

President Jiang Addresses Religious Representatives

On March 4, 1999, President Jiang Zemin addressed the ethnic minority and religious delegates at the Second Plenum of the Ninth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The March 5 edition of Hong Kong's Ta Kung Pao reported on the speech. The following is a translation of the section of that report dealing with religion.

Jiang Zemin said that the correct handling of the religious question involves: (1) A complete and correct implementation of the Party's religious policy, (2) A strengthening of supervision over religious affairs in accordance with the law, and (3) A positive guidance of religion to adapt to socialist society.

He said that "respect and protection for religious freedom is a long-standing basic policy of ours. We communists are atheists, who do not believe in religion, but we firmly uphold the policy of religious freedom. We must unite the great mass of religious believers so that they may play a positive role and become a positive force in the construction of socialist modernization."

Jiang Zemin pointed out that positively guiding religion to adapt to socialism has two important contents: (1) Religious believers must observe the laws, regulations and policies of a socialist country. The law protects religious freedom; and it is necessary that religious activities take place within the confines of the law. (2) Religious activities must follow and serve the highest national advantage and the whole public benefit. Religious personages must be patriotic and progressive, and they must make a contribution to the unity of the motherland and among all citizens, and to the development of society. Chinese religious believers have a good tradition of patriotism, which they must keep developing. Religious personages and religious organizations must use their influence, and advance the beneficial content of religious doctrines and laws in order to guide believers to be patriotic and law-abiding, to do good and avoid evil, and to serve society.