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# China Exchange

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## UCAN: Vatican Letter Urges Chinese Bishops To Fulfill Duties With Courage

UCA News - [www.ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com)

December 19, 2008 | CH06354.1528

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HONG KONG (UCAN) -- A letter the Holy See sent earlier this year to Vatican-approved bishops in mainland China reasserts principles that Pope Benedict XVI highlighted in his June 2007 letter to Chinese Catholics.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, addressed the April 22 letter to 90 bishops, including some who are retired, but it excluded a few whose ordination circumstances remain unclear. The letter began to circulate through China in May, but a few bishops only received it recently.

It stresses "fundamental principles of Catholic teaching" and reminds the bishops of "the role of the Episcopate" as communion. It says the pope invites all mainland bishops to "discharge courageously your office of Shepherd," to promote the Catholic nature of the Church, and to obtain greater freedom of activity through direct and respectful dialogue with civic authorities.

The cardinal's letter also asks the bishops "acting

together" to request the right to meet as a group and to be able to discuss issues in true freedom.

By respecting principles laid down in the pope's letter, the April letter says, the bishops can discover a "correct attitude to adopt with regard to those bodies to which reference is made in (section) No. 7 of the Papal document."

That section of the papal letter says some agencies that implement "the principles of independence and autonomy, self-management and democratic administration of the Church" are incompatible with Catholic doctrine. A footnote there cites the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association's statutes.

The letter also reminds the bishops to be "particularly careful to ensure that episcopal ordinations take place only with the apostolic mandate."

In November, one recipient, Bishop Peter Fang Jianping of Tangshan, told UCA News listing legitimate bishops' names helps

eliminate "guessing who is and who is not (legitimized) ... which Chinese Catholics are quite concerned about."

Bishop Fang, a Hebei native, was ordained without papal approval in Beijing on Jan. 6, 2000, but the Holy See legitimized his episcopal status in 2002.

He describes the April letter, which emphasizes communion and the Holy Church, as "good overall" for the development of the China Church.

Another open Church bishop, whose name appears on the list but who asked for anonymity when he spoke with UCA News, agrees the list gives mainland bishops "a better understanding of the situation" by identifying legitimate bishops.

He added that he appreciates the cardinal's letter is a call for action on the papal letter, but even he himself finds it hard to call a meeting of just priests, so a nationwide meeting of bishops would be even harder to convene. *cont.*



In northern China, an underground bishop who received the letter told UCA News the April letter more concretely addresses issues mentions in sections 7, 8 and 9 of the pope's letter, which refer to the local Church and state agencies, the Chinese episcopate and the appointment of bishops.

Even so, he questions if the Holy See fully understands the situation in China when it urges all bishops to meet together. "We hope to see this moment materialize, too, but the government does not give us such a chance," he said.

"We are very willing to maintain harmony with the government," the bishop added, "but what it wants is the 'independent, autonomous and self-management' principle of the Church, and 'self-election and self-ordination' of bishops."

A priest identified only as Father Joseph similarly pointed out to UCA News that travel is hard for some elderly bishops and there is no freedom of travel for many underground prelates. Some bishops have been missing and no one knows if they are alive or dead, he said, "so how can they contact each other?"

The priest suggests that the Holy See assign a bishop or a committee of bishops to call such a meeting. In his view, this is important to resolve the decades-old conflict between the underground and open Church communities.

He sees the pope's letter as the answer to such differences, but "when it falls into the hand of the Chinese

bishops, each has his own interpretation." Kwun Ping-hing, a Hong Kong-based China-Vatican watcher, remarked to UCA News that Cardinal Bertone's letter re-emphasizes basic Church principles but also requests concrete actions. Kwun also said the list of recipients provides a foundation for solidarity but, in his view, the Vatican is well aware that the China Church issue cannot be solved at once.

The bishops' names were presented alphabetically in the letter but some Chinese Catholic websites posted it in other ways, such as listing bishops by provinces and indicating their dioceses and episcopal titles. One site even provides an extra list of bishops who have not received Vatican approval.

Ever since the letter was signed in April, four bishops have died but no new ones have been ordained, so Vatican-approved bishops on the list now number 86, and about 60 of them belong to the open Church community.



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## Asia News: Cardinal Zen asks Chinese bishops for more courage

AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)

01/03/2009 15:46

VATICAN - CHINA - HONG KONG

by James Wang

The bishop of Hong Kong condemns as "outdated" the celebrations of 50 years of "self-election" and "self-ordination" of Chinese bishops as promoted by the United Front, the Patriotic Association, and the Office of Religious Affairs. He is asking the bishops to follow the example of Saint Stephen, and not to offend the pope by participating in meetings sponsored by the regime to appoint the new presidents of the PA and the council of Chinese bishops, two bodies not recognized by the Holy See.

Hong Kong (AsiaNews) - The bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen, has asked all of the (official) bishops of China to be courageous, and not slip into compromises with the regime.

In an article in the January 4 edition of the diocesan weekly *Gong Jiaobao*, he urges Chinese bishops and priests to have the virtues of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, and not to submit constantly to directions of the state that are contrary to the faith: "to suffer for the faith will eventually bring victory, even if today everything seems lost."

In the article, entitled "Inspiration from the martyrdom of Saint Stephen," Cardinal Zen provides an analysis of the develop-

ments of the Catholic Church in China over the past two years, remembering the illicit episcopal ordinations (without the permission of the Holy See) in 2006, when - "regretfully," he says - a dozen bishops, approved by the Vatican, took part in the ceremony out of fear, and some of them perhaps through deceit.

He then recalls the "ray of light" that appeared in 2007 with a meeting at the Vatican about the Church in China, and especially with the release of Benedict XVI's letter to Chinese Catholics. In the letter, the pope says that the Chinese Patriotic Association has purposes that are contrary to the Catholic faith, wanting to manage the ordination of bishops and constitute a Church independent of the Holy See.

Precisely for this reason, in the article Cardinal Zen rails against the celebrations in Beijing last December 19, celebrating the 50th anniversary of autonomous episcopal ordinations in China. The celebrations were sponsored by the United Front, the Patriotic Association, and the state administration for religious affairs (cf. AsiaNews 20/12/2008 Beijing, Vatican must break with Taiwan and not interfere in domestic affairs).

For the bishop of Hong Kong, there is nothing to

celebrate, because the method of "self-election" and "self-ordination" was promoted during the 1950's by radical forces of the extreme left, which looked at the pope as a representative of imperialism. But this view is now outdated, at a time like today when China is celebrating 30 years of economic reforms, aimed at opposing that radical mentality.

"Forcing Catholics to do something against their conscience," the cardinal writes, "is a grave insult to the dignity of every Chinese citizen, [and for this reason] there is nothing to be proud of, nothing to celebrate. Launching this celebration demonstrates that those who hold power do not want to give it up, and are forcing our great nation to bear the shame of backwardness in this regard."

The prelate then asks if the entire emphasis of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the Patriotic Association (PA) and "self-election" and "self-ordination" might not be a preparation for meetings to vote for the new president of the Patriotic Association and the president of the council of Chinese bishops [a sort of episcopal conference, which includes only the official bishops and is not recognized by the Holy See].

The elections of these two leaders is supposed to be held at the national congress of Catholic representatives. It should take place at this time, since the two posts have been vacant for some time: patriotic bishop Michael Fu Tieshan, elected president of the PA in 1998, died in 2007; Joseph Liu Yuanren, patriotic bishop of Nanjing, elected president of the council of bishops in 2004, died in 2005.

The cardinal seems to be suggesting to the bishops that they boycott the upcoming meeting. He asks: "Does this meeting really need to be held? . . . Is it not an insult in response to the pope's letter to Chinese Catholics? Is it not a slap in the face to the pope to participate in such a meeting? . . . Does your conscience really permit you to do this? Will the people of God accept such behavior on your part?"



## Asia News Special: Beijing - Vatican - Patriotic Association

AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)

02/03/2009 10:43

CHINA – VATICAN

by *Bernardo Cervellera*

Mgr Li Shan, who was ordained the capital's bishop with the approval of the Holy See, now apparently backs an independent Church. This is dividing the faithful and causing embarrassment to the Vatican. For more than a year now the Communist Party has been on the offensive to get official bishops to tow its line. But for Cardinal Zen the time of compromise is past.

Rome (AsiaNews) – Just over a year after Beijing Catholics got a new bishop, they are divided over his episcopate as more and more accuse him of betraying the Holy See. Mgr Joseph Li Shan, 44, was ordained on 21 September 2007 with papal approval. But after more than year in office his attitude towards the Vatican seems to have changed. For many Catholics the clergyman who replaced Michael Fu Tieshan, the patriotic bishop who died a year earlier, is getting too cozy with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), and moving too far away from the Holy See.

**\*\* Monsignor Li Shan, 'slave' to the CCPA \*\***

The faithful have been taken aback by his way of doing things, by speeches that seem to increasingly

parrot the party line of the CCPA, an organisation that is openly committed to building a Catholic Church independent of Rome. Some of his speeches are particularly revealing.

In his first address on 25 November during a training session for priests and lay people, Bishop Li spoke about the progress made by the Church in the 30 years since the launching of Deng Xiaoping's reforms. For many believers speaking at such an occasion to analyse Deng Xiaoping's reforms and modernisations was tantamount to "praising those in power."

More disconcerting though was Mgr Li Shan's defence of his predecessor, Bishop Fu Tieshan, who began a "glorious tradition" that sought to inspire Beijing faithful to "love the fatherland" and "love the Church". The slogan "love the fatherland, love the Church" comes in fact from the CCPA and its use by a bishop underscores the Church's subordination to the Communist Party.

In a not so veiled reference to the Vatican, Mgr Li Shan said in the same speech that outside powers and China's underground Church are guilty of interfering with that dual

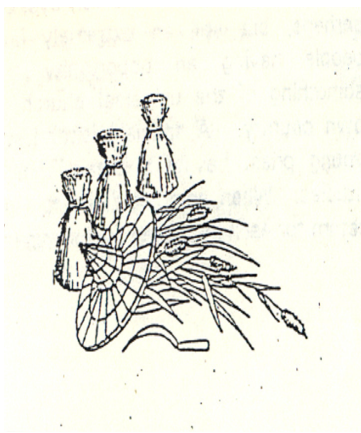
love, thus reflecting the Communist Party's view that the Holy See is "a foreign state that wants to meddle in the internal affairs of China under the guise of religion."

"Some people have focused on our diocese and Monsignor Fu," Bishop Li said. In doing so "they have devalued what we have done in all these years, which is much more than what was done in the previous 700 years . . . trying to convince us to give up the principle of Church self-government (i.e. autonomy from Rome), pushing us backward."

For the sake of the future "we must hold onto the idea of loving the fatherland and the Church, persevering on the path towards the Church's self-government" because these two goals are "a fundamental guarantee for a wholesome development of the Church and its actions in the capital."

"These principles are the outcome of what we have learnt from the semi-colonial history<sup>1</sup> of the old Chinese Church; they are also the precious experience of the new life and development of the Chinese Church in the socialist society of the new China."

*continued ...*



Naturally for Bishop Li this means that the CCPA and the Church's internal "democracy" are necessary. Episcopal nominations, pastoral work and theological issues must be decided according to the whims of CCPA-dominated assemblies of bishops, priests and lay people. But in doing so the sacramental character of the Church is debased.

On Christmas Eve last year Mgr Li Shan again delivered a similar speech when at 7 pm he met Ye Xiaowen, director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs; Zhou Ning, director of the Second Section of the United Front; Tong Genzhu, deputy minister of the Central Department of the United Front; and many others, including Beijing Deputy Mayor Niu Youcheng.

On this occasion the faithful were again shaken by what Mgr Li Shan had to say. Expecting a prelate who would end Bishop Fu Tieshan's subservience to the party and his steadfast refusal to seek reconciliation with the Holy See, they got instead someone who thanked the Chinese government for its help and support to the Church and its activities. In this address he said that

the Church would continue to uphold the notion of "love the fatherland, love the Church", and pursue the goals of "independence and self-government" (from the Holy See), that would make the Catholic Church a model for building a harmonious society.

In every one of his speeches and statements, the tone and slogans used by the bishop reflect the style used by the Communist Party during its most radical period, that of the Cultural Revolution.

No wonder then that the faithful would be surprised and ask themselves how their pastor could turn so quickly into "a Red Guard" and show such a servile disposition towards the CCPA and the people in power, exceeding in many ways even his predecessor.

Mgr Li Shan was known as a good priest, simple, perhaps not too broad-minded but faithful to the Pope, able of arousing passion in the young and particularly open to the underground Church. His speeches against "foreign states" and the underground Church turned everything on its head, representing a total shift in his way of thinking.

According to information that reached AsiaNews, Mgr Li Shan did not write his speech, which was penned instead by Shi Hongxi, general secretary of the Beijing chapter of the CCPA, well-known for his radical views. Other sources say the bishop got the speech shortly before he was supposed to deliver it without knowing its content. However, when the same slogans pop up in three different speeches, it matters not whether the bishop agrees or disagrees with them; what counts is the fact that he is under the thumb of CCPA. This, in turn, raises another question.

Founded in 1958 the CCPA had tried for the past 50 years to divide the Church, ordaining bishops without papal approval. However, the last few decades have seen many bishops ordained within the Patriotic Church ask for forgiveness for standing outside the Church of Rome. Through the magnanimity of John Paul II and Benedict XVI they have become reconciled with the Holy See. In fact in January 2007 the Vatican announced that almost all official (i.e. government-recognised) bishops were in full communion with the Holy See.<sup>3</sup>



**WP: China's Charter**  
**China Infodoc Service** [<mailto:china.infodoc@online.be>]  
**Saturday, 20 December 2008 3:30 AM**  
**Washington Post**  
**December 17, 2008**  
**Editorial**

CHINA'S Communist regime spent much of this year selling itself to the world as a rising power that offers an alternative to the democratic capitalism of the West. Its symbol is the Beijing Olympics, for which stadiums were built, crowds orchestrated and events staged with brutish efficiency -- even as political dissidents and unsightly poor people were jailed or exiled from Beijing. But Olympics China is not the only forward-looking vision of the country, as a group of more than 300 intellectuals, journalists, rural activists and artists made clear last week. Their manifesto, Charter 2008, sketches a free and democratic China where human rights, democracy and the rule of law are paramount. While it might seem less formidable than the Bird's Nest Stadium, our long-run bet is on the charter.

Those aspirations will sound to many as far-fetched as Charter 77 did for a dozen years. The Chinese dissidents may appear as isolated as the courageous Russian activists who over the weekend founded a new democratic alliance called Solidarity -- after the Polish movement that ended communist rule in that country. But the new groups have the same powerful and frequently underestimated weapon: What they advocate, as Charter 2008 puts it, is to "embrace universal human values [and] join the mainstream of civilized nations." That's an offer that ever more Russians and Chinese are likely to find preferable to 21st-century dictatorships.



**AsiaNews/Agencies: Bao Tong: Beijing should explain  
how Charter '08 violates the law**

AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)

12/17/2008 15:13

**CHINA**

Endorsements are increasing for the proposal for the democratic transformation of the country. Former communist leader Bao Tong has sent an open letter to Beijing, stressing that everything requested in Charter '08 is already provided for in the Chinese constitution, and asking them to explain "why it is illegal."

Bao Tong, deputy of communist party secretary Zhao Ziyang, has been under house arrest for 20 years for supporting the pro-democracy protests in 1989, and has signed the charter as "a citizen." At the news of the arrests and threats against signers, he sent from his home the following open letter to the government (published by Radio Free Asia).

"1. I call on the Chinese government to to answer me this: "Where is the crime in Charter 08?" The basic concepts of the Charter are freedom, human rights, equality, republicanism, democracy, and constitutional rule. So would the powers-that-be please tell 1.3 billion people why freedom is a crime, why human rights, why equality, or republicanism, and what is criminal about democracy and the rule of law under the Constitution?

"Charter 08" puts forward 19 propositions. Not one of them is the invention of the people who signed it. They have all already been implemented in modern, civilized countries, and they have shown themselves to be part of a worthwhile system with beneficial effects. If the authorities care to examine each of the propositions closely, under a magnifying glass, under a microscope, in the hall of mirrors, they could perhaps tell us which crimes are being committed by each article? The aim of the Charter is to call on any Chinese people who still have a sense of purpose, whether in the corridors of power or in remote parts of the country, regardless of personal status, to take part in a movement of citizens, to help realize a dream that has gripped the people of this country for more than 100 years. How is that a crime?

"2. I, as the former director of the Chinese Communist Party's think-tank for reforms of the political system, who have also served time in jail as a political prisoner of former premier Li Peng, who brought illegal charges and fake evidence against me, I can tell the Chinese government that there is nothing criminal in Charter 08. The main concept, and what it calls for, are not criminal. We do not live in Imperial China, nor do we live in the Bureaucracy of China, nor even in the Communist Party State of China. We live in the People's Republic of China.

All that Charter 08 seeks to do is to extend the original meaning and influence of the Constitution. According to an old dictum of Mao Zedong, the key to the problem lies within the problem itself. There may be a great many flaws in the Charter, but they do not lie in the question of its legality. Fortunately, we live in a republic where all power is in the hands of the people. Its Constitution protects the rights of its citizens, and forbids the authorities to trample on their rights. Under such circumstances, the news that some of the people involved with the Charter have had their homes searched and been subjected to detention and interrogation cannot but come as a shock. One might say that these actions are a challenge to Chinese citizens, but it would be better to say that they are a challenge to the Republic and to its Constitution.

"3. The government carried out these searches, detentions and interrogations. I don't know exactly who they are, this 'government.' I just know that if a problem arises at the grassroots level, then it's up to the next level up to correct it. If an incident occurs higher up the chain of command, then the highest level of authority is called in to sort it out. If there is a problem at the highest level, then it's up to the people to do something about it. There should be a mechanism for correcting problems in a republic. A republic in which wrongs are just allowed to be wrong, and in which wrongs are piled upon wrongs is not worthy of being called a republic.

"4. While I sit here quietly waiting for them to search my home, waiting to be detained and interrogated, I am also waiting quietly for a reply from the authorities. I call on all those who have already signed the Charter, and all those who are about to sign, to stay cool-headed and logical, optimistic and resolute. I send my regards to Zhang Zuhua, who has already returned home, and his wife Tian Yuan. Also to Liu Xiaobo, who is still in detention, and to his wife, Liu Xia. I wish them all peace and good health."



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**AsiaNews/Agencies: Charter 08's Liu Xiaobo held in undisclosed location**
**3 January 2009 2:29 AM**
**AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)**
**01/02/2009 12:29**
**CHINA**

Charter 08's Liu Xiaobo held in undisclosed location in violation of China's laws.

Liu could be held for a year and half without charges or trial. More and more people are signing up to Charter 08 to change China into a country that defends human rights.

Beijing (AsiaNews/CHRD) – Liu Xiaobo, an intellectual who was among the first to sign Charter 08, is still being held in an undisclosed location subject to “residential surveillance” in violation of China’s own laws.

Detained on 8 December, when he and 300 other intellectuals, academics and activists released to the public an appeal in which, without challenging the power of the Communist Party, they demand respect for all the human rights protected under United Nations conventions signed by China.

Police yesterday allowed Mr Liu's wife, Liu Xia, to visit her husband in Xiaotangshan, Changping district near Beijing. According to her, he appeared to be healthy and in good spirits.

Still the National Security police is holding Liu under “residential surveillance” in an unknown location and has

not informed either Liu or his wife of the crime for which the Charter 08 signatory is being held, or the duration of his arrest.

“Residential surveillance” (jinshi juzhu in Chinese) is a form of pre-trial detention. According to Article 57 of China’s Criminal Procedural Law, a suspect is held either in his or her home or at a designated location if the suspect has no permanent residence. Since Liu is a Beijing resident, holding him in an undisclosed location violates Chinese law.

According to Article 58 of the Criminal Procedural Law residential surveillance has a six-month time limit. Public security, prosecutors and the courts can re-impose it consecutively. Mr Liu could end up held for a year and half without charges brought against him or without going to trial.

The Chinese government is desperately trying to stop Charter 08 from circulating, removing it from Internet sites and arresting anyone who signs it. But the number of people joining it in order to see China transformed into a country that defends human rights is increasing every day. So far at least 5,000 people have signed up.




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**UCAN: Pre-Vatican II attitude affects Bible study on mainland**
**UCA News - [www.ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com)**
**CHINA Pre-Vatican II attitude affects Bible study on mainland**
**March 5, 2009 | CH06805.1539**

TAIYUAN, China (UCAN) -- A mainland Chinese priest who has taught the Bible at a seminary for 12 years says many laypeople and priests in China do not seem enthusiastic about Scripture.

Father Peter Guo Quanzhi, Scripture lecturer at the regional Montecorvino Major Seminary where he graduated from in 1996, observed that Catholics who received their faith formation before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) believe that the Bible, as the Word of God, should not be casually read or spoken about.

His observations come following the Synod on the Word of God last October at the Vatican, which aimed to spark "a new season of greater love for the Sacred Scriptures."

Father Guo and other Church leaders in northern China say that in the past, only the clergy could read or study the Bible whereas laypeople seldom had the chance to own or even read a bible.

Father Guo, 36, who is also parish priest of Yangjiabao Church in Taiyuan diocese, Shanxi province, expressed concern that the Bible ministry "remains stagnant" on the mainland.

Besides insufficient Catholic teachers and resources for Bible studies in seminaries, Catholics do not have easy access to popular Bible-reading material, he said.



**WSJ: China's Human-Rights Activists Need Support.**  
**The Wall Street Journal**  
**Opinion - 19 December 2008**  
**By VACLAV HAVEL**  
**Prague**

In January 1977, a group of Czechoslovak citizens, of which I was privileged to be one, released Charter 77. That document was our call for the better protection of basic civil and political rights by the state. It was also the articulation of our belief that, as citizens, we had a certain responsibility to work with the Czechoslovak government to ensure through our vigilance that basic rights would be protected.

With the release of Charter 77, we wanted to create not a membership organization, but instead, as I wrote then, "a free, informal open community of people of different convictions, different faiths, and different professions united by the will to strive, individually and collectively, for the respect of civic and human rights in our own country and throughout the world."

More than three decades later, in December 2008, a group of Chinese citizens has taken our modest effort as their model. They have made a similar call -- for human rights, good governance and respect for the responsibility of citizens to keep watch over their government -- to ensure that their state plays by the rules of a modern open society.

The document they have

issued is an impressive one. In it, the authors of Charter 08 call for protection of basic rights, increased judicial independence, and legislative democracy. But they do not stop there. With the passage of time, we have come to realize that a free and open society means more than the protection of basic rights. To that end, the signatories of Charter 08 also wisely call for better environmental protection, a bridging of the rural-urban divide, better provision of social security, and a serious effort to reconcile with human-rights abuses committed in decades past.

The original signatories, who number more than 300, come from all walks of life, and from across China -- a testament to the broad appeal of the ideas put forward in Charter 08. Among the signatories are China's top minds from law, political science, economics, the arts and culture. Their decision to sign onto such a document was surely not taken lightly, and their words should not be so brusquely brushed aside. Since the Charter was released, more than 5,000 men and women have added their names to it.

China in 2008 is not Czechoslovakia in 1977. In many ways, China today is freer and more

open than my own country of 30 years ago. And yet, the response of the Chinese authorities to Charter 08 in many ways parallels the Czechoslovak government's response to Charter 77.

Rather than respond to our offer of engagement with dialogue and debate, the Czechoslovak government instead chose repression. It arrested some of the signatories, interrogated and harassed others, and spread disinformation about our movement and its aims.

So too has the Chinese government declined the invitation to discuss with the signatories of Charter 08 the merits of their proposal. Instead, it has detained two signatories, Liu Xiaobo and Zhang Zuhua, both of whom the government has identified as lead actors in its creation. Mr. Zhang has been released, but Mr. Liu, a prominent writer and intellectual, is still being held incommunicado without charge.

Dozens of others have been interrogated, and an unknowable number are being watched by state security agents as they make phone calls and type email messages on behalf of their jailed comrades. Soon after Charter 77 was issued, I was arrested for the commission

of "serious crimes against the basic principles of the Republic." It is feared that Mr. Liu will be charged with "incitement to subvert state power," a similarly arbitrary crime.

I am saddened by this turn of events, and my thoughts are with Liu Xiaobo's wife, Liu Xia, who has yet to be given the opportunity to speak with her husband. The Chinese government should learn well the lesson of the Charter

77 movement: that intimidation, propaganda campaigns, and repression are no substitute for reasoned dialogue. Only the immediate and unconditional release of Liu Xiaobo will demonstrate that, for Beijing, that lesson has been learned.

\* Mr. Havel is the former president of the Czech Republic.

