

News Update on Religion and Church in China September 15 – December 4, 2011

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The “News Update on Religion and Church in China” appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today’s China (RCTC). Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum (www.china-zentrum.de). – The last “News Update” (2011, No. 2, pp. 91-113) covered the period May 14 – September 28, 2011.

September 15, 2011:

Beijing Review: Students from rural areas are falling behind

Fewer and fewer students from rural areas are managing to enroll in one of the leading universities in China. According to a 2010 study, only 17% of undergraduate students at Qinghua (Tsinghua) University in Beijing were from rural areas, despite the fact that rural students accounted for 62% of all registered participants in the nationwide university entrance exam. In 2011 less than 15% of undergraduate students of Qinghua University came from China’s rural areas. At Beijing University, the number of students coming from the countryside dropped from 30% (1978–1998) to around 10% over the last ten years. Overall, the number of rural students at leading universities has dropped alarmingly below 20%. According to the article, one of the main reasons is the unfair distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas (*Beijing Review* Sept. 15).

September 25–26, 2011:

Pastoral Commission of the official Catholic bodies meets – with the presence of an unusually highly placed figure of the Communist Party leadership

Members of the newly established Commission for Pastoral Care and Evangelization of the state-sanctioned Catholic governing bodies (the Patriotic Association and the official Conference of Bishops) came together for their first meeting in Ningde (Diocese of Mindong, Fujian Province). Ten bishops (three of whom, including commission chairman Bishop Zhan Silu, are not recognized by Rome), 13 priests, a sister and eight lay people took part. Zhu Weiqun, deputy director of United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party and a senior cadre of the central Party leadership, came

from Beijing specifically for this meeting. According to a *UCAN* report, Zhu repeatedly told commission members that it was the Church's main task to hold fast to patriotism; he also said the two national Church authorities must "not be ambiguous but be firm on the principle of an independent Church." The *UCAN* report speculated that Zhu's participation was a possible indication that Beijing is paying greater attention to and wants to exercise greater control over the official Catholic leadership bodies, as well as to strengthen the position of Bishop Zhan Silu, in whose diocese 90% of Catholics belong to the underground Church.

The Commission also produced a document, which, while repeatedly quoting Pope Benedict XVI, speaks among other things of the need for raising awareness of evangelization among all members of the Church and of promoting adaptation of the Church to local society and the development of an indigenized theology. It stresses the important role of the media in evangelization and calls for greater control (*guanli*) of Church related websites in China, which – as the document claims – have been somewhat "chaotic" in their reporting, thereby harming the unity and stability of the Church (*UCAN* Oct. 12; www.catholicchurchinchina.org Oct. 5; Nov. 7 [Text of the Commission paper], see also the article "Transcendent and Secular at the Same Time, News from the Field of the Religious Media" in this issue of *RCTC*).

见证信仰 推进福传
融入社会 服务人群



中国天主教“一会一团”
牧灵与福传委员会二〇一一年文告

The „Good Shepherd“ adorns the cover page of the new document on the website of the two official Catholic governing bodies.

September 26, 2011:

***Xinhua*: 8–10 million abortions in China each year**

Cheng Linan of the China Medical Association explained that 47% of the women who abort are unmarried and under 25 years of age. These numbers are the result of a recent countrywide survey carried out by the association. The number of abortions is particularly high among migrant workers who generally have inadequate knowledge of or access to birth control methods, Cheng said (*Xinhua* and english.news.cn Sept. 26).

September 26, 2011:

Caritas Macau to manage food bank on behalf of the government

The Macau SAR government began the food bank (Short-term Food Assistance Programme) in 2009 following a sharp rise in inflation. It decided to outsource the service to a local NGO, thus making use of the wider NGO network to reach more people in need, especially those who for various reasons are not known to the state social services. Over the next two years, the government expects to spend 10 million Patacas (approx. € 930 000) on the project, and hopes to reach 6,000 people (*Fides* Sept. 27; *UCAN* Sept. 23).

September 30, 2011:

Hong Kong: Filipina domestic worker wins landmark permanent residency case

Hong Kong's immigration law stipulates that foreigners who work for more than seven consecutive years in Hong Kong are eligible to apply for permanent residence. The law, however, explicitly excludes foreign maids or domestic helpers from this scheme. A Hong Kong court has now ruled this exclusion unconstitutional. The Hong Kong government says that while it respects the ruling, it plans to appeal the verdict. According to *Reuters*, there are 146,000 Indonesian and 139,000 Filipina domestic workers, of whom 117,000 have been working in Hong Kong for more than seven years. The *BBC* reports that domestic workers are required to live with their employers, may work only as domestic workers and must leave Hong Kong – if they have no permanent residence permit – as soon as they become unemployed and are unable to find a job in a new household within two weeks. Opponents of the ruling warn of additional government social spending. Some politicians also fear that the ruling could force the Hong Kong government to ask Beijing for an interpretation of the Hong Kong Basic Law (*BBC News* Sept. 30; *Reuters* Sept. 30).

October 3, 7, 15, 17 and 25; November 3; December 3, 2011:

Six more Tibetan monks or former monks and two nuns set fire to themselves in protest

- October 3: Kelsang Wangchuk (17 years old), monk of Kirti monastery, Ngaba (Aba) in Sichuan Province. Present condition unknown.
- October 7: Khaying (about 20 years old), a former monk of Kirti monastery. He died on October 8.
- October 7: Choepel (about 18), a former monk of Kirti monastery. He died on October 11.
- October 15: Norbu Dramdul (about 19), a former monk of Kirti monastery. Present condition unknown.
- October 17: Tenzin Wangmo (20), a nun of Dechen Ling Choekor monastery in Ngaba (Aba) in Sichuan Province. She died the same day.
- October 25: Dawa Tsering (38), a monk of Kardze monastery, Sichuan Province. Present condition unknown.
- November 3: Palden Choetso (35), a nun of Ganden Jangchup Choeling monastery in Tawu (Dao-fu), Kardze (Ganzi) Prefecture, Sichuan Province. She died the same day.
- December 3: Tenzin Phuntsok (46), family man and a former monk of the Karma Gon monastery in Chamdo (Changdu), Tibet Autonomous Region. He died on December 9.

This brings to 12 the number of Tibetans who have set fire to themselves during the course of 2011 (for the earlier cases of March 16, August 15 and September 26, see the “News Updates” of previous issues of *RCTC*).

According to Robert Barnett in the *South China Morning Post*, observers point out that the last case of self-immolation has now spread the protest to a monastery of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, which is not under the Dalai Lama. The *Eurasia Review* has reported a similar attempt by a Tibetan outside the PRC to set himself on fire near the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on October 4, and another in Nepal on October 1.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry, among others, has commented on the suicides by burning, and the Karmapa Lama has also taken a stance; see the entries of October 11 and November 9 below (Open letter from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to President Hu Jintao of Nov. 3, with the

list of the first 11 who set fire to themselves which was adopted here partially; *Eurasia Review* Nov. 10; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 3; www.tchrd Oct. 19; cf. *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, pp. 11, 17; No. 2, pp. 105, 108, 113.).

October 6, 2011:

The U.S. Senate apologizes for laws discriminating against Chinese immigrants

In its unanimously adopted Resolution SR 201, the U.S. Senate noted that earlier anti-Chinese laws in the U.S., including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (which prohibited the immigration of Chinese nationals and which was definitively repealed only in 1943) were not compatible with the principles of equality contained in the Declaration of Independence. The resolution regrets that the Chinese had been excluded both physically and politically from the U.S. for 60 years and reaffirmed that the Chinese in the United States and others of Asian origin enjoy the same rights as everyone else. Activist Haipei Shue, who had lobbied for the resolution, told *Xinhua* that he was delighted with the news. He said this was only the first step and explained that they wanted to start an education campaign to get Americans to understand their Chinese ancestors.

After 1850, the number of Chinese immigrants, including those involved in the construction of the railroads, increased sharply. Hostility towards the Chinese was particularly strong in California, which issued its own discriminatory laws (*San Francisco Chronicle* online Oct. 11; *Xinhua* Oct. 7; e-lobbyist.com/gaits/US/SR201).

October 7–9, 2011:

Meeting of the Association of Catholic Intellectuals of Zhejiang Province

68 participants from ten cities and four dioceses of Zhejiang met in Wenzhou for an experience of sharing. The Association was founded in 2003 and has over 1,000 members. The chairman of the organization, Fr. Zheng Jiamao, said that there are many Catholic academics in the province, but that their talents were not fully developed for the benefit of the Church.



The Association was formed in the hope that they can do more for the Church, he explained. According to *UCAN* it is probably the second such group in China. The first was the Catholic Intelligentsia Association of the Diocese of Shanghai, founded in 1986 (*UCAN* Oct. 10, including photo of the participants).

October 10, 2011:

Centennial remembrance of the Xinhai Revolution – celebrations in Taipei and Beijing with different accents

On October 10, 1911, a military coup against the Qing Dynasty led to the end of the more than 2,000-year-old Chinese empire and to the founding on January 1, 1912 of the Republic of China. On the eve of the anniversary, Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China, said in Beijing that reunification through peaceful means would best serve the interests of all Chinese people. In Taiwan, Ma Yingjiu, President of the Republic of China, said on October 10 at the ceremony in Taipei that the government in Beijing must not forget the ideals of the founding father [Sun Yatsen] and should work toward making freedom, democracy and equitable distribution of wealth a reality. *AsiaNews* reported that in mainland China, authorities cancelled some lectures on democracy which had been scheduled in connection with the anniversary. In preparation for the anniversary, the various religious communities in Taiwan took part in special worship services which included an interfaith prayer service for peace in Gaoxiong on August 23 (*AP* Oct. 10; *AsiaNews* Oct. 5; *South China Morning Post* Oct. 10, 11; *Xinhua* Oct. 8; cf. *RCTC* 2011, No. 2, pp. 106-107).

October 11, 2011:

Foreign Ministry spokesman comments on self-immolations of Tibetan monks and places the blame on the “Dalai Lama clique”

At a press conference, Liu Weimin, spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said that in recent months a number of monks and nuns have attempted to set themselves on fire and that the incidents are under investigation. According to him, the “Dalai Lama clique” has not condemned this extreme behavior, but has openly glossed over the deaths and has spread rumors in order to incite more people to emulate these examples. Liu said that the behavior of the clique is a disguised form of violence and terrorism. It is contrary to both the human conscience and to Buddhist teachings and, he claimed, is condemned by indigenous Tibetans, including religious groups (*Xinhua* Oct. 12).

October 11, 2011

Vatican Insider reports that nine Catholic priests have been blocked from entering China since June

The nine priests – four Italians, four of Chinese origin and a Frenchman, most of them residing in Hong Kong – were each turned back at the border crossing or at the international airport in Beijing. According to *Vatican Insider* among them were the Italian Fr. Franco Mella (social activist in Hong Kong / July 27); Fr. Bruno Lepeu, MEP (superior of the Paris Foreign Missionaries in Hong Kong / late July); Fr. Gianni Criveller, PIME (an expert in Chinese church history with a visa for academic work in Beijing / late July) and Fr. Peter Choy Wai-Man (head of the theology department at the Diocese of Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Seminary). In mid-September, 86 year old Fr. Angelo S. Lazzarotto, PIME, who maintains many academic contacts with China and who has regularly visited the country since 1978, was turned back upon his arrival in Beijing and was obliged to take a return flight three hours later. According to information from *Vatican Insider* the Government has drawn up a blacklist of at least 20 persons, mostly priests, whom they consider as having ties to the Holy See and whom they have decided not to allow entry into China. This action is understood as a retaliation for, in particular,

the excommunication of the two bishops consecrated without the consent of Rome in June and July, *Vatican Insider* reported (*Vatican Insider* Oct. 11).

October 16, 2011:

Catholic nuns run the Beijing Marathon for charity



“Sisters on the run” in Beijing. Photo: *UCAN*.

52 nuns, four priests and two religious brothers joined the team of runners organized by the Catholic welfare organization Jinde Charities. Six sisters and one priest managed to complete the full distance of 42 kilometers, others ran sections of the marathon. The sisters, belonging to nine different congregations, took part in the marathon in order to support 14 different projects.

A total of 30,000 runners participated in the 2011 Beijing Marathon. The starting point for the race was Tian'anmen Square (*UCAN* Oct. 18).

October 17–21, 2011:

15th Asian Liturgy Forum discusses the inculturation of burial rites

Liturgical experts from Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan, approximately 40 in number, concluded their meeting in Taipei with a joint statement. Among other things, the statement finds that it could be pastorally appropriate to incorporate into the funeral liturgy some local burial customs, such as the color of the vestments, specific gestures, traditional songs, instruments and symbols, etc. As part of the process of inculturation, the statement recommends serious study of indigenous practices and traditional burial rites. The forum stresses the importance of instruction in the Christian teaching regarding death and resurrection. According to the statement, the catechesis should also speak about reincarnation and superstitious beliefs which are not compatible with the Christian faith (*UCAN* Oct. 21; see the link <http://asianliturgyforum.blogspot.com/2011/10/15th-asian-liturgy-forum-statement.html> for the full text of the statement).



Tachih Catholic Cemetery in Taipei. Photo: *UCAN*.

October 18, 2011:

CPC Central Committee adopts new guidelines for cultural development

According to press reports from China, the “Decision of the Central Committee on some important issues concerning the stimulation of a major cultural development and prosperity” (中央关于推动文

化大发展大繁荣若干重大问题决定) aims at strengthening China's "Soft Power" and at preserving the country's "cultural security." The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China wants to build up and promote a "system of socialist core values" and improve the Party's leadership in cultural affairs. It also wants to develop the culture industry more rapidly and plans that by 2016 that sector will account for 5% of gross domestic product. According to *Xinhua*, this was the first time in 15 years that a session of the Party's Central Committee dealt mainly with culture.

On November 1, 2011, the Ministry of Finance announced that in future it intends to allocate more tax money for museums, cinemas, music companies, publishers and other cultural institutions (*Global Times Online* Nov. 1; *Xinhua* Oct. 25; Nov. 1).

October 19, 2011:

Declaration of the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) on the situation in Tibet

The Indian-registered NGO, which has headquarters in Dharamsala and operates under the patronage of the Dalai Lama, has issued a statement which also refers to the recent series of self-immolations. The statement describes the situation in Tibet as "extremely grave," and concludes that the human rights situation in Tibet is deteriorating sharply. TCHRD estimates that in 2011 alone, 200 known Tibetans have been arrested and 50 Tibetans have been sentenced. According to the statement, there are around 980 known political prisoners of whom 415 have been sentenced. The center estimates that since 2008, more than 170 Tibetans have died as a result of abusive treatment while in the hands of Chinese authorities (www.tchrd.org Oct. 19).

October 19, 2011:

Cardinal Zen begins a three-day fast for the freedom of Hong Kong schools

With this dramatic gesture, the retired Bishop of Hong Kong is protesting against an October 13, 2011 ruling by the Supreme Court of Hong Kong by which the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong finally lost its challenge to the "Education (Amendment) Ordinance" of 2004. The law requires that those private schools subsidized by the state must form incorporated school management committees by July 2011, which are to consist of at least 40% of elected representatives of parents, teachers and alumni and which are to be legally responsible for the management of the schools. The diocese sees this as a definite risk to the Catholic identity of its schools. The Catholic Church is responsible for 111 of Hong Kong's 572 primary schools and 87 of its 533 secondary schools. The Anglicans and Methodists, who also operate schools in Hong Kong, also fear that this new law will bring about an erosion of the authority of their school boards.

For three days and three nights, Cardinal Zen took only water and daily Holy Communion. Before beginning the fast, he addressed himself to the media in a long statement. The cardinal spent the three



Two priests and a journalist from Macau visit Cardinal Zen during his fast. Photo: *UCAN*.

days out in the open, in a small tent in the grounds of the Salesian religious community where he normally lives. On the last evening, more than 300 people gathered to pray in solidarity with Cardinal Zen. Among the visitors were Martin Lee Chu-ming, founder of the Democratic Party and the Diocese's lawyer throughout the whole process, as well as media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, both of whom are Catholics. At the beginning of the fast, the media reported that in recent years Lai had given Cardinal Zen HK \$ 20 million (€ 2 million). Cardinal Zen confirmed these reports, but stressed that the donation was not subject to any conditions and that the money had been used on the Mainland for charitable purposes and to provide assistance to both the official as well as to the underground Church (*AsiaNews* Oct. 22, 25; *South China Morning Post* Nov. 7; *UCAN* Oct. 13; www.katholisches.info Oct. 19). *Katharina Feith*

October 21, 2011:

UCAN reports the suspension of Bishop Pei Junmin from his official positions

Citing a church source, the Catholic news agency *UCAN* reported that in mid-August, Bishop Pei Junmin of Liaoning (Shenyang) was suspended from his position as vice chairman of the official Chinese Bishops' Conference (not recognized by Rome) and as chairman of the Catholic Patriotic Association and of the Church Affairs Commission of Liaoning. According to *UCAN*, the move was a disciplinary action on the part of the government after the 42-year-old bishop failed to preside over the illicit episcopal consecration in Shantou on July 14 of this year as the government required. According to the source, Bishop Pei is now confined to his house. Yang Yu, a spokesman for the Patriotic Association and for the Bishops' Conference, denied that the suspension had occurred.

Earlier in the year *UCAN* reported that Bishop Li Liangui of Xianxian had been stripped of his membership in the Political Consultative Conference of Hebei Province as a punishment for his failure to attend the 8th National Assembly of Representatives of the Catholic Church in China in December of 2010. The two bishops are recognized by both Rome and Beijing (*UCAN* Oct. 21[also photo]; cf. *RCTC* 2011, No. 2, p. 99).

October 23–25, 2011:

International Forum on Daoism meets in Hunan to promote Daoist influence abroad



Discussion among Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism at the International Forum on Daoism. Photo: www.sara.gov.cn

With 500 participants from 21 countries, the forum took place in the Nanyue District of Hengyang City in Hunan Province. It was organized by the Chinese Daoist Association and the China Religious Culture Communication Association. The topics on the conference agenda included environmental protection, sustainable development, inter-religious harmony, world peace and the possible role of Daoism in these areas. The “Nanyue Declaration,” a resolution adopted at the end of the conference, sees unbridled desires and the self-indulgent pursuit of profit as causes of the disorder in nature and of conflicts among

peoples. The declaration calls for a return to the Dao and to Virtue (*de*) (see the report *China heute* 2011, No. 4, pp. 208-209 [in German] and the text of the declaration at www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2011-10/26/content_23732663.htm).

October 26, 2011:

Explosion in government building in Chamdo (Tibet Autonomous Region) triggers repressive measures against the Karma Gon monastery

According to a report on *Radio Free Asia*, notes demanding independence for Tibet were found at the site of the government building damaged in a bomb attack on October 26; authorities suspected that monks were involved in the attack. The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy reported in early December that armed police units had taken control of the nearby Karma Gon monastery and that the monastery continues to be subjected to severe repressive measures. Many monks were arrested; others have been expelled from the monastery, it said. A former monk of the monastery burned himself to death on December 3. The Karma Gon monastery is the cradle of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism (*Radio Free Asia* Oct. 30; www.tchrd.org Dec. 12).

October 27, 2011:

Bishop of Haimen ordains priests for Diocese of Shantou – consent presumed

Bishop Shen Bin of Haimen (Jiangsu) and Bishop Li Shan of Beijing have ordained five deacons to the priesthood in Nantong, three of whom are for the Diocese of Shantou. Both Bishops are recognized by the Pope. Huang Bingzhang who was consecrated Bishop of Shantou on July 14, 2011, without papal appointment, and for whom the Vatican had declared automatic excommunication on July 16, did not make an appearance at the ordination. An unnamed church source speculated to *UCAN* that Huang had agreed with the new priests on this way of doing things in order to reduce the psychological pressure that would have been put on them [through ordination by an excommunicated bishop]. The source said that he found it sad that some Catholics still verbally abused the new priests and their families. According to the *UCAN* report, the former Bishop of Shantou, Cai Tiyan, himself not recognized by Rome, did not personally ordain any of the 20 diocesan priests ordained for Shantou during his time in office from 1981 to 1997 (*UCAN* Nov. 2; cf. *RCTC* 2011, No. 2, pp. 99, 114-118).



Photo of the first Mass of the three new priests in Shantou on Oct. 27 – this time with the illicit Bishop Huang (center).
Photo: www.catholicchurchinchina.org

October 30, 2011:

“Project 1 Million Dutiful Children” unleashes debate

A five-year plan stipulates that each county should select 30–60 children between the ages of four to six years who are to receive 100 days of special lessons in etiquette and morality. Children who complete this course successfully will continue to be educated in this way for three more years, at the end of which they will receive the title of “dutiful children.” According to the *South China Morning Post*, the sponsor of “Project 1 Million Dutiful Children” (*baiwan xiaozi gongcheng* 百万孝子工程) is the “state-sanctioned” China National Association for Ethical Studies (*Zhongguo lunli xuehui* 中国伦理学会). The paper said that the campaign has been the subject of numerous critical comments on the Chinese Internet. However, one comment on the website of the *Xinhua News Agency* argued that the project should be looked upon as a useful test, despite some flaws in its reasoning, since respect for old age is disappearing from Chinese society and the traditional Chinese value of filial piety is a foundation for the healthy development of a harmonious society (*South China Morning Post* Nov. 1; comments on www.people.com.cn Nov. 1 and www.xinhuanet.com Nov. 2).

October 30, 2011:

Communist Party Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region adopts program to reward “harmonious model monasteries”

Reporting on a meeting of the Communist Party Committee, the government-run website www.chinatibetnews.com said that in this campaign, activities are being planned to strengthen awareness among the monks and nuns in the Autonomous Region that they belong to the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族) so that they consciously draw a clear line between themselves and the separatist forces. In the “Opinions on the development of activities for the building and selection of harmonious model monasteries and on the selection of monks and nuns advanced in patriotism and in compliance with the law (for trial implementation)” 关于开展谐模范寺庙暨爱国守法先进僧尼创建评选活动的意见 (试行) adopted at the meeting, it is stipulated that such selection processes would be held every six months at the local level and once a year throughout the Autonomous Region. According to the report, Party and government leadership at the respective levels of government will present the monasteries chosen with a certificate and prize money. They will also present awards to selected individual monks and nuns. In addition, each monastery selected as a “harmonious model monastery” will also receive a commemorative plaque (www.chinatibetnews.com Nov. 1).

November 7, 2011:

Muslims in China Celebrate Id al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) – *Xinhua* reports

The state news agency, *Xinhua*, reported that government employees in Xinjiang were given a day off to celebrate the annual Feast of Sacrifice (Corban, Id al-Adha, Chinese *zaishengjie* 宰牲节). Muslims of different nationalities who are celebrating Corban were allowed three days off. At a reception of the China Islamic Association on November 6, the Association’s chairman, Grand-Imam Chen Guangyuan, addressed greetings and best wishes to Muslims throughout China and around the world (*Xinhua* Nov. 7).

November 9, 2011:

The Karmapa appeals to Tibetans not to burn themselves to death

In a written appeal, the Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, who fled from China to India in 1999, pleaded: “I request the people of Tibet to preserve their lives and find other, constructive ways to work for the cause of Tibet.” He called the self-immolations that have taken place “desperate acts” of brave people with pure motivation. “Most of those who have died have been very young. They had a long future ahead of them [...] We Tibetans are few in number, [...] we need to live long and stay strong without losing sight of our long-term goals.” The Karmapa wrote that he agrees with the Dalai Lama that the Chinese leadership needs to face up to the true causes of these tragic incidents and seriously revise its policy towards Tibetans and other minorities. He appealed to the world to empathize with the suppression of the monasteries, especially in the Tibetan part of Sichuan, and at the same time appealed to the Chinese leaders to pursue genuine dialogue with the Tibetan people.

According to one comment on *TibetInfoNet*, the Karmapa was the first Tibetan leader who unambiguously called on Tibetans not to end their lives, but to find other avenues of protest (the text of his statement can be found at www.kagyuoffice.org/HHKarmapaStatement; *TibetInfoNet Update* Nov. 10. See entries from Oct. 3 and 11).

November 10, 2011:

Vietnamese Falungong followers convicted for broadcasts to China

Vu Duc Trung and his brother-in-law Le Van Thanh were found guilty in Hanoi of illegal radio broadcasts to China and were sentenced to 3 and 2 years in prison respectively. According to the Falun Dafa Information Center in New York, the two had been sending shortwave programs to China regarding human rights violations, corruption and oppression of the Falungong movement since 2009. A group of Falungong practitioners protesting against the trial outside the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi was briefly detained.

According to Falun Dafa, in Vietnam, there are several hundred Falungong adherents who, due to pressure from the Chinese Communist Party, are increasingly subject to acts of harassment (even though the organization is apparently not prohibited by law). The arrest of Vu Duc Trung and Le Van Thanh followed on the heels of a May 30, 2010 diplomatic memorandum from the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi, Falun Dafa said.

The group Reporters Without Borders condemned the verdict and expressed concern about the influence exercised in the case by the Chinese Government (*AFP* Nov. 10; en.rsf.org Nov. 10; www.faluninfo.net Nov. 7, 8 and 10).

November 14, 2011:

Amnesty International calls for release of two Falungong followers, reports of unusual petition

According to Amnesty International (AI), Falungong member Zhou Xiangyang was released from prison in 2009 after serving six years of a nine-year sentence, but he was arrested once again in March

2011. He is at present in Ganbei prison in Tianjin, where he has allegedly been tortured, AI reported. According to the same report, his wife, Li Shanshan, who spent 15 months in a labor camp in 2006–2007, has described both of their situations in an open letter and after that was arrested once again on October 29, 2011 in Tangshan (Hebei Province) and sentenced to two years of “reeducation through labor.” Between September and mid-November of 2011, some 2,300 people in Zhou’s hometown in Changli County (Hebei Province) have signed a petition for his release, thus the AI report. Another petition for Li Shanshan had already been signed by 500 people before Nov. 15.

On October 31 the Falun Dafa Information Center in New York announced that a Buddhist temple registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau of Sichuan Province has been converted since mid-2010 into a “brainwashing center” for Falungong adherents. According to the report, the temple involved is the Sansheng Temple in Fengechang in Guihua Township, Pengzhou City. Falungong spokesperson Zhang Erping said that over the past 12 years, tens of thousands of such centers had been set up in China, but that it was particularly chilling when a Buddhist temple is used as the site of coercive measures against followers of a Buddhist group (www.amnesty.org Nov. 14; www.amnesty.de Nov. 18 [UA-335/2011, ASA 17/047/2011]; www.faluninfo.net Oct. 31).

Mid-November 2011:

Major Seminary of Shanxi resumes normal classes

According to *UCAN*, at a meeting in late October the seminary board members refused once again to reinstate Fr. Chang Tongxi, who had been dismissed as rector of the Montecorvino Seminary in Taiyuan last June on charges of embezzlement. The religious affairs authorities of Shanxi Province had made his reinstatement a condition for the resumption of classes and had even threatened to remove the 85 year old chairman of the board, Bishop Huo Cheng of Fenyang, from his position as chairman. In early November the seminary board called the seminarians back to the seminary and lessons resumed in mid-November, without further intervention by the authorities (*UCAN* Nov. 17; cf. *RCTC*, 2011, No. 2, p. 110).



Newly returned seminarians tidy up the seminary’s vegetable garden. Photo: *UCAN*.

November 16–18, 2011:

Forum on Liturgy and Inculturation in Shijiazhuang

The forum was organized by the Catholic Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (Shijiazhuang) in cooperation with the ten [official] major seminaries of mainland China. The 59 participants included academics (from the Church, universities and colleges), priests, nuns and lay people as well as experts from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Belgium, France and Germany. According to Fr. Zhang Shijiang, head of the Faith Institute, since 1991, 21 Chinese priests and only one sister (no laity) have either studied liturgy abroad or are still studying now. These include 7 in the U.S., 4 in Italy, 4 in Germany, 3 in the Philippines, 1 in Switzerland and 3 whose place of studies is not specified. Eleven have since returned

to China, where some of them are teaching in the seminaries. In addition, over the last 20 years, 128 liturgical publications of various kinds have appeared in mainland China, as well as the 70–100 song



View of the podium at the Forum.
Photo: Martin Welling.

books produced locally by various dioceses and parishes.

Within the framework of the main theme, the forum's 40 or so presentations dealt with, among other things, issues of church interior design, liturgical gestures and symbols, language, ancestor worship and traditional Chinese festivals in the liturgy, church music (also in connection with Chinese musical tradition), liturgy and evangelization (*Fides* Nov. 17; www.xinde.org Nov. 18; for the conference program see www.xinde.org/feature/liyi_2011/conference%20program).

November 22, 2011:

Coadjutor Bishop of Kaifeng dies in the “underground”

Bishop Anthony Zong Changfeng was born in 1932 and entered the seminary at the age of 12, but could only be ordained a priest following the Cultural Revolution in 1979. Following his ordination, he worked as a chaplain in the Diocese of Zhouzhi (Shaanxi Province). In 1998 Bishop Liang of Kaifeng in the neighboring province of Henan secretly consecrated him as his coadjutor (auxiliary bishop with the right to succession). The authorities, however, prevented Bishop Zong from ever exercising his episcopal ministry in Kaifeng, so he continued his pastoral ministry as a priest in the underground in Zhouzhi Diocese. About 3,000 faithful, three bishops and 40 priests attended Bishop Zong's funeral on November 29 in the village of Nanyu (*UCAN* Dec. 1).

November 24, 2011:

Xinhua: Tibet Autonomous Region adopts rules for social security coverage of Tibetan monks and nuns

According to the state news agency *Xinhua*, the recently adopted measures provide that all registered monks and nuns in the Tibet Autonomous Region who are over 18 years of age can apply to join health insurance and the old age pension scheme. They will also be able to apply to the State for a subsidy to help cover the costs of the annual premiums. Monks over the age of 60 can apply for a basic monthly pension of 120 Yuan without having paid premiums. *Xinhua* said that the new measures will solve the problem caused by the fact that many monks and nuns do not have their household registration (*hukou*) where their monasteries are located and therefore could not be included in local social security benefits. According to the document, local governments may grant monasteries and monks additional aid as a reward for being law-abiding and patriotic. *Xinhua* quoted one monk as saying that this clause is an important stimulus for monasteries to comply with the laws and to maintain social stability. The “Interim Measures of the Tibet Autonomous Region for Buddhist monks and nuns in monasteries to participate in the Social Security Program” 西藏自治区寺庙僧尼参加社会保险暂行办法 went into effect on Jan. 1, 2012 (*Xinhua* Nov. 24; www.fjnet.com Dec. 8). – For more on the general problem of social security for religious personnel see *China heute* 2010, No. 3, pp. 140-142 [in German].

November 25, 2011:

Henan Province to allow a second child to parents coming from one-child families

According to a decision of the Standing Committee of the Henan Provincial People's Congress, couples where both partners are only children may have two children in the future. Henan Province is the latest province to decide on this relaxing of family policy, said *Xinhua*. According to the news agency, the one-child policy has prevented 33 million births in population rich Henan Province over the past 30 years (*Xinhua* Nov. 25).

November 27–30, 2011:

Global Buddhist Assembly in New Delhi – China protests against the participation of the Dalai Lama

Some 900 Buddhists of different traditions and from 46 different countries participated in an international Buddhist assembly organized by the New Delhi based Asoka Mission. The assembly was called to celebrate the 2,600th anniversary of the Enlightenment of the Buddha. Indian media reported that in the run-up to the meeting China is said to have protested against the Dalai Lama taking part and to have urged India to cancel the gathering. Since India refused to do so, China reportedly has postponed Sino-Indian border talks that had been scheduled for the same period, and of the 40 Chinese Buddhist scholars expected for the meeting only 8 were able to come. The Karmapa Lama, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism and currently living in exile in India, delivered the opening address to the sub-forum on environment and nature. Participants decided to establish an International Buddhist Confederation, which will serve as a platform for Buddhists worldwide. According to the 2001 census, almost 8 million Buddhists live in India (*IANS* Nov. 27; *PTI* Nov. 26; www.asokamission.in; www.kagyuoffice.org Nov. 28).

November 30, 2011:

Episcopal consecration in Yibin (Sichuan) – with Papal mandate, but with an excommunicated bishop taking part

The 95 year old Ordinary of Yibin, Bishop Chen Shizhong, has ordained 50 year old Fr. Peter Luo Xuegang as his coadjutor bishop (with the right of succession). The co-consecrators were Bishops He Zeqing of Wanzhou, Li Jing of Ningxia, Yang Xiaoting of Yulin, Coadjutor Bishop Xiao Zejiang von Guiyang as well as Lei Shiyin (Leshan). With the exception of Lei Shiyin, who was excommunicated for his episcopal ordination without Papal mandate on June 29, 2011, all of the other consecrating bishops are recognized by both Rome and Beijing. According to local sources cited by *UCAN*, the consecration took place amid rigid security measures, with round-the-clock “security protection” for the participating clergy the day prior to the ceremony and the presence of many police officers and police dogs in the area; cell phones, cameras and liquids were banned from the ordination site.

Newly consecrated Bishop Luo originally belonged to the Diocese of Leshan. In May of 2009 he was transferred to Yibin Diocese and in January of 2010 was elected coadjutor bishop candidate of Yibin. He was ordained a priest in Leshan on November 30, 1991 together with Fr. Lei Shiyin. The Diocese of Yibin has 30,000 Catholics. (*UCAN* Nov. 24, 28, 29, 30; Dec. 1; www.catholicchurchinchina.org Nov. 30; www.xinde.org Dec. 1).

November 29 and 30, 2011:

Vatican spokesman Lombardi, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei on the episcopal consecration of Yibin

On November 29, the day before the episcopal consecration in Yibin (see above), Vatican spokesman Fr. Federico Lombardi confirmed that the candidate for ordination was recognized by Rome, and expressed the hope that the standards of the Church regarding the ordination of bishops would be respected. The same day, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in answer to journalists' questions on the upcoming consecration that China has always been sincere in its desire to improve relations with the Vatican.

In comments on the evening of November 30 following the consecration, Lombardi said that the Holy See welcomed the consecration of Bishop Luo. "After the recent episcopal ordination without papal mandate, the fact of having a new bishop in communion with the Pope and all the Catholic bishops of the world is certainly positive." However, the participation of the [excommunicated] Bishop Lei Shiyin in the consecration "gives rise to disagreement and confusion among the faithful," the Vatican spokesman said. Under normal circumstances, he concluded, Lei's presence "should have been entirely excluded, and would entail canonical consequences for the other participating bishops." Under the circumstances, however, "it is likely that they were unable to prevent it without great inconvenience." According to Lombardi, the Holy See will be able to judge this question better when it has more precise information (*Fides* Nov. 29; *Reuters*, Nov. 29.; *Vatican Radio* as found at www.news.va Dec. 1).

November 30, 2011:

Bishop not recognized by Rome ordains six deacons

According to information from the news service *Eglise d'Asie (EDA)*, the official Bishop of Kunming (Yunnan Province) Ma Yinglin, who was consecrated in 2006 without papal mandate and who in 2010 was elected chairman of the Chinese Bishops' Conference (not recognized by Rome), has ordained six seminarians to the diaconate in the village of Lunmeiyi. Citing local Church sources, *EDA* reported that the candidates had been placed under considerable pressure. Five of them come from the Yunnan dioceses of Kunming, Dali and Zhaotong and belong to various ethnic groups (two Tibetans, one Miao, one Yi, and one Jingpo). The sixth candidate was a Han Chinese from Shanxi Province. All six had studied at the major seminary in Chengdu. According to *EDA*, in recent years seminarians from Yunnan have either left the country or have gone to other provinces so as to be ordained by bishops other than Ma. Ordination at the hands of an illegitimate bishop creates not only a problem for the deacons under Church law but also a very real pastoral problem since they risk being rejected by a large part of the faithful, *EDA* commented (*EDA* Dec. 2).

December 2, 2011:

Holy See and Taiwan conclude agreement on academic cooperation and mutual recognition of university degrees

With this agreement, Taiwan now recognizes the degrees of ecclesiastical universities around the world. Conversely, degrees issued by colleges and universities in Taiwan will now be recognized by all ecclesiastical universities worldwide. As *AsiaNews* reported, the agreement has consequences in Taiwan itself: the degrees of the Jesuit-led Theological Faculty of Fu Jen Catholic University will also be recognized

by the government. This was not the case in the past. Graduates of the Faculty will finally have a degree which will enable them to find employment in Taiwanese society, said the Faculty's dean, Fr. Augustine Tsang, SJ. The Theological Faculty of Fu Jen has 174 students in its regular day program and 64 who are taking evening classes. Among them are many foreign religious and one Russian Orthodox student who is preparing himself for future ministry among Chinese communities in Heilongjiang and in Siberia (*AsiaNews* Dec. 2; *CathNews China* Dec. 2).

December 3, 2011:

***China Daily*: Trafficking in women is on the increase in China**

According to the government newspaper, the number of women from Vietnam, Laos and Burma, who are smuggled illegally into China is on the increase. Once in China, they are either sold for between 20,000 and 50,000 Yuan as brides for men living in rural areas or they are forced into prostitution. According to information from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, between July and September of 2011, 52 Vietnamese women and 13 children were rescued in raids carried out along the border with Vietnam. 53 suspected traffickers were arrested (*Xinhua* Dec. 3).

December 4, 2011:

Last Chinese pilgrims return home from Mecca after this year's pilgrimage

Statistics provided by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA), indicate that 13,700 Muslims from the PR China have taken part in the 2011 Hajj to Mecca. The last of the 41 charter flights to return touched down in Beijing on December 4. As in recent years, the pilgrimage was centrally organized by both the SARA and the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA). The CIA concluded that the goal of providing a decent, civilized and peaceful pilgrimage was achieved and that pilgrims this year enjoyed the best level of service and organization of any Hajj in many years. According to official figures, more than 13,000 Muslims from the PR China took part in the Hajj in 2010 (www.sara.gov.cn Dec. 04).



Top: Pilgrims check-in for the pilgrimage to Mecca.
Left: Welcome ceremony for the Hajjis returning from Mecca.
Photos: www.sara.gov.cn

Collaboration: Katharina Feith (item indicated)

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