

## **Catholic Lay Apostolate in Twentieth-century China: From Catholic Action to the Legion of Mary**

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**Abstract:** Voluntary participation of the laity in apostolic work under the encouragement and direction of the clergy is a distinctive feature of Catholic missionary activity in China from the early to the mid-twentieth century. It contrasts with church practice during the Ming and Qing dynasties when everything fell on the shoulders of the clergy and a small number of paid catechists. The lay apostolate centered around Catholic Action during the Republican period, and the Legion of Mary from the end of World War II to the early years of the Chinese Communist regime. Catholic Action encouraged the laity to participate in social reform and charitable work. It flourished in more than half the Chinese vicariates in the 1930s until the Second Sino-Japanese war halted its activities. After the war, the Legion of Mary, which had expanded remarkably in Ireland and Africa, was introduced to China by the Apostolic Inter-Nuncio. Spread across most provinces in hopes of keeping Catholic

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communities alive in a Church where the clergy was barred from ministry, it was soon banned by the Communist regime as a “secret and reactionary organization” in the early 1950s. Investigating the two lay associations through firsthand accounts and discussing their difficulties and controversies reveals the predicament faced by the Catholic Church during this time of change.

**Keywords:** Catholic Action, Catholic Church in China, laity, lay apostolate, Legion of Mary

**[摘要]** 本文以二十世紀初至中葉，天主教在華傳教活動一個明顯特徵為研究對象，即教友（平信徒）在神職人員的鼓勵及指導下義務參與傳教工作，有別於明清兩代傳教職責落在神職人員和少數受薪傳道員肩上之侷限情形。教友傳教運動先後由兩大善會所組織：活躍於民國時期的「公教進行會」，及二戰後至中共建政初期的「聖母軍」。公教進行會推動教友參與社會改革及慈善公益，在三十年代在全國逾半教區發展蓬勃，直至中日戰火蔓延令其活動停頓。戰後奉派來華的教廷公使曾在愛爾蘭和非洲目睹聖母軍的傳教成效斐然，決定推廣至大部分教區，目的是培養教友在無神論政權一旦建立、神職人員從缺時維持教會活力，終於五十年代初被中共以「秘密反動組織」罪名取締。本文除了耙梳史料文獻，更著重於討論兩個教友團體在擴展至全國各地的過程中，發生何種困難與爭議，讓讀者以小見大，一窺當時天主教會整體面臨的處境。

**關鍵詞：**中國天主教、平信徒、公教進行會、聖母軍、教友傳教

## 1 Introduction: Chinese Lay Apostolate in History

This paper studies the role of laity in propagating the Catholic faith in twentieth-century China with special attention to two nationwide associations even before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) advocated the laity's "participation in the salvific mission of the church"<sup>1</sup> and encouraged "their apostolate be broadened and intensified."<sup>2</sup> The word "laity" refers to people who become members of the Catholic Church through baptism but are outside the ranks of the clergy. "Lay apostolate" means all activity of church members directed to the purpose of spreading the kingdom of God so humankind may share in Jesus Christ's saving redemption.<sup>3</sup>

Chinese converts, scholars of China's four-hundred-year history of Catholic missions<sup>4</sup> teach us, were no mere recipients of the Gospel. Many of them assisted foreign

1 Pope Paul VI, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," 21 November 1964, no. 33, retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

2 Pope Paul VI, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," 18 November 1965, no. 1, retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html)

3 Pope Paul VI, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," no. 2.

4 Among other historical studies in Chinese Catholicism, Father Joseph Motte 穆啟蒙 SJ (1906-1990)'s 《中國教友與傳教工作》 [Chinese Lay Apostles] and Father Jean-Pierre Charbonnier 沙百里 MEP (b. 1932)'s *Christians in China A.D. 600 to 2000* focus on the role of the Chinese laity, which inspire the author to take a closer look at the two major lay associations.

missionaries in introducing Christianity across the immense mission field. For instance, the “Three Pillars of Chinese Catholicism” of the late Ming—namely, Paul Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562-1633), Leo Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565-1630) and Michael Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1557-1627)—not only collaborated with Jesuit missionaries in translating and writing Christian literature, but also funded the building of churches and offered protection to missionaries amid anti-Christian unrest. Besides Catholic literati, male catechists and consecrated virgins to missionaries lent valuable assistance in the propagation of the Gospel and the management of local Catholic communities. Their role became more important when missionaries were expelled during a century-long proscription of Christianity (1724-1846) in the Qing Dynasty. In times of Christian persecution, laity were arrested and killed if they refused to apostatize.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to individual efforts, Catholic sodalities or pious associations 善會 sprang up during the Ming-Qing period, beginning with the Sodality of Our Lady 聖母會 set up by Jesuit missionaries. By the end of the Ming Dynasty in 1644, there were some 400 various pious associations across China. The lay groups also played a significant role in sustaining the spiritual life of local Catholics during difficult times.<sup>6</sup> Since the mid-nineteenth century, missionary activity had

5 Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China A.D. 600 to 2000* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2003), pp. 291-315.

6 Joseph Motte, 《中國教友與使徒工作》(Laity and Lay Apostolate in China), trans. Joseph Tarc Hou 侯景文 (Taichung: Kuangchi Press, 1978), pp. 117-118.

regained freedom and gradually extended to almost every corner of the Celestial Empire after its doors were somewhat reluctantly thrown open by the Western powers. The influx of male and female missionaries revitalized Catholic missions. The number of converts increased from 200,000 in 1840 to 720,000 by the time of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and then doubled when the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1912.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the number of conversions, the influence of the Catholic Church was confined to rural areas. Moreover, the Church's evangelistic approach of alms and other charitable service to the poor, and then instruction of basic catechism to those who wanted to join the church, remained static. As a result, new converts were mostly illiterate country people, a considerable portion of whom were free riders, the so-called "rice Christians," receiving baptism in exchange for material benefits or intercession on their behalf in lawsuits. Missionary activity, which had relied on treaty protection, incurred castigation and hostility from local gentry and officials. It was not until the early twentieth century that several farsighted priests created new associations of the laity to raise the quality of Catholics and expand the scope of missionary work. They were pioneers of Catholic Action 公教進行會 in China. Reaching the apex of its development in the 1930s, the nationwide lay movement withered due to the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and was replaced by the Legion of Mary 聖母軍 that rapidly blossomed around the country between 1948 and 1951.

<sup>7</sup> Motte, 《中國教友與使徒工作》, p. 205.

By studying the historical context of both prosperity and adversity of these two lay associations (with greater attention to the Legion of Mary) this paper narrates the development of the Catholic Church around the Communist takeover in China. We shall address the following questions: (1) Why did the Legion of Mary become more popular among Catholic priests and laity than Catholic Action? (2) Why did the new-born Communist regime choose the Legion as one of the first targets of crackdown? With new primary material found at the Columban Fathers Central Archive in Ireland, this paper uses firsthand accounts of the Legion's national director, Father Aedan William McGrath 莫克勤 SSC (1906-2000), and his superior Father Edward MacElroy 梅開五 SSC (1911-1980), the Shanghai-based director of the Region of China of the Columban Fathers (1948-1954), to revisit the history of the Legion of Mary, which bore the brunt of the Communist regime's wrath when it began purging the Catholic Church of opposing elements. In this paper, we limit our scope to Shanghai, where the Legion headquarters in China were set up and where the Communists experienced the first defeat in their campaign to suppress the Legion.

## **2 Catholic Action in the Republican Era**

Catholic Action, before the Second Vatican Council, is a generic term referring to “the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy,” which became a widespread movement of multiple types of lay organization under the

promotion of Pope Pius XI (pontificate 1922-1939).<sup>8</sup> He endeavored to organize the laity to infuse the temporal society with Gospel values, first in Italy and then throughout the universal church.<sup>9</sup> We shall see that he made the same call to Chinese Catholics in 1928. Since Vatican II, Catholic Action refers to lay association which shares the church's apostolic aim, that is, "the evangelization and sanctification of men and the formation of a Christian conscience among them so that they can infuse the spirit of the Gospel into various communities and departments of life."<sup>10</sup> The lay groups still function under the higher direction of the hierarchy (bishops and priests) but they are given greater recognition to their responsibilities. They may take on various forms and titles to meet the needs of different regions and peoples.

In China, the Catholic Action movement sprouted in the

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8 The origin of Catholic Action could be traced back to the encouragement of Popes Leo XIII (pontificate 1878-1903) and Pius X (pontificate 1903-1914) to the Catholic laity's political and social engagement in the temporal world. In 1912, Belgian Father (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967) formed the Young Christian Workers to train factory workers to evangelize in their work environment. Pius XI supported and took this concept to promote Catholic Action. Motte, 《中國教友與使徒工作》, p. 206.

9 Gregory M. A. Gronbacher, "The True Meaning of Catholic Action," *Catholic Culture*, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=3221> [accessed 9 August 2019]; "Pius XI," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 9 August 2019, retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pius-XI#ref77494> [accessed 9 August 2019].

10 Pope Paul VI, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," no. 20.

early twentieth century. It gradually replaced the traditional practice of foreign missionaries hiring catechists to assist in missionary work, either as caretakers of local Catholic communities or as traveling evangelists who accompanied missionaries or went on a mission alone.<sup>11</sup> Pioneers included Father Frédéric-Vincent Lebbe 雷鳴遠 CM (1877-1940), a Belgian missionary in Tianjin with a deep love for the Chinese people, as well as several farsighted Chinese priests in the northern provinces of Shanxi and Gansu and in Shanghai. They shared the perception that conversion of the whole of China was beyond the power of missionaries and observed that Catholics in different parts of China had no contact with each other and seemed like a sheet of loose sand.<sup>12</sup> In 1912, therefore, the lay apostolate associations these priests formed separately merged to become Catholic Action of China headquartered in Tianjin.

This movement not only focused on internal perspectives—consolidating Catholic communities, strengthening the faith of the laity, and guarding them against heretical and evil ideas—but also encouraged its members to help the country by improving social morality.<sup>13</sup> Seventeen vicariates set up Catholic Action groups within a year.<sup>14</sup>

11 Charbonnier, *Christians in China A.D. 600 to 2000*, p. 302.

12 Bishop Cheng [Yutang] of Hongdong 洪洞成 (玉堂) 主教, 〈中華公教進行會之演進史〉 [History of the Development of the Catholic Action of China], *Revue Catholique* 《聖教雜誌》, 24.12 (December 1935): 731.

13 〈中華公教進行會簡章〉 [General Regulations of the Catholic Action of China], 《聖教雜誌》, 1.8 (August 1912): 145.

14 Motte, 《中國教友與使徒工作》, p. 207.



Besides developing charitable services, some members ran for election at national and provincial levels with the purpose of defending the interests of the church. An outstanding example was their campaign for religious freedom in 1913, when the government of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916) proposed making Confucianism the state religion. Several eminent Catholics in Tianjin and Beijing took prompt action submitting to parliament a petition in the name of Catholic Action, as well as approaching parliament members one by one to convey their message directly. They also joined forces with Protestants, Muslims, Buddhists and Taoists to fight for full religious freedom. Their protests succeeded in blocking the proposal to establish state Confucianism, but Yuan still revived the monarchy and proclaimed himself emperor of the Chinese Empire in December 1915.<sup>15</sup>

In December 1914, the first national congress of Catholic Action took place in Tianjin, chaired by Father Lebbe, to standardize the statutes and strengthen communication among the provincial branches. After a few years of activity, however, Catholic Action gradually declined for two major reasons: (1) A sense of evangelization had not been awakened among the laity in general; and (2) most foreign missionaries did not give support because of their enmity towards Lebbe,<sup>16</sup> who ardently supported

15 Cheng [Yutang], 〈中華公教進行會之演進史〉, pp. 733-734; See also Sergio Ticozzi, "Christians and Freedom of Religion in the Early Republic of China," *Tripod*, 162 (Autumn 2011): 35-37.

16 Chen Fang-chung 陳方中, 《于斌樞機傳》 [Biography of Cardinal Yupin] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 2001), p. 28.

the Chinese people's patriotic course to defend the nation's integrity against imperialist invasion. When Lebbe was transferred from Tianjin as a result of the Laoxikai Incident 老西開事件 in 1916,<sup>17</sup> the principal and most vibrant Catholic Action group was suddenly leaderless, and lesser branches inevitably became inactive without its direction.<sup>18</sup>

### Revival under papal instruction

Archbishop Celso Costantini 剛恆毅 (1876-1958), the first Apostolic Delegate that Pius XI sent to China (tenure 1922-1933), prepared several general principles of Catholic Action to be discussed during *Primum Concilium Sinense* (the First Chinese Council 中華全國主教公會議) in May-June 1924.<sup>19</sup> After having private communication with many

17 The Laoxikai Incident (1916-1917) was an anti-French campaign in which Tianjin citizens protested against an expansion project of the French Concession into the Laoxikai district, where a new cathedral was built. Father Lebbe and *I Shih Pao* 益世報 (a Chinese daily he founded in 1915) were sided with the boycott action against French commercial interests. Consequently, Lebbe was ordered by his superior to remain neutral and transferred him to the Vicariate of Ningbo (Zhejiang province) in 1916. D. E. Mungello, *The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), pp. 39-43; Charbonnier, *Christians in China A.D. 600 to 2000*, p. 391.

18 Cheng [Yutang], 〈中華公教進行會之演進史〉, pp. 734-736.

19 A hundred and eight clergymen took part in this historic plenary assembly of Catholic bishops in China. The voting delegates were comprised of forty-two vicars apostolic, five prefects apostolic, and one apostolic administrator. Almost all were European and American, except for two Chinese prefects apostolic nominated by Costantini shortly before the Council. A Trappist abbot and twenty-four superiors of religious men's institutes attended the Council meetings as

bishops, however, he realized that it was an inappropriate time to restart the lay association. The Laoxikai Incident, in which members of Tianjin's Catholic Action played an active role in protesting the extension of the French Concession into the Laoxikai district, had worried the bishops that lay associations would degenerate into instruments of independence, political unrest or outright revolt.<sup>20</sup> Four years later, in July 1928, Costantini thought the opportune moment had come, and reported to Rome on the urgency of organizing Catholic Action in China. Earlier that year, Pope Pius XI had advocated for the Catholic Action movement by giving it a classical definition of "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy." It trained and empowered the laity in the temporal society to bring a Christian influence to their environment.<sup>21</sup>

On August 2, Costantini received a long telegram from Rome. It was a congratulatory message from the Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Gasparri (1852-1934) on behalf of Pius XI acknowledging reunification of China achieved by the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) through its Northern Expedition. In the telegram, which received

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observers. The purpose was to a set of particular laws for the missions so that superiors of missionary institutes and other personnel engaged in the spread of Christianity could be regulated by the same laws. A complete list of attendees and absentees can be found in 《聖教雜誌》, 13,7 (July 1924): 22-24.

20 Celso Costantini, *Con i missionari in Cina (1922-1933): Memorie de fatti e di idee* (Rome: Via di Propaganda, 1947), vol. II, p. 25.

21 Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Catholic Action," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Catholic-Action>

positive coverage in the Chinese press, the pope commanded bishops in China to develop Catholic Action. The purpose of promoting the lay apostolate, the message stated, was to encourage Chinese Catholics to “make a contribution to peace, social prosperity and development of the country with their prayers, good words and charitable work, so that the sacred and valuable teaching of the Bible could be spread to the world.”<sup>22</sup>

Costantini promptly published instructions and a statute draft of Catholic Action the following month.<sup>23</sup> Catholic Action headquarters were reestablished in the Apostolate Delegation in Beijing in November 1929. It was to conduct propaganda so that all vicariates and parishes would set up branches as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup> Fathers Philip Wu Dehui 吳德輝 CM (1893-?) and Venanzio Zhao Huaixin 趙懷信 (?-1949), both from Beijing, had been appointed as national ecclesiastical assistant 監理司鐸 successively. To prevent abuses, the statute specified that the lay apostolate was “under the auspices and moderation of ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>25</sup> Pious, exemplary and selfless persons who entered Catholic Action not for personal or human reasons but simply for spiritual reasons should be chosen.<sup>26</sup> In September 1932, the

22 Celso Costantini, “Actio Catholica,” *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis*, 1,3 (September 1928): 373.

23 Costantini, “Actio Catholica,” pp. 376-393.

24 〈成立公教進行會之必要〉 [The necessity of constituting Catholic Action], *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis*, 2,1 (January 1929): 49.

25 Costantini, “Actio Catholica,” p. 384.

26 Costantini, *Con i missionari in Cina (1922-1933)*, vol. II, p. 26.

statute was revised and approved by the bishops in China, and Shanghai philanthropist Joseph Lu Bohong 陸伯鴻 (1875-1937) was named the president.<sup>27</sup>

After Costantini returned to Rome and resigned as Apostolic Delegate because of sickness in 1933, he recommended Father Paul Yupin 于斌 (1901-1978) to the pope as director general of Catholic Action in China. Yupin had obtained a doctorate in theology from the Pontifical Urban College, and then served as professor of Chinese philosophy and literature at the college and a librarian of the Vatican Library. Catholic Action then entered a flourishing period upon his return home at the end of 1933. Five associations (subdivisions) had been set up according to the social needs of China: men, women, youth, academic research, and social service.<sup>28</sup> In September 1935, an eight-day general congress of Catholic Action was held in Shanghai, attended by more than a thousand members from all branches,<sup>29</sup> which “began a new era of Catholic Action in China, thereafter further progress has been made.”<sup>30</sup>

27 Costantini, *Con i missionari in Cina (1922-1933)*, vol. II, pp. 356-357.

28 Chen Fang-chung, 《于斌樞機傳》, pp. 29-30.

29 Director of Lumen News Service, “The First All-China Catholic Action Congress Held at Shanghai September 8-15, 1935,” *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis*, 8 (1935): 951; Chen Fang-chung 陳方中 and Chiang Kuo-hsiung 江國雄, 《中梵外交關係史》 [History of Sino-Vatican Diplomatic Relations] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 2003), pp. 150-151.

30 A comment from Father John Niu Yiwei, quoted from Chen Fang-chung, 《于斌樞機傳》, p. 37.

The growth of Catholic Action benefited from the publication of several magazines edited by Father John Niu Yiwei 牛亦未 (1897-1976). He and Yupin were among a group of Chinese priests who were inspired by the model of Father Lebbe to dedicate themselves to the movement of indigenization of Christianity in China. With the support of the Apostolic Delegation, they founded several influential Chinese Catholic magazines: *Schola Catholica* 公教學校, *Nova Stella Polaris* 新北辰, *Actio Catholica* 公教進行, *Nova Petra* 磐石雜誌, and *Femina Catholica* 公教婦.<sup>31</sup> Yupin was firmly convinced that the modern media had a much greater propagation effect than oral lectures.<sup>32</sup> In 1936, Niu took over Yupin's post of director general of Catholic Action in China after the latter's elevation to the episcopacy as vicar apostolic of Nanjing.

The second Apostolic Delegate to China, Archbishop Mario Zanin 蔡寧 (1890-1958, tenure 1933-1946), continued promoting Catholic Action as one of his prior tasks, and put emphasis on the formation of its members across the country. Shortly after the Shanghai Congress, he penned a lengthy letter to declare 1936 as the year of “course and lecture” for Catholic Action and called upon all bishops in China to (1) hold training courses for lay leaders, (2) conduct annual

31 *Commissio Synodalis in Sinis, Catalogus Publicationum* (Beijing, 1937), p. 3; Albert Chao 趙雅博, 〈牛若望副主教逝世廿五週年祭〉 [Commemoration of the Twenty-fifth Death Anniversary of Vicar General Niu Ruowang], *Costantinian Bimonthly* 《恆毅雙月刊》, 506 (August 2001): 47.

32 Chen Fang-chung, 《于斌樞機傳》, p. 35.

retreats for members of every association, (3) encourage research and writing on apologetics, and (4) practice thrift and help the needy to cope with the worldwide economic depression.<sup>33</sup>

As of June 1937, according to an incomplete survey, thirty vicariates had established men's associations, eleven vicariates had women's associations, ten had youth associations, as well as associations for students of the three Catholic universities,<sup>34</sup> for non-Catholic students in Beijing, and for high school students. The total membership was 8,614. Fifty-five out of the 119 vicariates had not formed any Catholic Action associations.<sup>35</sup> Various kinds of effective apostolic work included conducting public lectures, running evening schools and libraries, visiting jails and preaching to prisoners.<sup>36</sup>

On December 30, however, shocking news broke that Joseph Lu had been gunned down outside of his residence by two men. The murder, which happened at the beginning of the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, remains unsolved. Although his own enterprises and many Catholic establishments were destroyed by war, to save the poor

33 Mario Zanin, "De apostolatu laico" (February 26, 1936), *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis*, 9,4 (April 1936): 369-372.

34 They were Fu Jen University in Beijing, Institut des Hautes Études Industrielles et Commerciales de Tientsin (Tientsin Kung Shang College) in Tianjin, and Aurora University in Shanghai.

35 〈全國公教進行會統計〉 [Statistics of Catholic Action Nationwide], 《聖教雜誌》, 26,12 (December 1937): 761.

36 Motte, 《中國教友與使徒工作》, p. 210.

and refugees in the city Lu contacted the Japanese invaders and agreed to join the local reorganization committee they created. His act contravened directives of the Nationalist government that had retreated to Chongqing in southwestern China.<sup>37</sup> The loss of its celebrated head at the outset of the eight-year warfare raised the curtain on the decline of Catholic Action in China.

As the missionary fields became more extensive in the Republican era, the laity were encouraged to join forces with the clergy for the Christianization of China. This concerted effort went beyond the boundaries of vicariates and involved educated urban Catholics. To some extent it empowered them to break their position of subordination in the European-dominated missions. On the other hand, it required a big change in mentality among Catholics to develop a sense of active participation in church affairs. To a certain extent, the laity's participation in politics and social welfare in the name of Catholic Action was able to build a better reputation and reduce the church's stigma of cultural imperialism.

### 3 The Legion of Mary in Post-war China

Modeled on the army of ancient Rome, the Legion of Mary is a new and highly structured system of Catholic Action which aims at the sanctification of its members and the conversion of the world.<sup>38</sup> It was unknown outside

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37 Charbonnier, *Christians in China A.D. 600 to 2000*, p. 401; Costantini, *Con i missionari in Cina (1922-1933)*, vol. II, p. 317.

38 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*



Hubei province, however, until the arrival of the first Apostolic Inter-Nuncio to China, Archbishop Antonio Riberi 黎培理 (1897-1967, tenure 1946-1958).<sup>39</sup> During his service at the Apostolic Nunciature to Ireland (1930-1934), Riberi became acquainted with the Legion of Mary and its founder Frank Duff (1889-1980) in Dublin. After his appointment as Apostolic Delegate to the African Missions in September 1934, based in the British colony of Kenya, he saw the extraordinary work of Edel Quinn (1907-1944), an Irish lay missionary sent from Dublin to establish the Legion in East and Central Africa.<sup>40</sup> Riberi had no doubt that the Legion could play a dynamic part in propagating the Catholic faith in China.<sup>41</sup>

Three months following the erection of the Chinese Catholic Hierarchy in April 1946,<sup>42</sup> Pope Pius XII (pontificate 1939-1958) established the Apostolic Internunciature in

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(Dublin: Concilium Legionis Mariae, 1955, 7th American ed.), pp. 2-4.

39 Riberi was born in Monte Carlo, Monaco, and ordained a priest for the Diocese of Rome in 1922. Unlike his predecessors, Costantini and Zanin, he graduated from the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, which trains priests to serve in the diplomatic corps of the Holy See, and had previous experience in the diplomatic service.

40 Chen and Chiang, 《中梵外交關係史》, p. 203.

41 Aedan W. McGrath, *From Navan to China: The Story of a "Chinese Irishman,"* Eamonn McCarthy and Michael Walsh (eds.) (Dublin: R.A.W. Publishing, 2008), p. 45.

42 The new hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church in China consisted of twenty archdioceses and seventy-nine dioceses, which were elevated from their previous status of vicariates apostolic, while thirty-eight prefectures apostolic retained the same status, as they were deemed not mature enough to become fully blown dioceses.

Nanjing (the capital of the Republic of China, 1927-1949), with Riberi as the first Inter-Nuncio. At that time, there were 2,348 Chinese and 3,094 foreign priests, as well as 4,299 Chinese and 2,157 foreign religious brothers and sisters serving nearly 3,280,000 Catholics.<sup>43</sup>

In his first letter of greetings to all bishops in China published in January 1947, the 49-year-old diplomat admitted his anxiety and fear because of his understanding about “what difficulties impede here the peaceful propagation of the Gospel” in the vast regions of China, as well as about the outstanding achievements that his predecessors had made. He pointed out major challenges of post-war missionary work: “Every missionary has to convert hundreds of thousands of souls and has to care for thousands. This little flock of workers has decreased in numbers because of the war and other conditions ... And not a few are hindered so that they cannot exercise their ministry.” The supply of new missionaries was limited due to the shortage of vocations “arising from the war, material and social changes.” Financial support from European countries to the missions in China also halted owing to the war and the breakdown of the economy.<sup>44</sup>

Another pressing issue was that the Communists were

43 *Annuaire des Missions Catholiques de Chine 1947* (Shanghai: Bureau Sinologique de Zi-ka-wei, 1947), p. XIII.

44 Antonius Riberi, “Ad Illustrissimos et Reverendissimos Ordinarios in Siniis” [To the Most Noble and Most Reverend Bishops in China], *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis*, 14,1/2 (January/February 1947): 76.

winning control of the whole country. Riberi could foresee that missionaries would be expelled one day, and in the meantime it was vital to build up a framework which would sustain the church in the absence of the clergy.<sup>45</sup> He learned that an Irish missionary, Father Aedan W. McGrath, had had a successful experience of running the Legion of Mary in his Qianjiang parish (belonging to the Diocese of Hanyang, Hubei, managed by the Society of Saint Columban), and therefore asked for him to promote it to all Chinese dioceses. Actually, it was McGrath's confrere, Father Joseph Hogan SSC (1900-1946), who introduced the Legion to China in 1937, but unfortunately he died of pulmonary tuberculosis in July 1946, on the same day as Riberi was appointed the Inter-Nuncio.<sup>46</sup>

After his bishop agreed to put him at the disposal of Riberi in April 1947,<sup>47</sup> McGrath made a careful study of the Legion system at the Dublin Concilium (headquarters).<sup>48</sup> He returned to China on February 16, 1948.<sup>49</sup> "Have you realized the impossibility of the situation?" Riberi asked when they met in Shanghai the following day, "Five hundred million people and only five thousand priests? Even if I doubled and trebled that number, the conversion of China is

45 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 45.

46 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 45; Neil Collins (ed.), *Those who Journeyed with Us* (Missionary Society of St. Columban, 2016), p. 104.

47 Mgr. Galvin to Aedan McGrath, 23 April 1947. Aedan W. McGrath Papers, Columban Fathers Central Archive.

48 "Bulletins," *The Far East*, 31,7 (July 1948): 103.

49 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 50.

still impossible.” The future of the Catholic Church in China would be largely dependent on fervent lay apostles, and Riberi sought to train them through the Legion.

“Father, I want you—as fast as you can—to go all over China, not just in Shanghai, and start the Legion of Mary before it’s too late,” Riberi said to McGrath. “Archbishop, do you not think it’s too late?” he asked. “Do what you’re told,” Riberi replied, and instructed him to start from the Aurora College for Women 震旦女子文理學院, the only tertiary institution for women in Republican China, run by the Religious of the Sacred Heart. When McGrath doubted that it was the right place to start—among sophisticated girls from wealthy families in Shanghai—Riberi repeated, “Do what you’re told.”<sup>50</sup> Things happened beyond McGrath’s expectations. In early April, Santa Maria Praesidium was started in St. Columban’s parish with six European Catholics, and he attended the second weekly meeting of Our Lady Queen of China Praesidium which Mother Margaret Thornton 唐樹德 RSCJ (1898-1977) had begun with six Aurora girls, a capable and keen bunch.<sup>51</sup>

After the establishment of four praesidia in Shanghai, McGrath returned to the triple cities of Wuhan in late May,

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50 Aedan W. McGrath, *Perseverance through Faith: A Priest’s Prison Story*, Theresa Marie Moreau (ed.) (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2008), p. 33.

51 McGrath’s diaries on April 2 and April 5, 1948, extracted from McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 55; McGrath, *Perseverance through Faith*, p. 33.

the beginning of his tour around the country. In less than two years, this five-foot-three Irish missionary had traveled by plane, by boat and by road to major Chinese cities—Beijing, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Macau, Guilin (Guangxi province), Hengyang (Hunan province), Chongqing, Chengdu and Wanxian (Sichuan province)—setting up more than 1,000 praesidia in ninety dioceses.<sup>52</sup> McGrath wrote to Duff on June 6, telling him that the responses were overwhelmingly positive when he talked to the bishops, who had received a letter about the Legion from the Inter-Nuncio but did not know how to get started.

After he gave initial talks and conducted sample meetings of the Legion, many priests and religious sisters became interested in starting praesidia in their parishes, seminaries, schools, hospitals for nurses, and even among prisoners whom they regularly visited and had baptized. They were convinced that the Legion was the great need of the day in China. “Almost everywhere I speak, Our Lady seems to have given my listeners the sense of such need; it makes work very easy and thrilling.” They served as spiritual directors to look after the newly-formed praesidia, and were astonished at the Legion’s effectiveness in many tasks before long.

For example, when McGrath went to Hong Kong for the first time in December 1948, Bishop Enrico Valtorta 恩理覺 PIME (1883-1951) and parish priests told him that

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<sup>52</sup> McGrath, *Perseverance through Faith*, p. 42.

they had already established many Catholic lay associations, and the Legion might not fit in. Although seventeen praesidia were formed before he left, still “some of the priests were cautious and did not believe until they experienced the first fruits,” McGrath wrote.<sup>53</sup> When he returned in March 1949, he heard that “the parish priests were more than satisfied, and not a few quite dumbfounded at the work done. They had not expected such results.”<sup>54</sup> McGrath then planned to make the British colony a base of communications between the Legion Concilium and those in free China in case Shanghai was cut off.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the Red Army was taking control of the whole country. McGrath was usually one step ahead of them, until an encounter in November 1949. A few days after the Communists entered Chongqing, police officers ordered him to halt activities of the Legion. He gave them a Legion handbook and invited them to a praesidium meeting to take a look at this purely religious organization. Three weeks later, they returned the handbook to McGrath and said: “This is a great organization, just like communism.” McGrath took that as “the greatest compliment they could pay.”<sup>56</sup> The time was apparently premature for the Communist authorities to

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53 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, pp. 88-89.

54 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 104.

55 Aedan McGrath to Frank Duff, December 15, 1948, extracted from McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 91.

56 Aedan W. McGrath, “In Mary’s Army” (unpublished manuscript), pp. 5-6. Aedan W. McGrath Papers, Columban Fathers Central Archive, Navan, Co. Meath, Ireland.

launch a crackdown. They gave McGrath a pass to return to Shanghai, and the Legion was permitted to resume in Chongqing.

He returned to the Catholic Central Bureau (CCB)<sup>57</sup>—where the Legion’s headquarters in China was set up—in June 1950, two days before the news of the Korean War was published in newspapers, but “for the next six months, Shanghai remained quite normal ... and we could travel about and breathe freely.”<sup>58</sup> He visited Legion praesidia in Shanghai, gave retreats to those which had irregularities and failed to keep the rules of the handbook, and corresponded with curiae and praesidia throughout China.<sup>59</sup> On the eve of the storm, church attendance was unprecedentedly high, and the atmosphere was vigorous. Converts were still flocking to the churches and studying the Catholic doctrine with great enthusiasm.<sup>60</sup> The Legionaries, brave men and women, were preparing for an uncertain future.

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57 With general consent of the bishops in China, Riberi reorganized the Synodal Commission on Schools, Books and Press (1928-1947) into the Catholic Central Bureau in 1947. It was a central administrative body responsible for coordinating all missionary, cultural, charitable and educational activities of the Catholic Church in China under the newly-erected ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Legion and Catholic Action were supervised by the Bureau’s Lay Apostolate Department.

58 McGrath, “In Mary’s Army,” p. 13.

59 McGrath, *Perseverance through Faith*, p. 40; McGrath, “In Mary’s Army,” p. 15.

60 McGrath, “In Mary’s Army,” p. 13.

## Better results than Catholic Action

Comparing the Catholic Action movement before the war with the success of the Legion after, Father McGrath gave three reasons for the former's decline in China: First, "the necessity of prayer had not been stressed sufficiently, nor was the meeting itself sufficiently prayerful"; second, holding a meeting and doing an assignment only once a month was ineffective; and third, work was assigned to all members instead of an individual, and a report was not required afterwards so that the priest might not know the problems.<sup>61</sup>

In contrast, he wrote in an essay, the Legion system has "precise, logical and intensely practical" rules and methods, because it is organized on the model of an army of ancient Rome, with "the only difference being that the arms of the Legionaries are not of this world."<sup>62</sup> The Legion is primarily a spiritual organization which aims at "the sanctification of its members by prayer and active cooperation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary's and the church's work of crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ."<sup>63</sup> Archbishop Petronio Secundo Lacchio 藍澤民 OFM (1901-1976) of Changsha (Hunan province), an advocate for Catholic Action, said to McGrath after attending

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61 W. Aedan McGrath, "The Legion of Mary," *China Missionary*, 1,4 (August 1948): 417.

62 McGrath, "The Legion of Mary," p. 417.

63 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, p. 4.



a praesidium meeting at the Cathedral of Hong Kong: “Father, I now see the difference. Our Lady is obviously behind this movement. And besides, the definiteness and detail make the Legion effective. I shall certainly organize it in my vicariate.”<sup>64</sup>

In fact, from McGrath’s daily records sent to the Legion Concilium, we can see quite a number of Legion praesidia were formed from existing Catholic Action groups. For instance, during his visit to Beijing in September 1948, McGrath was invited to give talks to Catholic Action groups at the North Church and the South Church, and subsequently the parish priests selected from among these boys and girls appropriate ones to set up praesidia. Another example was in Guangzhou. Father Bernard F. Meyer 馬奕猷 MM (1891-1975), who was “well known for his Catholic Action work on the cell system” and was won over by the Legion, had set up several groups and turned them into Legion praesidia with the help of McGrath when he arrived in February 1949. While most praesidia in China were single sex, Meyer formed a praesidium made up of married couples. “Some of the work assignments consisted of husbands and wives working together. It is the first time I have seen the like,” McGrath remarked after attending its meeting.<sup>65</sup>

From the point of view of the clergy, they may prefer the Legion of Mary to other forms of Catholic Action for the

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64 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 105.

65 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, pp. 95-97.

invariability of the intensely-ordered Legion system,<sup>66</sup> the demand of the members' respect and obedience given to the spiritual director (priest),<sup>67</sup> and his “decisive authority in all moral and religious matters” raised at the meetings.<sup>68</sup> More importantly, the weekly meeting—the Legion sets attendance at the meetings as the primary obligation of all members—is an effective way to intensify the power of the organization, “at which work is assigned to each Legionary and a report from each Legionary of the work done.”<sup>69</sup> In other words, the priest can have a better grasp of the dynamics of a praesidium and its members through meeting them every week than at a monthly meeting of Catholic Action, which has a stronger lay leadership structure. It cannot be denied that there is always a tension between the clergy and the laity over communal authority, even in the Chinese society which has upheld the Confucian concept of filial piety and loyalty to the head of the family—the clergy are “fathers” to their flock.

On the other hand, it was obvious that the Legion of Mary suited the need of the Catholic Church in China whose life was at stake in the face of the atheistic Communist Party's coming to power in 1949. The Legion's army-like

66 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, pp. 37, 71.

67 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, p. 20.

68 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, p. 80.

69 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, pp. 38-40.

structure and invariability of its rules and practices could prevent a minimal deviation from the church principle so as to protect the purity of the faith. For hesitant and anxious lay Catholics, in particular younger ones, the Legion's frequent meetings would be heartening and soothe their nerves. In each meeting, the Legionaries receive spiritual formation and unite with each other through prayers—the Legion prayers are divided into three sections and intermingled with reports and discussion. They receive guidance in a talk given by the spiritual director (called the *Allocutio*), and are assigned with concrete apostolic work. It would be helpful to those who were at a loss what to do. Besides following the virtues of the Roman Legion—loyalty, courage, discipline, endurance, and success—Legionaries imitate the Crucified Christ's spirit of martyrdom that their service “must strive to reflect such utter giving of self.”<sup>70</sup> Therefore, through close collaboration with the clergy, these lay apostles were nurtured with a unprecedentedly high sense of cohesion and enthusiasm. Their leverage on Catholic communities around the country not only amazed many parish priests, but also alarmed the Communist authorities.

#### 4 The Three-Self Reform Movement

The demise of the Legion of Mary in China was closely related to its significant role in fostering Chinese Catholics' defense of church principle and therefore resistance to the

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70 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, pp. 5-6.

state-sponsored “Three-Self” Reform Movement. After six years of bitter struggle between the church and party-state, the movement resulted in the formation in 1957 of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, a peripheral organization outside the Catholic Hierarchy that the Communists still use to control the church.

The first policy document on Christianity of the People’s Republic of China, transmitted to local bureaux in July 1950, defined Catholicism and Protestantism as having long been instruments of imperialist cultural invasion. It insisted on the necessity to protect religious freedom and opposed the use of administrative means to eliminate Christian churches. The majority of Chinese Catholics and Protestants were poor peasants and workers who possessed a deep faith. If the authorities took inappropriate steps, it would cause antipathy among Christians in many countries towards China. The document stated that the policy at this stage was to gradually “reduce the religious market,” and therefore “not to help their development and to counter their imperialist influence.” It stipulated that Christians were not allowed to evangelize outside churches, and at the same time, anti-religion propaganda should not be conducted in churches. Furthermore, the document instructed Communist cadres to seize every opportunity to propagate patriotism and to expose the conspiracy of imperialistic cultural invasion and espionage activities. They should direct and support Christian patriots to unite the majority of laypeople and oppose reactionaries (diehard Catholics) who colluded

with imperialists. The goal was to free Christian churches from imperialistic influences and economic relationships so as to “turn Christianity into a religion self-governed, self-propagated and self-supported by the Chinese.”<sup>71</sup>

A political movement aimed at the socialist transformation of Christianity began with the September publication of the “Christian Three-Self Manifesto”<sup>72</sup> by some 1,500 Protestant leaders, after having meetings with Premier Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898-1976).<sup>73</sup> The manifesto pointed out that Christianity “consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, became related with imperialism” in Chinese society. It encouraged the churches to purge imperialistic influences from within Christianity itself and to take up an indigenous Chinese stance in accordance with the

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71 CPC Central Committee, 《中央關於天主教、基督教問題的指示》 [CPC Central Directives on the Issues of Catholicism and Protestantism], 23 July 1950, United Front Work Department of CPC Central Committee (ed.), 《統戰政策文件彙編》 [A Collection of United Front Policy Documents] (Beijing: [Internal information], 1958), vol. 4, pp. 1911-1914.

72 The original title of this statement was “The Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China.”

73 〈防止帝國主義利用教會危害中國人民 中國基督教界發表宣言〉 [To Prevent Imperialism from Using the Church to Harm the Chinese People, Chinese Protestants Issue a Declaration], *People's Daily* 《人民日報》, 23 September 1950.

Three-Self principles<sup>74</sup> within the shortest time possible.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, the Catholic Church in China remained cautious about, if not resistant to, the state-sponsored signature campaign. Local officials were urged to win over Catholic patriots to begin the same movement as the Protestants.<sup>76</sup>

The party-state's tolerant attitude towards Christian churches ended abruptly when in October 1950 it sent a million-strong "volunteer army" to join North Korea against the American "invasion" after United Nation forces crossed the 38th parallel and advanced towards the Yalu River bordering China. Amid the domestic Resist-America Assist-Korea Movement, the Chinese people were called up according to trades or professions to participate in mass meetings and processions to demonstrate support for the Chinese troops on the Korean Peninsula and approval of the policy against American imperialism. The party-state

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74 The Three-Self principles, abbreviation of self-government 自治, self-support 自養 and self-propagation 自傳, had been agreed by most Protestant missions in China since late nineteenth century that they should target to be independent of the mother churches in Europe or America and to assist Chinese Christians to establish their own indigenized churches. However, the principles became politicized when the Communist party-state sponsored the Three-Self Reform Movement and steered its aim towards removing foreign influences from the Chinese churches and to assure Christians would be loyal to the new regime. Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity of China* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 51-52, 159-160.

75 〈防止帝國主義利用教會危害中國人民 中國基督教界發表宣言〉。

76 CPC Central Committee, 《中央關於天主教、基督教問題的指示》, pp. 1912-1913.

switched to a hardline approach that pressured Chinese Christians to cut ties with the Western churches and demonize foreign missionaries as agents of imperialism.

In mid-December, the *People's Daily* published the first Three-Self Manifesto of Catholics. Father Matthias Wang Liangzuo 王良佐 (1920-1997), parish priest of Guangyuan county in Sichuan, and some five hundred parishioners were lauded as originators of this anti-imperialist statement. Without mentioning a word about the Vatican or the pope, it condemned the imperialists who used the church to plot their invasion of China, and therefore advocated severing all relations with the imperialists and establishing a national church on the Three-Self principle.<sup>77</sup> Although Father Wang tried to deny his active role in publishing the statement and professed to his bishop his loyalty to the church, he could not prevent Communist authorities using his name to conduct vigorous propaganda and pressure Catholics in other regions to follow his example.<sup>78</sup>

77 〈四川廣元天主教徒發表宣言 天主教徒開始自立革新 堅決與帝國主義者割斷關係〉 [Catholics in Guangyuan, Sichuan Issued a Declaration, Catholics Begins Self-Governance and Reform, and Resolutely Cut Ties with Imperialists], *People's Daily*, 12 December 1950.

78 Father Wang tried to defend himself afterwards, ascribing the publication of the manifesto to the demand of the government and the work of “enthusiasts” in his parish. He expressed his loyalty to God and helplessness during the course of the incident in a report addressed to his bishop. Liu Jianping 劉建平, 《紅旗下的十字架——新中國成立初期中共對基督教、天主教的政策演變及影響（1949-1955）》 [The Cross under the Red Flag: The Policy Changes of the Chinese Communist Party towards Protestantism and Catholicism and

Nevertheless, the general response to the “Guangyuan Manifesto” was behind the party-state’s satisfaction. Catholics in general were not enthusiastic in supporting the manifesto. Compared to the Protestant campaign which had by April 1951 collected 200,000 signatures from a total Chinese Protestant population of about 700,000 among various denominations, only a few thousand Catholics in less significant dioceses signed similar statements. The Communist authorities discovered that the Legion of Mary posed a stumbling block as young Legionaries played an active role “with an utterly fearless spirit” in combating the crisis of Catholic unity or even survival.<sup>79</sup> With its nationwide network, the Legion served as an efficient courier facilitating throughout all Chinese dioceses the circulation of a large quantity of evangelistic and apologetic literature published by the Catholic Central Bureau in Shanghai and conveying bishops’ verbal instructions to the laity that they should not sign any Three-Self statement.

A Chinese pamphlet entitled “Reference for Study” 學習參考, for example, aimed to enlighten Catholics on the church doctrine concerning the discipline affected by the Three-Self Movement. It articulated that the church has always practiced self-government, self-support and self-propagation of the faith, which means: (1) To establish a native hierarchy governed by native bishops, (2) to refuse

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its Impacts in the Early PRC] (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 2012), pp. 119-121.

79 Motte, 《中國教友與使徒工作》, p. 234.



any subsidy having political implications from foreign or home countries, and (3) for foreign missionaries to propagate the faith in the interests of local churches and strive to foster native vocations so that they may spread the faith independently. It also demanded Catholics reject without hesitation any accusation leveled against the church that it was a tool of imperialism. It reaffirmed that the church teaching “strictly commands Catholics to love their country” at the same time they must be “personally responsible, as citizens, for their political activities.”<sup>80</sup>

The pamphlet came under attack from Communist newspapers in mid-March, soon after it was published by the Catholic Central Bureau. It was condemned as a secret document distributed by imperialist elements in the Catholic Church to sabotage the reform movement. Thanks not only to the Legionaries but also the Communist press’ reproduction of its full text, accompanied by a refutation, to more than a million copies, it became the most widespread Catholic literature on apologetics. It made the Catholic position in front of the Three-Self Movement known to Christians and non-Christians alike. An effort to suppress the Catholic voice conversely helped it spread to every part of the country.<sup>81</sup>

Archbishop Riberi, whose diplomatic status had not

80 “The Church in China’s Declaration of Principles,” *China Missionary Bulletin*, III (IV),5 (May 1951): 384-386

81 F. Legrand, “Tract sur les trois autonomies et la presse,” *Études et Mélanges Missionnaires*, II (April) 1951: 113; Jean Lefeuvre, *Les enfants dans la ville: Chronique de la vie chrétienne à Shanghai, 1949-1955* (Paris: Témoignage Chrétien, 1956), p. 55.

been recognized by the Communist regime, became a target of denunciation in May. The *People's Daily* reprinted his circular letter to all the bishops in China, in Latin with a Chinese translation, which warned them against a manifesto of Nanjing Catholics that was published without his knowledge or approval, beside the editorial titled “Absolutely Intolerable” 決不能容忍. The manifesto of Nanjing, where the Apostolic Internunciature sat, took a step further than previous anti-imperialist statements and explicitly opposed the Vatican’s interference in China’s internal affairs. It declared a severance of its political and economic relations, and only to maintain pure religious relations with the Vatican.<sup>82</sup> This incident, together with the Communist press’s exposure of “crimes” committed by imperialists with the church (foreign missionaries), added fuel to the flames of the Three-Self Movement. In September 1951, after seventy days under house arrest and interrogation, Riberi was expelled permanently from mainland China.

## 5 Suppression of the “Reactionary Organization”

The Communist regime’s opening barrage against the Legion of Mary took place in the large trading city of Tianjin, where the reform movement had begun vigorously in January 1951. The Military Control Committee of Tianjin issued a ban on July 13 and denounced the Legion as an imperialist-led secret organization, which carried out

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82 〈天主教南京教區教徒聯合宣言〉 [Joint Declaration of Catholics of the Nanjing Diocese], *People's Daily*, 24 May 1951.

reactionary propaganda to sabotage the reform movement.<sup>83</sup> Members of the seven curiae and fifty-eight praesidia<sup>84</sup> were ordered to register themselves and declare their withdrawal from the Legion. The authorities expelled Bishop Jean de Vienne de Hautefeuille 文貴斌 CM (1877-1957)<sup>85</sup> and arrested several leading lay members who “continued to conduct destructive activities secretly and set their faces against the government.”<sup>86</sup>

Accusation meetings were convened in all Catholic parishes and schools to make Legionaries “see clearly the reactionary nature of the Legion that the imperialists had utilized for their aggression.” It was reported that some Legionaries “bowed their heads in front of the people in acknowledgement of guilt” and disclosed the evils of the imperialists and their lackeys in the meetings.<sup>87</sup> The

83 〈天津市軍管會頒發通告取締反動秘密組織「聖母軍」〉 [The Military Control Committee of Tianjin City Issues a Ban on the Reactionary and Secret Organization “the Legion of Mary”], *Tianjin Daily*, 13 July 1951.

84 McGrath, *From Navan to China*, pp. 145, 181.

85 Bishop de Vienne de Hautefeuille was deported on May 28. The *Xinhua News Agency* quoted his seven-point statement of confession, in which he admitted that he organized the Legion of Mary in Tianjin, opposed to the reform movement, and delivered anti-Communist literature. 〈天津公安局驅逐帝國主義分子文貴賓出境〉.

86 Leo Roberts, *Mary in Their Midst: The Legion of Mary in Action in China 1948-1951* (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, 1958), p. 17. The *Tianjin Daily* reported on June 24, July 13, and September 1, 1951 the arrest of a Dutch missionary, Father Harry Hermans 滿濟世 CM (1915-1993), and at least seven leading Chinese Legionaries.

87 〈天津市聖母軍分子紛紛聲明退出〉 [Members of the Legion of Mary in Tianjin City Declare their Withdrawal One after Another], *Tianjin*

accusations and confessions were then carried in the newspaper for wider publicity. The Communist propaganda asserted that the ban on the Legion of Mary was “to protect the Catholic Church’s true doctrine and purity, and to save Legionaries who had been deceived and used by imperialism to damage the country’s interests” so that they could “return into the arms of the fatherland and run their own religion.”<sup>88</sup>

On August 14, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC)<sup>89</sup> issued a set of concrete directives for the crackdown on the Legion of Mary to local bureaux. The key procedures included: (1) Plan the crackdown according to the local situation. Once the planning is ready, outlaw the organization and enforce a ban; (2) Set a date for members to declare their resignation from the Legion and for the praesidia officers to register themselves; (3) Arrest the top persons-in-charge and lower-ranking personnel whose crime is evident or who hold the real power, particularly foreigners (such as spiritual directors); (4) Expel or deport all foreigners in connection with the Legion of Mary except those who must be arrested; (5) Collect related materials at any time, mobilize Legionaries and other Catholics to denounce the organization and publish statements, and

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*Daily*, 19 July 1951. The newspaper further reported that by July 30 there had been 349 officers, 1,873 members and 23 spiritual directors registered.

88 *Tianjin Daily*, 30 July 1951.

89 This is the official abbreviation used by the party today. Sometimes westerners may use CCP as it was stated in this way before in some books.

conduct vigorous press propaganda to educate the Catholic population, especially Chinese priests; (6) Avoid creating an anti-Catholic impression to prevent the enemy from using it as a pretext for counter-attack, or causing discontent among the faithful; (7) Link the crackdown on the Legion with the promotion of the Three-Self Movement in the locality.<sup>90</sup> Newspaper reports showed that in July and August local authorities of Jinan, Qingdao, Taiyuan, and Kaifeng employed more or less the same tactics to subdue the Legion of Mary.

In Shanghai, the Military Control Committee fired on all cylinders in the suppression of the Legion after its headquarters in the CCB were suspended. A priest of the Divine Word Missionaries recalled the omnipresent Communist propaganda against the Legion in the metropolitan:

Throughout 1951 there was no newspaper which did not attack the Legion vehemently every day. Anti-Legion slogans were hung up everywhere, in schools, banks, cinemas, railway stations, buses and trams; even across the chief streets, streamers were stretched, made of red cloth or paper, proclaiming the crimes and intrigues of the Legion of Mary. Loudspeakers at busy street-corners warned people daily how dangerous the Legion was for

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90 CPC Central Committee, 〈中共中央關於取締「聖母軍」應注意事項的指示〉 [CPC Central Directives on Matters Needing Attention in Enforcing a Ban on “The Legion of Mary”], 14 August 1951, 《統戰政策文件彙編》, vol. 4, pp. 1950-1951.

the people and the government.<sup>91</sup>

Besides charging it a reactionary and secret organization, the Communist press linked the Legion with “Imperialists Riberi and McGrath,” who conspired to spread it across the country when the Nationalist army was utterly defeated. It accused the Legion of running an agenda “aimed at sabotaging the liberation of the Chinese people and overthrowing the democratic regime of New China” from the time of its establishment.<sup>92</sup>

When news of crackdowns in Tianjin and Beijing reached Shanghai, Father McGrath and a few spiritual directors discussed the situation and agreed to disband the Legion of Mary. They told the Legionaries to stop all meetings and “burn every trace of anything—the minutes and the lists of names of all members and auxiliaries—that might help the Communists.”<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, the party-state’s determination to destroy this subversive organization did not waver. “Arch-criminals” of the Legion, including McGrath, his assistant Father Joseph Shen 沈士賢 (1918-1953), a few foreign missionaries who served as spiritual directors, as well as two Chinese laymen, Francis Shen and Paul Zhang, who served as president and vice-president of the Shanghai senatus were arrested in September-October.

91 Roberts, *Mary in Their Midst*, p. 48.

92 〈保護正當宗教信仰自由 取締反動組織「聖母軍」〉 [Protect a Proper Freedom of Religious Belief, Ban the Reactionary Organization “the Legion of Mary”], *Liberation Daily* 《解放日報》, 8 October 1951.

93 McGrath, *Perseverance through Faith*, p. 55.

The municipal authorities formed a thirteen-member working team on the Catholic Church 天主教工作組, which opened its office on October 3 in the East China Religious Affairs Bureau 華東宗教事務處, to coordinate all work relating to the local church, including a ban on the Legion of Mary. Four sub-teams were placed in charge of policy, one each for schools, districts, propaganda, and information. The first, and most immediate task, was conducting a propaganda campaign against the Legion.<sup>94</sup> Then, on October 8, the Military Control Committee issued an order to outlaw the Legion altogether and a special counter was set up in each district's police station—about thirty in total—for the registration of Legionaries. A placard outside each station read: “Registration of Reactionary and Secret Organization—the Legion of Mary.”<sup>95</sup>

Father Edward MacElroy, the only curia spiritual director in Shanghai not under arrest, recalled the “extremely trying weeks” following the proclamation of the order. All members flocked to the small church in the Procure of the Columban Fathers for advice.<sup>96</sup> The majority of Legionaries in Shanghai were students of Catholic high schools and

94 〈中共上海市委關於組成天主教工作組的通知〉 [Notice of the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee on the Formation of the Working Team on the Catholic Church], 29 September 1951, Shanghai Municipal Archives, B1-1-29-51.

95 McGrath, “In Mary’s Army,” p. 6.

96 Edward MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), p. 82. Edward MacElroy Papers, Columban Fathers Central Archive.

colleges from well-off families.<sup>97</sup> They were under great pressure and felt helpless, especially those who were not understood by their non-Catholic parents and friends:

This was a typical Communist move and had the effect of almost producing a split between Legionaries and the main body of Catholics. Extreme cases of Legionary hardship had arisen, where individual Legionaries were beaten by their parents, and thrown out of their homes altogether, or otherwise subjected to grave parental displeasure. [...] It was a very tense situation.

Some Catholics blamed the Legionaries for inviting disaster to the church. The Jesuit priests were “inclined to disown” the Legion when it started getting into trouble. “This was not done openly, but there was a strange silence,” MacElroy observed. In fact, the Jesuits in general “had never been in favor of” the Legion although McGrath had obtained written permission from Bishop Auguste Haouissée 惠濟良 SJ (1877-1948) to introduce the lay association.<sup>98</sup> McGrath once admitted that while he had more difficulty promoting the Legion in Shanghai than in other places, as “the Jesuits have most of the parishes,” he was hopeful he could “get a push” under the new secular bishop.<sup>99</sup>

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97 Jin Luxian 金魯賢, 《金魯賢回憶錄上卷：絕處逢生 1916-1982》[The Memoirs of Jin Luxian, vol. 1] (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), p. 114.

98 MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule,” pp. 72, 81-82, 86.

99 Aedan McGrath to John Nagle, 4 September 1950, extracted from McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 154.



MacElroy commented that Bishop Ignatius Kung Pinmei 龔品梅 (1901-2000), a Shanghai native who led the diocese since July 1950, had little knowledge of the Legion but seemed pleased to have the Legionaries active in his diocese. Nevertheless, Kung gave a vague directive to his priests that “the Legion of Mary was in the diocese, but not of it.” MacElroy believed it was “obvious that this was largely inspired by Jesuit influence.”<sup>100</sup> Father Jean Lefevre 雷煥章 SJ (1922-2010), a French Jesuit who lived in Shanghai from 1947 to 1952, explained that the Chinese Jesuits decided to keep a distance from the Legion after considering the local Catholic community’s future under Communist rule. “They appreciated the vigor, but they knew that the Catholic Central Bureau as well as the Legion of Mary would disappear as soon as the Communists would attack the visible organs of Catholic Action.”<sup>101</sup> At the same time, the Jesuits put much effort into strengthening the formation of Catholic youth through lectures and retreats, and set up “catechism groups” 教理小組 in Aurora University and parishes.

In the first week after the organization was outlawed, “of the 1,000 Legionaries only six signed” a document stating that he or she was a member of the Legion, and that it was a secret society working against the country. While most Legionaries regarded signing the document a grave sin, they debated whether to present themselves at the registration

<sup>100</sup> MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule,” p. 82.

<sup>101</sup> Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, p. 73.

center to avoid contempt of the law and heavy penalty or just do nothing. Finally, the mainstream opinion was not to “budge an inch.” Some of the few who had signed under pressure from their families soon went back to withdraw their registrations.<sup>102</sup>

Seeing that nobody went to register, the authorities changed their tactics and summoned the Legionaries individually after they collected “a fairly complete list” of names given by the registered Legionaries and the Communists’ own spies.<sup>103</sup> When called before the police, the young men and women usually took a small bag of clothes and toiletries with them to the police station in preparation for imprisonment.<sup>104</sup> Some even prepared for prison life by sleeping on the floor at night, rather than in their beds.<sup>105</sup> Every known stratagem of bullying, coaxing and flattery was used in the prolonged questioning, yet many Legionaries willfully uphold their faith, which in turn kept them calm and self-possessed in the face of interrogators.<sup>106</sup>

Within a few weeks Bishop Kung, all the Jesuits and members of catechism groups eventually gave their full support to the Legionaries. The turning point was the shocking news that Father Beda Chang 張伯達 SJ (1905-

102 McGrath, “In Mary’s Army,” p. 6; Roberts, *Mary in Their Midst*, p. 50; MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule,” p. 83.

103 MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule,” p. 85.

104 Roberts, *Mary in Their Midst*, p. 50; Jin Luxian, 《金魯賢回憶錄上卷》, p. 115.

105 McGrath, *Perseverance through Faith*, p. 59.

106 MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule,” pp. 88-90.

1951) died in detention on November 11. He was arrested in August 1951 for being a “counterrevolutionary.” Local authorities believed that seizing this greatly-respected Jesuit educator was necessary to break the front of young Catholics. He was reportedly pressed to lead the Three-Self movement but refused to cooperate with the government.<sup>107</sup> MacElroy recalled how his death stirred up sympathy and admiration for the Legionaries:

The temper of the Catholics changed overnight. Fr. Chang’s death in jail, the whole sequence of events in connection with his funeral, and the attempts to besmirch him after his death, convinced everyone that it was the Catholic Church that was being attacked, not merely the Legion of Mary. [...] The immediate reaction was, to wholeheartedly support the stand of the Legionaries, even though it might end in martyrdom for many. Fr. Beda Chang had given the lead: he was regarded as a martyr by all.<sup>108</sup>

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107 Beda Chang was the dean of the Faculty of Arts at the Aurora University and the principal of Xuhui St. Ignatius Middle School 徐匯中學. The talented priest was regarded as the leader of Chinese Jesuits in Shanghai. Months before his arrest, he had modestly and prudently spoken in defense of the church in meetings with educational officials, trying to find a middle road to meet the authorities’ demand for the transformation of the church. Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, pp. 86-89, 96-97; Su Ruoyi 蘇若裔, 《中國近代教難史料 (1948-1957)》 [Historical Data of Persecutions of Modern Times in China (1948-1957)] (Taipei: Fu Jen University Press, 2000), 51-37-51-42; Jin Luxian, 《金魯賢回憶錄上卷》, p. 108.

108 MacElroy, “Five Years under Communist Rule,” p. 88.

A report from Shanghai's New Democracy Youth League 新民主主義青年團 revealed that an estimated 390 students in nine former Catholic schools were mourning the death of Father Beda Chang. Despite much propaganda work and ideological education, students in mourning showed how the "backwardness" in their thinking was still creating problems for them, as most of the Catholics had not broken off their association with the counterrevolutionaries.<sup>109</sup> This internal document reflected that the priest's death rendered the campaign to destroy the Legion of Mary more difficult.

The Communist authorities soon tasted their first defeat in the nationwide suppression of this "reactionary and secret organization." December saw the removal of the chief of Shanghai's Public Security Bureau, Shi Yunhua 石蘊華 (1912-1999, better known by his penname, Yang Fan 揚帆), who had directed the campaigns to suppress counterrevolutionaries and to crackdown on the Legion. MacElroy believed that Shi was a scapegoat for the failure against the Legion.<sup>110</sup> He was replaced by Xu Jianguo 許建國 (1903-1977), former vice-mayor and the Public Security Bureau chief of Tianjin who had demonstrated

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109 Shanghai Municipal Working Committee of the New Democracy Youth League of China 中國新民主主義青年團上海市工作委員會, 〈關於前天主教學校進一步開展取締「聖母軍」工作的意見〉 [Suggestions on the Further Development of the Work to Ban the 'Legion of Mary' in Former Catholic Schools], November 1951, Shanghai Municipal Archives, C21-2-218-33.

110 MacElroy, "Five Years under Communist Rule," p. 91.

meritorious performance in crushing the Legion.<sup>111</sup>

The year 1951 marked the beginning of the Communist purge of the Catholic Church in China, which insisted on maintaining full communion with the pope in order to be truly Catholic. Thousands of Legionaries bore the brunt. From its experience in North China, where the Legion played a significant role in uniting and vitalizing the Catholic communities, the party-state might have been optimistic that it would succeed in disintegrating the principal resisting force of the Shanghai diocese by using the same tactics. Once the bastion—the headquarters of the Legion—fell, there would be no more difficulty in promoting the Three-Self movement among all Catholics. But the move was apparently based on ignorance and misjudgment of circumstances in the Shanghai diocese.<sup>112</sup> As Lefevre pointed out:

In Shanghai, the Legion played no active role in transmitting the instructions for the signing of the Three-Self documents. The Communists had not yet suspected the latent force of these little “catechism groups,” which were shaping a new generation of Christians and would play a considerable role in this great battle.<sup>113</sup>

In February 1953, after almost two years’ trial and error, the party-state admitted that the nationwide

111 Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, 107; Jin Luxian, 《金魯賢回憶錄上卷》, p. 114.

112 Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, p. 99.

113 Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, p. 100.

campaign against the Legion of Mary, and the political transformation of the Catholic Church in general, had not been accomplished. It ascribed the blame to some local officials' inactivity in their work on the Catholic Church, or their improper use of administrative means, relying only on a small number of patriotic Catholics as vanguards, but neglecting to win the clergy over. The directives pointed out: "Instigated from overseas, imperialists and reactionaries in the Catholic Church who are based in Shanghai and Wuhan have been conducting counter-attacks on the patriotic movement of Catholics."<sup>114</sup> These two cities together with Guangzhou<sup>115</sup> were targeted as the focus of the national work on Catholicism in 1953. In other words, these three Catholic communities were the most diehard and the knottiest for the authorities to deal with.

Two years later, in May 1955, an official report claimed that the Legion of Mary had been "defeated on the whole."<sup>116</sup>

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114 CPC Central Committee, 〈中央關於天主教工作的指示〉[CPC Central Directives on the Work of Catholicism], 6 February 1953, 《統戰政策文件彙編》, vol. 4, pp. 1968-1973.

115 The Archdiocese of Guangzhou, headed by Archbishop Dominic Tang Yee-ming 鄧以明 SJ (1908-1995), had remained firm in resisting the Three-Self movement and the denunciation of the Legion of Mary. Tang and dozens of his priests were consequently arrested in 1956-1958, following the party-state's suppression of the "Kung Pinmei counterrevolutionary clique" in Shanghai. Su Ruoyi, 《中國近代教難史料(1948-1957)》, 56-1-56-2.

116 Xi Zhongxun 習仲勳, 〈習仲勳同志在第三次全國宗教工作會議上的總結〉[Concluding Report of Xi Zhongxun at the Third National Conference on Religious Work], May 1955, 《統戰政策文件彙編》, vol. 4, pp. 2010-2021.

It was banned in some thirty big and middle-sized cities, and more than a hundred counties in twenty-one provinces. More than 17,000 people had registered for their withdrawal from the Legion, accounting for seventy percent of the total number of Legionaries.<sup>117</sup> In September of that year, many unregistered Legionaries in Shanghai were among a thousand lay Catholics who were arrested together with Bishop Kung and about thirty priests in the suppression of the “Kung Pinmei counterrevolutionary clique,” directed by the iron-fisted public security chief, Xu Jianguo.<sup>118</sup> They were sentenced to reform through labor in northwest or northeast China until the end of the Cultural Revolution. Other Legionaries who did not lose their freedom were forced to discontinue schooling or to be unemployed. Still, most of them remained faithful to God and never complained about the injustice done to them. Some even tried to evangelize secretly in the labor camp.<sup>119</sup> After the blow, the Legion of Mary could not revive its scope in mainland China till today.

117 〈一九五四年全國天主教作總結及一九五五年全國天主教工作方針任務報告〉 [Concluding Report of the National Work on Catholicism in 1954 and Guidelines and Tasks for the National Work on Catholicism in 1955], 《統戰政策文件彙編》, vol. 4, pp. 2022-2030.

118 Lefeuve, *Les enfants dans la ville*, pp. 355-356; Su Ruoyi, 《中國近代教難史料 (1948-1957) 》, 55-45-55-46; Matthew Koo, interview by Rodney Leung, video, 21 February 2018, Salt + Light Media, <https://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed/getpost.php?id=19173&language=ch>

119 Jin Luxian, 《金魯賢回憶錄上卷》, p. 115.

## 6 Conclusion:

### Why was the Legion a Target of Crackdown?

Why did the communist party-state choose the Legion of Mary as a major target during its earliest attempt to transform the Catholic Church in China? Let us conclude with an assessment in light of this question. Many historians, Communist propaganda and even some Catholics ascribe such targeting to the lay group's title, which literally means "Holy Mother's Army" in Chinese, and its army-like structure. For example, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian 金魯賢 SJ (1916-2013), then a priest of Shanghai, wrote that the Communists considered the Legion as having a political purpose and a military nature and therefore requiring total prohibition.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, Monsignor Matthew Koo 顧光中 (b. 1933), a Legion member from Shanghai who survived Communist labor camps,<sup>121</sup> pointed out that the word "army" misled people into regarding it a military group when in fact it was merely a lay apostolate organization.<sup>122</sup>

In mid-1950, Father McGrath decided to change its

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120 Jin Luxian, 《金魯賢回憶錄上卷》, p. 114.

121 Matthew Koo was a seminarian when he was arrested in September 1955. He endured more than thirty years of reform-through-labor. In 1988, he was ordained to the priesthood secretly. After pursuing theological studies in Chicago, he began service in the Diocese of San Jose, the United States, in 1993 as chaplain to the local Chinese Catholic community. He is now retired. "Monsignor Matthew Koo," website of *San Jose Chinese Catholic Mission*, accessed 4 September 2019, retrieved from <https://sjccm.com/monsignor-matthew-koo/>

122 Koo, interviewed by Leung.



Chinese title, as it was causing “suspicion to the authorities and nervousness among Legionaries.” The temporary new title became “Our Lady of Mercy Prayer Meeting” 聖母慈愛祈禱會.<sup>123</sup> But it was too late to prevent the Communists using its nomenclature to label the Legion a “reactionary organization.” In addition, Communist propaganda interpreted out of context the Legion’s objective from its handbook—“crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ”<sup>124</sup>— as the Legion defamed the People’s Government and the Communist Party as “serpent,” and hallowed the American imperialism and the rule of Kuomintang as “the reign of Christ.”<sup>125</sup> Another often-misinterpreted line from the handbook was about the Legion’s origin, namely it is “for the service in the warfare which is perpetually waged by the church against the world and its evil.” The Communist press quoted it to accuse the Legion’s enmity towards the new regime and plot to overthrow it, and omitted the following line that stressed the strictly spiritual nature of their combat: “But the army and the arms of Legionaries of Mary are not of this world.”<sup>126</sup>

Two more generally-acknowledged factors are

123 Aedan McGrath to Frank Duff, 4 July 1950, extracted from McGrath, *From Navan to China*, p. 151.

124 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, p. 4.

125 〈保護正當的信仰自由 取締反革命的「聖母軍」〉 [Protect a Proper Freedom of Beliefs, Ban the Counterrevolutionary “the Legion of Mary], editorial of *People’s Daily*, 15 July 1951.

126 Concilium Legionis Mariae, *Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, pp. 1-2.

mentioned in this paper: (1) The rapid development of the Legion and the nature of its apostolic work was contrary to the policy of restricting evangelistic activity outside the churches to reduce the religious market; and (2) their active role as messengers to transmit instructions of the church authorities and disseminate apologetic literature fostered the Catholic resistance against the Three-Self Reform Movement. Therefore, the Communist rulers were definitely reluctant to see a united and uncompromising Catholic Church that would prevent the party to exercise control over every sector of the Chinese society.

A deep-rooted cause of the party-state's determination to eliminate the Legion of Mary was very likely the resemblance of their organizational structures. The Chongqing policeman's remark on the Legion was a preliminary warning. Father Donal O'Mahony SSC (1918-1993), a Columban priest who had worked in the Diocese of Nancheng (Jiangxi province), observed that the Legion was "organized along lines startlingly similar to those of the Communists." The Legion and the CPC have "the same cell formation, the same close discipline, the same thorough indoctrination courses, and the same burning enthusiasm for a cause." For that reason, O'Mahony noted that they are mutually destructive.<sup>127</sup> Perhaps there was one more aspect of resemblance between the two—the same target on the youth. Legionaries in Shanghai's former Catholic

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127 Donal O'Mahony, "Our Lady's Warriors," *The Far East*, 32,5 (May 1950): 1.

colleges, for instance, were strongly uncooperative when Communist cadres strived to exert influence on the students by teaching materialist ideology, absorbing them into the New Democracy Youth League and launching the Thought Reform Movement (1951-1952).<sup>128</sup>

Last but not least, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, all other religions, non-communist parties and civil organizations had no choice but to yield obedience to the Communist Party. It guaranteed the freedom of religious belief to the individual and promised to unite people from all social classes and walks of life in the construction of New China, with the exception of a small minority of enemies (such as imperialists and reactionaries in Christian churches). But as Monsignor Koo pointed out, "In the circumstances of China at that time, any organization that was not subject to the leadership of the Communist Party was regarded as counterrevolutionary."<sup>129</sup> Amid the waves of anti-imperialist patriotic movement, the party-state could not tolerate any organization which was consolidating the efforts of the laity to resist its plan to disintegrate the church from the interior.<sup>130</sup> If other groups of Catholic Action were still active, they would very likely share the same fate as the

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128 Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, pp. 114-122.

129 Koo, interviewed by Leung.

130 Lefevre, *Les enfants dans la ville*, p. 60. As aforementioned, it was until about a year later, the Communist authorities realized that it was counterproductive to rely on patriotic Catholics to establish a national church. It was proven a failure to copy the successful strategy of transforming the Protestant churches to the Catholic Church.

Legion of Mary. The latter's army-like title and structure were taken only as a pretext for justifying the stronger suppression. After all, religious freedom was one of the many beautiful promises the CPC had made to win the support of the Chinese populace to its regime. History has proven that these promises have been broken again and again.<sup>131</sup>

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131 See Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013) which reveals the Communist policy of “calculated terror and systematic violence” during the early phase of the autocratic regime.

## Abbreviations

(Religious orders and missionary congregations)

CM	Congregation of the Mission	遣使會
MEP	Missions étrangères de Paris	巴黎外方傳教會
MM	Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll Mission)	美國天主教外方傳教會 (瑪利諾會)
OFM	Order of Friars Minor	方濟會
PIME	Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions	宗座外方傳教會
RSCJ	Religious of the Sacred Heart	聖心修女會
SJ	Society of Jesus	耶穌會
SSC	Missionary Society of St Columban	聖高龐外方傳教會