

EDITORIAL

The special topic for this issue of *Tripod* is the life and times of China's first Republican Foreign Minister, turned Benedictine monk, Lou Tseng-Tsiang. The year 2009 is the 60th anniversary of Lou's death and the 90th anniversary of the Versailles Peace Treaty, which marked the end of World War I, and which Lou and his fellow representatives in the Chinese delegation to the Peace Conference refused to sign.

Described as a gentleman, with refined speech and a mild manner, Lou Tseng-Tsiang's courage came to the fore when China's territorial integrity was at risk of being destroyed. The reader will recall that the delegates of 27 nations at Versailles agreed to grant Germany's leased territory in Shandong Province to Japan. When news of this "sell-out" reached China, over 2,000 angry students gathered on May 4, 1919 in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, to voice their opposition to that decision of the Peace Conference. Demonstrations took place in other cities in China as well. It was the beginning of "The May 4th Movement," the 90th anniversary of which also takes place this year.

In his article, our Chinese editor, Anthony Lam, points out the leading role Lou Tseng-Tsiang played in the Chinese delegation's decision not to attend the treaty signing ceremony on June 28, 1919, and of course, not to sign the treaty itself. He even prevailed upon the Beijing government to issue an order not to sign, which it belatedly did on July 10. They decided to bow to the Chinese people's will from observance of the many demonstrations and the boycott of Japanese goods taking place throughout the country.

In an excerpt from his book, *Christians in China, A.D. 600 to 2000* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2007), Jean-Pierre Charbonnier describes how Lou Tseng-Tsiang got interested in Catholicism. Sergio Ticozzi spells out Lou Tseng-Tsiang's many efforts to bring

about the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Vatican. Father Ticozzi has also compiled an update of Chinese Church news for 2008. Father Roderick O'Brien sends us a "book notice" (he demurs from calling it a "review") on *Blue Book of Religions*, edited by the Social Sciences Academic Press (China), and entitled *Annual Report on China's Religions (2008)*.

On December 10, 2008, three hundred Chinese scholars and human rights activists, on the 60th anniversary of the promulgation of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, issued Charter 08 (inspired by Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia) advocating more democracy and respect for human rights in China. Since its issuance, more than 8,000 Chinese scholars, both within and outside of China, have signed Charter 08. In a well-reasoned, straightforward manner, the authors, after an overview of history, set forth their principles and what they advocate. They make 19 recommendations "on national governance, citizen's rights and social development."

No. 12 of the recommendations, on the freedom of religion reads: "We must guarantee freedom of religion and belief, and institute a separation of religion and state. There must be no governmental interference in peaceful religious activities. We should abolish any laws, regulations or local rules that limit or suppress the religious freedom of citizens. We should abolish the current system that requires religious groups (and their places of worship) to get official approval in advance and substitute for it a system in which registry is optional and, for those who choose to register, automatic."

Unfortunately, the main author of the declaration, Liu Xiaobo, a prominent literary critic, was detained by state security officers in December 2008, while many other signers have been summoned for questioning by the police.

It is good to see that China still has people, like Lou Tseng-Tsiang and the May 4th demonstrators of 90 years ago, who are willing to stand up for the rights of their fellow citizens. Hopefully the authorities will listen to them, and put their recommendations into effect. China is lucky to have them, and should be thankful for them.
(PJB)