

A new shepherd for the Diocese of Xinjiang in Shanxi

Fr. Li Hongguang of the Diocese of Xinjiang was ordained a bishop on May 14, 1996 in the cathedral church by Bp. Zheng Shouduo. The Christian name of the new bishop is Joseph. He was born in Lucheng, Shanxi, 1926 and ordained a priest on March 21, 1953.

China Sisters participate in Hong Kong program

Nineteen Sisters from 15 different Chinese congregations and nine provinces attended a program of pastoral exchange, "Community Life (Starting Point: Prayer and Bible Sharing)", from June 11-July 3, 1996.

The program was sponsored by the Catholic Institute for Religion and Society (CIRS)

The Sisters who took part either hold or will hold positions of responsibility in their communities. On their return to China, the Sisters intend to share their experience of community, prayer and Scripture-based faith with the Catholics and the Sisters in their own communities (Sun. Ex. 7/12/96).

Christians freed

Beijing police have released two Christians after holding them for two months.

Bob Fu Xiqiu and his wife, Heidi Cai Bochun, were released on July 8 after being held by police for involvement in a Christian training centre near Beijing. The couple were apparently well treated while in custody.

After their release, police informed Mr. Fu's workplace, the Communist Party School, that he could continue his teaching job and the two could keep their living quarters there. In addition were they not pressed to pay fines.

One source cautioned that the release did not mean the authorities had relaxed control over Christians as there were reports of crackdowns in Henan, Anhui, and Guangdong (SCMP, 7/22/96).

Police target Christian Groups

Fearful of a fast-growing Christian church, police have stepped up their pressure on believers and closed hundreds of unregistered house churches in the past few months.

In Shanghai, more than 300 house churches or meeting points were closed in April alone and at least two important meeting points have been closed in Shenzhen. In one of the Shenzhen raids, police detained about 20 Christians.

The *Quanzhou Daily* reported that police shut down more than 30 meeting points of a Christian sect in Quanzhou, Fujian Province. Sources feared many

more would be shut down by the end of the year (SCMP, 6/19/96).

Officials deny report of monks' death

Officials have denied reports that one monk died after being shot by troops who took over the Ganden monastery in May. An official from the Religious Affairs Bureau maintained that "no troops entered Ganden; there was no gunfire, no monk was wounded or died." He also dismissed claims from the Tibet Information Network in London that about 100 of the monastery's 600 lamas had returned to their homes because they were frightened. Many monks had fled Ganden. The official maintained that the 63 monks who had been detained had also been released.

A working group was in the monastery organizing the monks to study the religious policies of the Communist Party, the official said, adding, "Some monks admitted they were not familiar with law and party policy." (SCMP 6/14/96).

Tibetan monk dies

According to Amnesty International, a Tibetan monk imprisoned for pro-democracy activities died after being denied medical care.

Kelsang Thutob, a Buddhist monk at Crepung Monastery near

Lhasa, was sentenced to 18 years in prison in 1989 for forming a pro-democracy group and distributing anti-government material.

The monk had been in generally poor health and suffering from high blood pressure but had received no medical care. He died in prison on July 5; he was 49.

Nine other monks were sentenced with Kelsang Thutob to five to nineteen years' imprisonment for anti-government activities.

The Tibetan government in exile reported that a 19 year old monk, Sanagye Tenphei, died on May 6 in the same prison (SCMP 7/28/96).

Guangdong honors foreign teachers

Thirty-five foreign teachers received awards from Guangdong's provincial government for their contribution to local education.

These foreign teachers and scholars represent 11 countries: Australia, Austria, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Portugal, United States, Portugal and Ukraine.

Although most have been languages teachers, others have focused on architecture, nursing, designing and music.

"These teachers", Lu Zhonghe, vice-governor of the province said, "have been bridges, connecting Guangdong with the outside world. In the future, we'll

welcome more foreigners to work here, helping us nurture our local talent to meet the country's surging needs."

Every year, 36 of Guangdong's 43 colleges and universities invite 150 to 160 foreign teachers for long-term assignments of at least a year.

Nationwide about 15,000 foreigners teach at Chinese colleges and universities each year (CD 6/5/96).

Hiring foreign teachers, no excuse for raising tuition

A new education circular has warned that schools cannot demand higher tuition just because they have foreign faculty members.

Between 1991 and 1995, only 600 schools, mostly universities were authorized to hire foreign teachers, now the number has doubled. Today adult education centers, vocational training schools, middle and primary schools, even kindergartens, are offering classes taught by foreigners. The new circular specifies that kindergartens, primary schools and junior middle schools are not usually allowed to hire foreign language teachers. Senior middle schools, universities, vocational training and adult education institutions which want to employ foreign teachers need to meet the prerequisites.

These include a management office, qualified Chinese assistants,

a complete appraisal system, proper living and security guarantees, stable financial resources and knowledge of the foreign expert hiring process.

When all these conditions are fulfilled, the schools can submit their application to provincial education administrations and foreign affairs offices.

The application will go to the State Bureau of Foreign Experts for final approval after the provincial education, foreign affairs and public security departments have endorsed it (CD 7/12/96).

UN plea for China's children

In an eight-page report on China, the United Nations human rights committee has called on China to combat infanticide of girls and also expressed concern over "very high mortality rates" in some of Chinese welfare institutions (SCMP, 6/9/96).

Baby Friendly Hospitals

The Ministry of Health has mapped out a national program asking for the construction of baby-friendly hospitals. This year China says it will set up another 2,000 "baby-friendly" hospitals. This will bring the nation's total to around 5,000.

The nationwide program is designed to reduce the infant mortality rate and improve the physical health of Chinese children.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, a joint endeavor of UNICEF and WHO, aims at encouraging hospital to promote breast feeding exclusively. The hospitals also forbid promotion of breast-milk substitutes.

Data from MOH indicate that before the new program was introduced, the rate of breast feeding sharply declined in China in both rural and urban areas. As the number of professional women increased, mothers with careers often found it difficult to breast-feed their children so the situation became worse as time went on (CD 7/24/96).

Anti-crime crackdown

In China's most recent crackdown on crime, ninety eight people have been put to death. These bring the number of executions in the last three months to over one thousand.

Fifty-nine people were executed for drug trafficking; thirty for alleged theft, rape, murder and attempted murder, six others for unspecified crimes, still others for stealing horses and cattle. In addition China sentenced the deputy head of the China Investment Bank in Hunan to death for taking bribes

These executions were reported in a variety of Chinese newspapers (SCMP 7/25/96).

