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# China Exchange

Columban Mission Institute  
Centre for Promoting Communion with  
the Church in China

Editor: Fr P McGee  
c/- ACU Locked Bag 2002  
Strathfield NSW 2135  
Tel (02) 9352 8000  
Fax (02) 9746 8033  
E-mail: cmi@columban.org.au

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## EDITORIAL

In June the long awaited pastoral letter of Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholic people of China was received. It was an occasion of affirmation and joy for Catholics there.

The Government of China was also duly and respectfully greeted. Pope Benedict's efforts have brought the concerns of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, a little further along by outlining, among other things, the rights of the Catholic Church, particularly in the question of appointing bishops – a long time thorn in the side of Vatican-China relations, China regarding these appointments as an internal, national affair.

In September, two new bishops were ordained – Mgr Joseph Li as new bishop of Beijing on September 22, and Mgr Paul Xiao Zejiang, new coadjutor of Guiyang on September 8. Both had been recommended to the Holy See by their respective, local Catholic communities. "Both are in communion with the Pope and recognized by the government," the Osservatore Romano reports.

A reality check, however, provides us with many shades of grey, and unfolding events over the last half year indicate that all is not well on the road to reconciliation. The China-Vatican relationship is not unfolding apart from current events in China which in turn all have a direct effect on the situation of the Church and Catholic people there.

The recently completed 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, for the first time amended its constitution to include the word "religion" without however the exact wording being made available. Religion is viewed as being able to play an important part in bringing about a "harmonious society," a term used to refer to the need for economic growth to be accompanied by social cohesion.

The death in prison of Bishop John Han Dingxiang, of Yongnian Diocese, Hebei Province and his hasty cremation and burial within hours of his death, however, questions what kind of "harmony" is meant.

As do further repression of human rights and harassment and arrest of human rights lawyers with the approach of the Beijing Olympic Games in August 2008.

Two cardinals have visited China, since Pope Benedict's Letter was received. They give their impression of the Church in China and the possibilities for the future.

While a lot of news about Church in China concerns cardinals, bishops and other high profile people, a lot can be done at grass roots level. Tens of thousands of young people from China are now studying in Australian universities. This is important for both our countries. The second language spoken in Australia now is Chinese. Many migrant families are coming from China. All of the Catholic families coming from China have experienced some form of harassment and persecution. *'Welcoming the Stranger'* is part of our responsibility. On behalf of everyone at Columban Mission Institute – ***a joyous, peaceful Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season.*** ♦

## NEW BISHOP VOWS TO LEAD CATHOLICS CONTRIBUTING TO A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

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

(UCAN: 22 September, 2007)

**BEIJING (UCAN)** The newly ordained bishop of Beijing has pledged to uphold the banner of loving the country and the Church, to lead his diocese to abide by China's Constitution, maintain the country's unity and stability and contribute to the development of a harmonious society.

Vatican-approved Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing, 42, made this promise on the morning of Sept. 21, St Matthew's feast day, when he expressed thanks toward the end of his ordination Mass at the century-old Immaculate Conception Cathedral (South Church) in downtown Beijing.

Bishop Johan Fang Xingyao of Linyi, Shandong province, and six co-ordinators ordained the new Vatican-approved bishop.

The co-ordinating prelates were Bishops Damas Thang Hanmin of Jilin, Louis Yu Runchen of Hanzhong, Joseph Ma Yinglin of Kunming, and Jin Daoyuan of Changzhi, and Coadjutor Bishops Paul Peid Junmin of Liaoning and Peter Fang Jianping of Tangshan. All but Bishops Man and Jin are Vatican-approved, and most of them were ordained in the last 10 years.

During the two-hour liturgy, Bishop Li's appointment by the government-sanctioned Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China was read aloud.

Bishop Li was born into a devout Catholic family in March 1965. His father and his elder sister, who is a nun of St. Joseph's Convent of Beijing diocese, were among the 30 or so nuns and about 800 Catholics at the ordination Mass.

Father Sun Shang'en of Beijing, a Beijing diocese spokesperson, told the press after the ordination that since China and the Vatican have no diplomatic relations, "we elected and ordained (Bishop Li) in our customary way. Self-election and self-ordination represent the voice of Beijing's Catholics.

A Church source who asked not to be named told UCA News on Sept 18 Bishop Li received the Holy Father's approval, but the Holy See has not spoken publicly on the matter.

"If the Vatican approves Bishop Li, we are happy and welcome it, but we have not yet seen the apostolic bull from the Vatican," Father Sun said. "It's God's will," he added. There was no mention of the papal approval in the Mass.

A priest of Beijing diocese told UCA News that the ordaining bishops and some priests knew that Bishop Li has been approved by the Holy Father.

Also, Father Sun said Bishop Li has taught at the Beijing

diocesan seminary and served in parishes, and was diocesan procurator before he was elected bishop on July 16. "With his high prestige among the diocesan priests and his good coordination ability," Father Sun noted, "he could lead the diocese to consolidate and develop better."

Sister Teresa Ying Mulan, superior of St Joseph's Convent of Beijing diocese, told UCA News on Sept 20 that Bishop Li is honest and down-to-earth, a person who says little but whose homilies often inspire his parishioners.

As for the Vatican approval, Sister Ying said having a papal mandate would not cause pressure for Bishop Li and the diocese. Rather, she said, "it would be good to show that Beijing diocese is part of the one holy apostolic Church." She also noted that the approval diocese would not irritate the government since it is "a matter of faith, not politics."

A cathedral parishioner told UCA News on Sept 20 it would be great if the new bishop were approved, but receiving most votes in the July 16 election already showed that diocesan priests and Catholics support the new bishop.

About 50 priests, mostly from Beijing, concelebrated the Mass, and a few state and local government officials also attended.

Due to limited seating inside the cathedral, each parish was allotted a limited number of seats. A priest told UCA News. Other people, including dozens of reporters, had to stay in the courtyard. "We want to maintain the solemn atmosphere of the ceremony," Sister Ying explained.

A layman in his 70s told UCA News he woke up at 5.00 am and traveled far to attend the ceremony, but he had no "entrance card" distributed earlier in parishes and had to stay in the courtyard with 200 people to witness the Mass via televised screens.

The cover of the ordination Mass booklet presents Bishop Li's motto from 1 Corinthians 9:22, "Omnia Omnibus" (all things to all people), on his coat-of-arms, depicting a shield as background to guard the pure faith of the Church.

The coat-of-arms displays "A" and "M" initials of Ave Maria, denoting Our Lady's blessing to the Church, and a dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit. It also shows an image of Beijing's Temple of Heaven and an olive branch, meaning the Church takes root in Chinese culture and hopes to build a harmonious society with all Catholics and citizens of China.

Bishop Li was elected to take up the position left vacant after the death of Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan of Beijing, who was the president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA).

Meanwhile, Anthony Liu Bainian told reporters after the ordination that the Church authority is preparing the next Catholic representatives' congress, which will elect new presidents for the CCPA and the BCCCC. The presidency of the BCCCC is also vacant, after the late Bishop Liu Yuanran of Nanjing died in 2005.

However, Liu said it is hard to tell when the congress will be held, but it will probably not be this year.

At 1.30 pm Rome time, several hours after the ordination, the Vatican press office distributed an article that was due to appear on *L'Osservatore Romano* later that day, which confirms that the new bishop of Beijing has been approved by Pope Benedict XVI. ♦

### CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHINESE BISHOP'S DEATH HAS WIDER IMPLICATIONS

(Sunday Examiner – 4 November 2007)

**HONG KONG (SE).** When he died on September 9, Bishop John Han Duxiang of Yongnian, Hebei, had been under detention since 28 November 1999. He was 68 years old and had been suffering from lung cancer. On 23 September 2005, he was moved to an unknown location and was not seen until just before his death, when close family were summoned to his bedside.

In a tract published in the Chinese-language *Kung Kao Po* on October 21 (??), the Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong diocese expressed concerns over the circumstances surrounding the bishop's health care the bishop had received and also the circumstances of his death.

The commission pointed out that "the fact that he was detained for so many years is a violation of his human rights." It asked why, when Bishop Han fell ill, he was not released "so that he could be looked after by his family and parishioners in a relatively free and comfortable environment."

The commission also questioned why authorities hurriedly cremated the body and expressed its sadness that Bishop Han was buried in a public cemetery without rites and that parishioners – who only found out about his death after the body was buried – were unable to pay their last respects, as the grave was guarded by public security officials. Even requests to have the remains interred in a more appropriate place were rejected.

The commission expressed the hope that "the authorities concerned would show an understanding of the sadness and pain of the bishop's parishioners, show respect for their basic rights by removing the security measures at the gravesite, allowing them to pray in an environment of freedom, and also freely choose a proper burial site for his body."

The commission announced that a requiem Mass would be celebrated for Bishop Han at St Bonaventure Church,

It called his treatment during sickness and the circumstances surrounding his death a microcosm of the suffering of the Church in China and expressed concerns for the clergy, who are either missing or being held in detention.

It specifically mentioned Bishop James Su Zhimin of Baoding, Hebei, who is over 70 years old and has been missing for nearly ten years; 80 year old Bishop Cosma Shi Enxiang of Yi country, who has been detained since 2001; and Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding, who is over 70 and has been detained repeatedly at sensitive times, including a reported detention during post operation convalescence. However, the state of his health has not been confirmed.

The Justice and Peace Commission then made an appeal for the release of all clergy who have been detained without reason – particularly the elderly. The commission writes, "Let them be looked after properly. Only then will there be true harmony in society. Should their health or lives be put at risk, those who care for them will surely stand up and protest."

Taking note of the Chinese government's sensitivity to protests and demonstrations during occasions such as the Communist Party's recently-concluded Seventeenth Party Congress, as well as the upcoming 2008 Olympics, the commission observes that some officials feel that such activities are deliberate, confrontational acts against the government. But it points out that as long as people's rights are respected and they are treated well, there would be no cause for protests or demonstrations.

The commission concluded that "government officials should (be) asking themselves who the ones are who cause such trouble and actually interfere with social harmony. ♦



**CATHOLICS APPRECIATE VATICAN'S  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BISHOP'S DEATH**

HONG KONG (UCAN) Sunday Examiner 21 October, 2007.

The Italian edition of the official Vatican daily *L'Osservatore Romano* carried the obituary of 68 year old Bishop John Han Dingxiang in its October 9 issue, one month after he died, expressing "sadness and regret" over his death.

The article noted that only hours after he died on September 9, Bishop Han's body was cremated and his ashes buried without any religious rite. The faithful were not able to pay their last respects and the bishop's tomb is still under tight surveillance. The *L'Osservatore Romano* article maintains, however, that "nobody will be able to prevent the faithful of the whole world from paying homage to the witness of Bishop Han, who suffered for Christ in his life and in his death."

Bishop Han spent more than 20 years of his life in prison, according to the Vatican newspaper. He was last detained on 28 November 1999 and sequestered in various places until his death. He was not allowed any visitors even during the last days of his life. ♦

**AN APPEAL FOR A TRUE OLYMPIC SPIRIT  
IN BEIJING.**

(Sunday Examiner – 4 November 2007)

ROME (Asia News): The Rome-based agency, *Asia News*, has published an appeal, signed by several leading Chinese intellectuals and well-known personalities, calling on the Chinese government and world leaders to promote human rights at the 2008 Olympic Games so they may be truly memorable.

Chinese-language websites are carrying the open letter to "Chinese and World Leaders", asking them to honor the commitment the Chinese government made to the international community to respect human rights during the Olympic Games.

The letter states that if human rights are not promoted, the slogans heard at the Olympics will betray the ideals of the games and leave a world "where people suffer discrimination, political and religious persecution, and deprivation of liberty, as well as poverty, genocide and war."

The men and women who signed the letter, and who have often been victims of solitary confinement, surveillance and arrest, are also critical of the violence that has already taken place as a result of preparations for the Olympic Games.

For this reason, they say that they cannot share in any pride in China's glory as the host nation of the 2008 international event. Their letter states that "these glories are built on the ruins of the lives of ordinary people, on the forced

removal of urban migrants, and on the sufferings of victims of brutal land grabbing, forced eviction, exploitation of labour and arbitrary detention."

The statement presents a seven-point wish-list, which it says must be fulfilled if China is to present a games in the true Olympic spirit. It includes a call for a general amnesty of all prisoners of conscience, freedom of the press for foreign and Chinese journalists, fair compensation for all those who suffered losses as a result of land seizures or forced displacement to make way for the Olympic venues and facilities, a demand for fair wages and independent unions for migrant workers involved in the Olympic construction sites and an independent committee to supervise the use of public funds and prosecute those guilty of waste and corruption with regard to the construction of the Olympic sites.

The letter signed by well-known Chinese intellectuals and pro-democracy activists including Ding Zilin, the leader of *Tiananmen Mothers*; Liu Xiaobo, writer; Bao Tong, who has been under house arrest for the past 17 years and is a former secretary to the late Communist Party leader Zhao Zhiyang (who opposed the Tiananmen Square crackdown); journalists, Dai Qing and GaoYu; and Hu Jia, a human rights activist. Altogether 37 academics, lawyers, economists and other public figures from across China have put their names to the appeal. ♦

**"RELIGION" MENTIONED FOR THE FIRST TIME**

(Xinhua, 21 October 2007)

BEIJING: For the first time in its history, the CPC mentioned the word "religion" in an amendment to its Constitution adopted on Sunday.

The resolution said the move would meet the demands posed by the new situation and tasks. The Communist Party of China is atheistic but allows freedom of religious beliefs. China is home to 100 million religious faithful – largely Buddhists, Taoists, Christians, Catholics and Islamists. "I learned of the amendment on the Internet and was inspired," said Living Buddha Dainzin Qoizha in the Shannan Prefecture of southwestern Tibet Autonomous Region. He has been watching the week-long Party congress on the Internet.

Dainzin Qoizha is a government employee in Shannan. More than half of his colleagues are CPC members.

"I'm on very good terms with them," he said. "As a non-Communist, I'm in charge of ethnic and religious work. The prefecture's Party committee is very supportive." Hao Peng, vice-party chief in Tibet, describes the relations between the Party and the religious faithful as "united, cooperative and mutually respectful."

Tibet has more than 1,700 religious sites, 46,000 monks and nuns and more than 30 living Buddhas whose reincarnation has been recognized by the central or regional governments. – Xinhua ♦

**PARTY SHOULD END  
RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, SAYS BAO TONG**

(AsiaNews – [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it) –  
Friday, 26 October 2007)

Zhao Ziyang's former political secretary, ousted because of his opposition to the Tiananmen crackdown, asserts that respect for what the constitution of the People's Republic protects can help build the 'harmonious society' the Communist leadership wants.

Rome (AsiaNews) – Bao Tong, Zhao Ziyang's former political secretary, who was ousted from the Communist party in 1989 for his opposition to the Tiananmen crackdown, wrote to AsiaNews. In his letter, he said that "freedom of religion is one of the civil rights unequivocally stated in the constitution of the People's Republic of China. As such, it should be respected by the government. I wish the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress would prominently display its respect for the constitution and respect for every Chinese citizen. This would include the end of all religious persecution and the release of religious leaders from custody or house arrests. No pretexts should be given to allow the mistakes of past unlawful persecutions to continue."

He goes on to say that "truly respecting freedom of religion is an important step towards the construction of the 'harmonious society' which the Chinese leaders have claimed to strive for. The 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress needs to take these concrete steps if it hopes to build the trust of the people."

Bao Tong also wrote about the lack of freedom in the 17<sup>th</sup> congress on some Chinese-language blogs.

"What is most important is that all citizens have the right to speak freely and walk their own path within a legal framework," he said in one commentary.

"I think it is not only not frightening for a party to voluntarily abandon dictatorship, but (the move) will also bring the dying (party) back to life and a future without limits," he wrote in another.

Last but not least, stressing the growing contradictions in Chinese society, he asked why many "multi-millionaires have cropped up but manual workers who sweat and sacrifice the most are unable to free themselves from the pit of poverty." ♦

**CHINA TO VATICAN: DON'T RECEIVE DALAI LAMA**

(2 November 2007) Agency France Presse)

BEIJING – China on Thursday urged the Vatican not to go ahead with a planned meeting with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, warning it would hurt bilateral relations.

Vatican sources had said a day earlier that Pope Benedict XVI would receive the Dalai Lama in a private meeting December 13.

"We hope the Vatican will not do anything to hurt the Chinese people's feelings and will show sincerity to improve relations with China by taking concrete actions," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said

China has always insisted the Nobel laureate is not just a religious leader, but a dangerous "separatist" who advocates Tibetan independence, and has reacted angrily over recent meetings he has had with world leaders.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, US President George W Bush, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Australian Prime Minister John Howard have all met with him this year.

The United States also honored the Dalai Lama last month with a Congressional gold medal, the country's highest civilian award.

Liu said countries which received the Tibetan spiritual leader had "tarnished their own image."

The Pope and the Dalai Lama met in October last year.

The December meeting has not been announced officially by the Vatican, which has recently taken a softer stance towards Beijing.

Relations between the two sides have been rocky since Beijing severed ties in 1951 in anger over the Holy See's diplomatic recognition of Taiwan.

China has ruled Tibet, a devoutly Buddhist land, since sending troops into the region in 1950 to "liberate" it. ♦



The Nativity

Chinese ink-painting by Monica Liu

**CHINA CHURCH-WATCHERS AMBIVALENT OVER  
VIETNAMESE CARDINAL'S VISIT TO MAINLAND**

*(Sunday Examiner – 4 November 2007)*

**HONG KONG (UCAN/SE):** Responding to an October 4 announcement by the archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Jean Baptiste Cardinal Pham Minh Man, that through his recent “meetings with Chinese state officials, I feel they hope that the Church in Vietnam can help China and the Vatican understand each other’s points of view,” Church-in-China observers in Hong Kong are saying that the Vietnamese cardinal’s visit to the mainland could cloud the way in which the June 30 papal letter to Catholics in China is understood. They added that Vatican approval of the new Beijing bishop might not signal an improvement in China-Vatican relations.

Kwun Ping-hung, a Hong Kong-based Church-in-China observer, said on October 15 that the meeting between Cardinal Man and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and members of the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) “could confuse the common understanding of the spirit of the papal letter and may have a negative impact on reconciliation within the mainland Church.”

Kwan said that Pope Benedict XVI clearly stated his position toward both of the organizations in his letter, when he says that the practice of placing themselves above bishops in guiding Church life through state agencies “does not correspond to Catholic doctrine” and that the BCCCC “cannot be recognized as an Episcopal conference by the Apostolic See.”

However, speaking to the *Sunday Examiner* on October 25, auxiliary Bishop John Tong Hon of Hong Kong, observed that “it is good that Cardinal Man is explaining the more advanced religious situation in Vietnam to the Chinese authorities.” He went on to say, “We hope and pray that his efforts will not be in vain and will lead to a more enlightened attitude towards religion and human rights on the part of the Chinese government.”

Cardinal Man visited Beijing and Shanghai from September 24 to 28 at the invitation of the Chinese government. He met newly ordained Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing, and Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian of Shanghai, as well as leaders of the government-run Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and BCCCC.

Observing that the state officials were interested in Sino-Holy See relations, Cardinal Man said he told them that the Holy See is eager to establish diplomatic ties with China. He informed them that when he invited the late Pope John Paul II to visit Vietnam, he told the then-pontiff that “everyone (Chinese and Vietnamese people) will be glad to welcome you.”

Cardinal Man went on to say that he told the Chinese officials that Pope Benedict XVI had expressed a wish to establish diplomatic ties between the Holy See and both

China and Vietnam during the early years of his papacy. He went on to assure them that the Holy See will not hesitate to break its ties with Taiwan, as it is only an administrative post.

The archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City said that he also spoke with officials about the effects of government policies on the Church in his own country, saying that since the reunification of North and South Vietnam with the fall of Saigon and the surrender of the United States of America-led forces in 1975, the government had confiscated all Church properties and institutions in the south.

He then related that since the mid-1980’s *doi moi* renovation policy was introduced, foreign Church organizations have provided financial support and training for Church personnel and the government has returned much of its land and property, as well as cooperating with the Church in providing social services, especially in the area of treatment of HIV/AIDS.

However, a priest from an unofficial Church community in eastern China said that Cardinal Man was a too-high-profile a Church figure to meet with CCPA officials on the heels of the papal letter and the Episcopal ordination in Beijing. He mentioned that he had read an account of his interview with government officials and noted his desire to “share the faith we experienced in our country (Vietnam) with the Church in China, regardless of its unofficial or unofficial Church (communities).”

The priest questioned whether Cardinal Man had been able to speak with members of the unofficial communities in China, or had only had the opportunity to meet with members of official communities or just the CCPA.

Father Pierre Lam Minh, of the Paris Foreign Mission Society, said from Hong Kong on October 16 that he believes the Chinese government had invited Cardinal Man in order to hear his views on the appointment of bishops. He explained that in Vietnam this had gone more smoothly over recent years due to a working agreement between the Holy See and the Vietnamese government.

Under the current arrangement the Holy See nominates a candidate and if the government approves then both parties announce the appointment.

However, the Vietnamese-Chinese priest went on to say that he does not know whether or not if this could work in China, as it is larger and, because of the official and unofficial communities, more complicated. He also noted that in Vietnam it is simpler as it only has one bishops’ conference.

Kwun termed the Vatican approval of the new bishop of Beijing an “isolated case”, adding that both sides had reached a hasty compromise, taking into account

the reactions of local Catholics to the papal letter and the recently concluded Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party.

The Hong Kong-based China-Church watcher explained that China had examined the responses from the Holy See, the international community and the mainland Church toward its policy of self-elected and self-ordained bishops.

However, he was quick to point out that this does not mean that any consensus would be reached automatically over future appointments. He also warned that the Beijing ordination might not impact positively on any reconciliation process between the official and unofficial Church communities.

Anthony Lam Sui-ki, senior researcher of Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Study Centre, agrees. He is also of the opinion that the ordination may not improve China-Holy See relations. He noted that even though the Vatican approved three Episcopal ordinations – in Shanghai, Xi'an and Wanzhou – in 2005, these were followed by three illicit ones in Kunming, Anhui and Xuzhou during 2006.

Nevertheless, Lam admitted that prior to any diplomatic ties being set up between China and the Holy See, visits from high profile Church leaders in other countries may prove valuable. ♦

**VISITING SCOTTISH CARDINAL TOUCHES HEARTS, BRINGS POPE'S BLESSING**

UCA News – [www.ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com) - 25 October, 2007

Catholics in Xi'an diocese, central China, say the visit of Cardinal Keith O'Brien has encouraged them greatly. The cardinal who heads St. Andrews and Edinburgh Archdiocese in Scotland, arrived in Xi'an on October 19 to start a 12 day visit to China. Xi'an, 900 kms southwest of Beijing, is the capital of Shaanxi province. Since 1985 it has been a sister city of Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, part of the United Kingdom.

Cardinal O'Brien visited China at the invitation of the country's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). He was scheduled to travel to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, before returning home on November 1.

Accompanying him are Mgr David Gemmell, Administrator of St. Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh, and Columban Father Eamonn O'Brien, director of Cultural Exchange with China, a Catholic- run organization based in London.

His visit came three weeks after Vietnamese Cardinal-Jean Baptiste Minh Man of Ho Chin Minh City, Vietnam, visited China September 24-28.

On October 20, the Scottish delegation visited Bishops Anthony Dang Mingyan of Xi'an and Louis Yu Runchen of Hangzhong, whose diocese is also in Shaanxi, at St. Francis Cathedral (South Church) here. Bishop Dang told UCA News he spoke on the Church situation in Shaanxi while Cardinal O'Brien spoke about the Church in Scotland. All the Church leaders then visited Shaanxi Seminary, in a suburb of Xi'an, where about 110 seminarians and 97 nuns welcomed them warmly at the main gate.

On October 21, Mission Sunday, Cardinal O'Brien attended part of a Mass at the cathedral. He entered the building after the homily and sat among the faithful. After Holy Communion, he went up to the altar and spoke in English. An interpreter translated his words into Chinese.

Father Stephen Chen Ruixue of Xi'an diocese, a member of the reception team, told UCA News the cardinal urged unity in faith within the Universal Church, and encouraged Chinese Catholics to continue their mission in society and their contributions to the country. The Scottish prelate also spoke about Pope John Paul II's concern for mainland Chinese Catholics and imparted Pope Benedict's blessing on the diocese. He added his hope that under Bishop Dang's leadership, evangelization would prosper.

Bishop Dang, 40, told UCA News, "The cardinal's visit is not only for the good of the two Churches in Xi'an and Edinburgh, but also fosters growth in relations between the two cities and countries."

Father Chen pointed out that very few cardinals have visited Xi'an, and Cardinal O'Brien is the first since Bishop Anthony Li Du'an of Xi'an died in May 2005. Cardinal O'Brien lauded Bishop Li for his great influence on the China Church. "And after his death, we must give support to his young successor," the priest recalled the visiting prelate saying. ♦



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Recalling [the](#) Past to Understand the Present:  
Fifty Years After the Anti-Rightist Campaign

Roderick O'Brien

Since the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, it has initiated a number of movements or campaigns which have convulsed the nation, and brought great suffering to the people. Perhaps the most important was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. But it is worth recalling the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, because of the insights which it gives into the nature of society in China today.

The prelude to the campaign was a speech by Mao Zedong on 27 February, entitled "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People". Mao was concerned that the Party was losing touch with the people, and he was also struck by the experience in Hungary, where the people had revolted against their communist masters. Mao called for a period of democratic criticism, which took its name from one of the slogans of his speech: "Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend".

The period of blooming and contending began with a directive of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, published on 27 April, and widely publicised. Criticisms by non-party personages, encouraged by the Party leadership, mounted and eventually challenged the dominant role of the Party in China. This was too much. Then, in June 1957 the Party struck back. The critics found themselves the target of criticism across the country. On 19 June the text of Mao's speech was published – but in a revised version which included six criteria for judging right and wrong:

1. Words and deeds should help to unite, and not divide, the people of all our nationalities.
2. They should be beneficial, and not harmful, to socialist transformation and construction.
3. They should help to consolidate, and not undermine or weaken, the people's democratic dictatorship.
4. They should help to consolidate, and not undermine or weaken, democratic centralism.
5. They should help to strengthen, and not shake off or weaken, the leadership of the Communist Party.
6. They should be beneficial, and not harmful, to international socialist unity and the unity of the peace-loving people of the world.

Over the next few months, the Party found rightists in every corner of the country, and established several punitive measures to deal with them. The Anti-Rightist Campaign was in full swing, until replaced by the disastrous Great Leap Forward. Fifty years later, as we recall this Campaign, there are four important features:

- (a) The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party could not be challenged in 1957, and cannot be challenged now.
- (b) A system of labour camps was used to handle the punishment of rightists. Labour camps already existed for those designated as criminals, but the system was extended for those who were not criminals – simply citizens (including Party members) who had the temerity to criticise the rule of the Party. The system is known as re-education through labour (*laodong jiaoyang*, often shortened to *laojiao*). This system of imprisonment without trial has continued to the present day. Although it is an international embarrassment to the Party, it is too valuable to be given up. In recent years it has been expanded, and not only rightists but also others who have never been convicted of any crime, yet are imprisoned without trial to labour camps.
- (c) The Anti-Rightist Campaign particularly targeted intellectuals, a word which at that time included anyone with more than a primary-level education. Among these were the Church leadership. Bishops, priests, and lay leaders in large numbers found themselves in the labour camps for daring to criticise the religious policies of the Party. When, in 1979, many of the camp inmates were released, they had been there not since 1966-67 (the key years of the Cultural Revolution) but since 1957. For many Church leaders, they had been 22 years in labour camps.
- (d) Another group of intellectuals who had complained about the Party's policies were serving in the legal system. Judges, lawyers, and law academics were among the targets. In the process, the development of China's legal system was almost completely stalled. In the early 1960s, there were a few attempts to renew development, but these attempts were reduced to rubble during the Cultural Revolution. Only since 1979 have there been some tentative efforts to establishing a legal system. Now we have the beginnings of "rule by law", but not yet "rule of law".

In the People's Republic of China, discussion of the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign remains a sensitive issue. Yet academic reflections and personal memoirs are beginning to appear. Fifty years on it is possible to recall the events of 1957, and to learn from them. The principal lesson is that the Party does recognise its problems, but will not allow any criticism which goes to the heart of the Party's unelected control of China. Thus advocacy for autonomy in religious affairs or in the legal system or other areas was not accepted in 1957, and will not be accepted today. There may be more flexibility in one area, less in another, but the basic principles have been set.

[end]