

News Update on Religion and Church in China March 4 – September 28, 2015

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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” (RCTC 2015, No. 2, pp. 3-19) covered the period November 28, 2014 – February 24, 2015.

March 4, 2015:

Official Panchen Lama argues for increase of quota of monks permitted in Tibetan monasteries – or else there is a danger that “Buddhism will continue to exist in name only”

The official Panchen Lama, who is selected and installed by Beijing, gave a presentation before the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference on the topic: “Vigorously developing talents so that Tibetan Buddhism can better adapt to socialist society.” He began with words of praise for the progress Tibet has made “under the brilliance of the Party’s ethnic and religious policies,” before going on to speak exclusively of the problem that “the number of monks [and nuns] is not sufficient to satisfy the growing requirements and the needs of the faithful.”

According to the Panchen, the monks have three functions: 1. the handing down of the Buddhist heritage, something which presupposes a study of Dharma lasting many years; 2. caring for the temples and for Buddhist cultural assets; and 3. religious services for the masses, especially in the performance of rituals in the houses of the faithful, some of which are in distant locations and difficult to reach. He pointed in particular to three things which he considers to be at the root of the current low number of monks: 1. a rapidly changing society and increasing pluralism; 2. the declining number of children per family; and 3. a limited quota (*bianzhi* 编制) of monks in many monasteries. The Sakya Monastery, for example, much frequented by pilgrims and tourists, has a quota of 120 monks, with actually 130 monks living there. However, those monks have to care for the monastery’s 108 temples and 300 Sutra halls. Smaller monasteries are also suffering under quotas which are too low. Due to the great amount of work that the monks have to do each day, there often remains little time for individual study, for the transmission of religious teachings or for the regular assemblies of the monks required by their monastic rule, the Panchen said. He warned that because of all this, there is a danger that in future “Buddhism will continue to exist in name only.” As a remedy for these problems, the Panchen suggested readjusting the quotas and being more flexible in their application, something which could also help to avoid “eventual misunderstandings vis-a-vis the government’s religious policies.” He pointed to the fact

that in the Tibet Autonomous Region, with its 1,787 religious sites and its 46,000 monks and nuns, the numbers of monks and nuns are clearly lower in proportion compared with the provinces of Sichuan (783 monasteries with 68,000 monks and nuns) and Qinghai (660 monasteries with 44,000 monks and nuns) [both including areas settled by Tibetans].

The Panchen's talk was published that same day in the official Chinese media. Appraisals of his presentation in the press outside of mainland China varied considerably. While *UCAN* saw his talk as "the first sign Beijing's choice may be deviating from the party line," others suspected that just "a few waves" were being made in order to make the official Panchen appear more credible (for the text of his talk, see: www.mzb.com.cn/html/report/150330384-1.htm; English translation: www.savetibet.org/china-attempts-to-legitimize-its-panchen-lama-through-a-major-speech-as-the-real-panchen-lamas-birthday-approaches/. See also *The Economist* [Blog] *Erasmus* March 21; *UCAN* May 18). – For the Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama, see entry of May 17, 2015.

March 9 and 11, 2015:

China's politicians characterize comments by the Dalai Lama about his possible non-reincarnation as "blasphemy" and "betrayal"

The statement by the Dalai Lama that his line could possibly end with his death was "blasphemy against Tibetan Buddhism," said Padma Choling, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Congress. He said that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should follow strict historical conventions and required religious rituals of the Tibetan Buddhism and should also be approved by the central government. "It's not up to the Dalai Lama," he declared after a panel discussion with other Tibetan delegates during the annual session of the National People's Congress in Beijing. According to *Xinhua*, on March 11, Zhu Weiqun, Chairman of the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the Political Consultative Conference, spoke of the Dalai Lama's "dual betrayal" of his homeland and of his faith. Any reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, Zhu said, will have to be approved by the central government and would be illegal without such approval.

The Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile, Lobsang Sangay, said in response that finding a successor to the Dalai Lama is none of the Communist Party's business; this would be like "Fidel Castro saying: 'I will select the next pope [...]'" (*New York Times* March 11; *South China Morning Post* March 11; *Xinhua* March 9, 11; chinanews.com March 9).

In 2007, the Chinese government issued a document entitled: "Measures for the Administration of Reincarnations of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism." In an extensive statement on the issue of his reincarnation, the now 80-year old Dalai Lama explained on September 24, 2011 that at about the age of 90, he would consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. If it is decided that it should continue, he would leave clear written instructions about this. "No recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China," the Dalai Lama's statement on the issue of his reincarnation says (English text of the statement at www.dalailama.com/news/post/753-statement-of-his-holiness-the-fourteenth-dalai-lama-tenzin-gyatso-on-the-issue-of-his-reincarnation; German translations of both documents can be found in *China heute* 2007, No. 6, pp. 220-221 and 2012, No. 1, pp. 15-20).

March 11, 2015:

Parolin and Zen speak out on dialogue between China and the Vatican

In response to questions from journalists about a possible *rapprochement* between the People's Republic of China and the Vatican, Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, said on March 11 that there is “nothing new of importance” on the issue. “The only way forward is to talk to one another,” said Parolin. He expressed his belief that “dialogue between the Church, the Holy See and China could have immense benefits for world peace.” In contrast, Joseph Cardinal Zen, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, in an interview on the same day with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, complained that the Vatican was too ready to enter into compromises. “Beijing doesn't want to dialogue,” he said (according to *America Magazine* May 11; *UCAN* March 13; *Vatican Insider* March 13).

March 12, 2015:

Interview with Vatican spokesman concerning relations with China and Vietnam is being portrayed in different ways and is causing discussions

Hong Kong's Phoenix TV, known as sympathetic to Beijing, interviewed Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi in Rome. The station broadcast short parts of the interview on March 12, apparently supplemented by a journalist acting as moderator. In that interview, Lombardi reasserted the Pope's readiness to travel to China “tomorrow.” He also pointed out that relations with Vietnam have improved since the Pope received Vietnamese top government leaders in Rome and appointed a (non-resident) Vatican representative for Vietnam, citing this as a good example of how relations can develop positively through dialogue.

According to the way the interview was portrayed in a number of media reports (*UCAN*, *AsiaNews*, *Global Times*, etc.), Lombardi supposedly also suggested that the Vatican might consider using the so-called “Vietnam model” for the appointment of bishops in China. Lombardi, however, speaking to Gerard O'Connell of *America Magazine* – as O'Connell reported in an article of May 11 – denied that he had made any reference in the interview to the Vietnam model or that he had made any comments at all about episcopal appointments. In connection with the Lombardi interview, on March 12, Phoenix TV aired a half-hour talk show featuring four Chinese columnists who discussed the “Vietnam model.” However, as both Lucia Cheung (*UCAN*) and O'Connell pointed out, the model was presented in such a way as to lead one to believe that the Vietnamese government would be nominating candidates for the office of bishop, whereas both journalists concurred that *de facto* it would be the Vatican that would be proposing the names of candidates to the Vietnamese government.

In a March 13 article referring to Lombardi's [alleged] proposal of using the Vietnam model, the government backed *Global Times* wrote that Beijing is urging the Vatican “to face the historical tradition and reality of Catholics in China.” The newspaper quoted a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Minister, Hong Lei, as saying that China is willing to have constructive dialogue with the Vatican (*America Magazine* May 11; *AsiaNews* March 17; *china.ucanews.com* March 14; *Global Times* March 13, *UCAN* March 13, 20; *Vatican Insider* March 13).

March 12, 2015:

Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs confirms talks with the Vatican, adding “Both sides have to be patient”

“There has constantly been a normal channel of communication between China and the Vatican,” said Wang Zuo’an, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, in an interview conducted on March 11 and published on March 12 in the Beijing affiliated Hong Kong newspaper *Wen Wei Po*. Among the issues of this communication is the right of the appointment of bishops, Wang said. Since the problem has a long history and the issues to be discussed are complicated, both sides would have to be patient and keep calm, he added. “I am of the opinion,” he said, “that if both sides make the necessary efforts, we will eventually be able to arrive at a solution. We also hope that the Vatican will express [its wish for] improvement in Sino-Vatican relations not just with words. It is crucial that they [the Vatican side] also come up with concrete actions and that they summon up the honesty [needed] to solve the related problems.” – In the same interview, Wang also announced an extensive revision of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs,” which came into force ten years ago (*Wen Wei Po* March 12).

March 14, 2015:

Ecumenical “Way of the Cross” in Hong Kong

More than 100 persons belonging to various Christian denominations took part in a “Way of the Cross” organized by the group “Family of Love and Solidarity”. Together with Brother Ghislain of the Monastic Community of Taizé, a number of Protestant pastors and Catholic priests also took part. During this special service, a large cross was carried in procession from St. Theresa’s Catholic Church to the Anglican All Saints Cathedral. According to an article in the *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner*, the procession wound its way through the streets of Mongkok and along Prince Edward Street in Kowloon. The event was interspersed with Taizé hymns and prayers for Hong Kong, for the poor, for persecuted Christians and for the Unity of Christians, which were also written on banners carried by the participants (*Fides* March 24; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* March 28).

March 22, 2015:

Arrest of two underground priests in Harbin

In the City of Harbin, in Heilongjiang Province, two underground priests were arrested while they were giving a blessing during Sunday Mass in a house of prayer. According to a Church source, and as reported in *UCAN*, the two priests, Fr. Quan Xiaoyun and Fr. Cao Jianyou of the parish of Mudanjiang, were charged with “holding illegal religious activities at an unregistered worshipping venue.” The Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Harbin, Fr. Zhao Hongchun, said that he had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the two priests. In recent times, the prayer house has found itself under pressure from the authorities over and over again. “We did not anticipate such things happening at this time when the media is sharp on China-Vatican relations,” Fr. Zhao said, “. . . we are praying for China and the Vatican to be able to reach wonderful and healthy diplomatic relations. I don’t understand the intentions of the government” (*UCAN* March 23).

March 24, 2015:

For the first time, a prison sentence is handed down in connection with the cross removals in Zhejiang

The court of Pingyang County (Wenzhou) sentenced the Protestant pastor Huang Yizi to a year in prison after finding him guilty of “gathering a crowd to disturb public order.” In July of 2014, together with a group of the faithful, he had attempted in vain to prevent the tearing down of the cross atop the Salvation Church in Shuitou, which belongs to the official Church (UCAN March 25). According to reports, on that occasion 500–600 police and demolition workers clashed with around 300 believers; between 50 and 100 of the church members were injured (see also: *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 143f. [in German]).

April 1–6, 2015:

Presiding Bishop of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on China visit

This was the first visit to China by the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). At a meeting in Shanghai with Rev. Gao Feng, president of the China Christian Council, she stressed the fact that “most American Christians and Lutherans would be surprised by the large Christian presence in China.” Eaton also met with Elder Fu Xianwei, chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and together with her delegation visited church projects and communities belonging to the Lisu ethnic minority in Yunnan Province. – According to its own data, the ELCA, with its more than 3.8 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations, is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States (www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7737).

April 4, 2015:

Hong Kong Muslims launch “Letter of Peace” to all citizens

The document, with its headline “Muslims in Hong Kong are against any form of extremism or terrorism,” was posted on change.org, a website specializing in online petitions. By May 12, 2015, 528 supporters had added their names to the petition, which was signed “Muslims in Hong Kong.” The authors, as they explained in their text, after reports in the media felt the need to write a “Letter of Peace” to all. They cite verses from the Koran and other Islamic religious texts to prove Islam’s respect for human life and dignity and for tolerance, among other things. “The Muslims in Hong Kong have lived side by side with their fellow Non-Muslims for the best part of the last 175 years, and we certainly desire nothing else but to continue this peaceful coexistence. We request everyone not to judge the religion by the actions of a few [...] We, Muslims in Hong Kong, just like the people of Hong Kong want to continue to feel safe and understand we are in this together, being against any form of violence whosoever commits it” (see petition at: www.change.org/p/muslims-in-hk-against-any-form-of-extremism-or-terrorism). According to the *South China Morning Post*, which featured a report on this initiative in its April 4 edition, Islamic leaders decided to take this initiative following media reports that the so-called Islamic State (IS) was attempting to recruit members from among the Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong.

April 15, 2015:

Chinese Government's new "White Paper" on Tibet strikes out at Dalai Lama

The document, published on April 15 by the State Council Information Office, is titled: "Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide." Previous government White Papers on Tibet – including the most recent one of October 2013 – mostly stressed the "feudal serfdom" of the old Tibet prior to 1959 and contrasted it with the achievements of the new. The White Paper of 2015 also does this in its first two chapters. However, the following three chapters contain a detailed reckoning with the 14th Dalai Lama and his "clique," presented in such a way so as to constitute an element not seen before in a White Paper. The headings of the relevant chapters are as follows: III. The Essential Intent of the "Middle Way" Is to Split China; IV. A Veneer of Peace and Non-violence [accusing the Dalai Lama of inciting self-immolations]; V. The Central Government's Policy towards the 14th Dalai Lama. "Only when he [the Dalai Lama] makes a public statement acknowledging that Tibet has been an integral part of China since antiquity, and abandons his stance on independence and his attempts to divide China, can he improve his relationship with the central government in any real sense," the White Paper says. It calls upon the Dalai Lama to "put aside his illusions in his remaining years and face up to reality."

Speaking of religion, the White Paper states: "Citizens enjoy full freedom of religious belief. In Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, Bon, Islam, and Catholicism coexist with a number of other religions [...] Currently, Tibet has 1,787 sites for different religious activities, over 46,000 resident monks and nuns, and 358 Living Buddhas; there are four mosques and over 3,000 Muslims, and one Catholic church and 700 believers." The document emphasizes that religious activities in the monasteries as well as in the houses of the ordinary believers are "normally practiced" and that the reincarnation of Living Buddhas is "respected by the state" as a "succession system unique to Tibetan Buddhism." Since the democratic reform in Tibet, over 60 incarnated Living Buddhas have been confirmed, the White Paper says.

The English text of the White Paper can be found at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-04/15/c_134152612_2.htm. See also entry of September 6, 2015.

April 19, 2015:

Commemoration: 150 years since the arrival in China of Scheut Missionary Theophiel Verbist

The Scheut Missionaries (CICM) in Brussels have commemorated the 1865 arrival of their founder, Fr. Theophiel Verbist in China. During the anniversary Mass, Fr. Tim Atkin, CICM, the current Superior General, preached on the mission of Fr. Verbist, of his confreres and their lay helpers in China. The main celebrant was a Chinese priest, Fr. Joseph Li Shoushan, a native of the Tiger Valley in northeastern China, where Fr. Verbist worked until 1868 and where he also died. Thirty Chinese priests and religious sisters took part in the Mass, some of whom had travelled as pilgrims from the former mission fields of the Scheut Missionaries in Inner Mongolia and northern China. Over the years, Fr. Verbist and 679 other Scheut Missionaries were active in this region of China and 250 of them were laid to rest there as well. Both the Scheut Missionaries and the pilgrims stressed their common understanding of mission today, namely communion between local Churches. The pilgrimage also took place under the motto: "Encounter and Communion with European Christians." Thus, an exchange was organized with the group "Friends of the Church in China," and the Scheut Missionaries presented to each of their Chinese priest guests a chalice which had once belonged to one of their deceased Scheut confreres, telling them that today they, the local Chinese religious and priests, would be the ones to carry on the mission of the Scheut Missionaries in China (Scheut Missionary [CICM] press release of April 19, 2015).

April 20, 2015:

Bishop Wang Ruowang critically burned by high voltage electric shock



Bishop Wang in an archive photo (UCAN).

53-year-old Bishop Wang Ruowang of the diocese of Tianshui in Gansu Province apparently suffered the accident when a wet piece of laundry which he was spreading on the roof came into contact with a faulty power line. Since the appointment of Bishop Wang, a member of the underground Church, his ministry has been restricted to the parish of Taijing. When he is staying in the parish he lives with various families, never spending more than a few days with any one family so as not to be a burden on anyone. While hanging up the laundry on the roof of the house where he was staying at the time, one of the dripping albs came too close to the power line which ran across the roof. The very high humidity on that day and the nearness of the wet garment caused the electric current to jump the gap

to the garment and Bishop Wang Ruowang suffered serious burns on over 50% of his body and was knocked unconscious. After being brought first to a local clinic, he was transferred to a specialty clinic where a team of specialists took over his treatment, stabilized his condition and finally succeeded in restoring him to consciousness. According to a spokesman for the diocese, it seems that he was fortunate in that neither his inner organs nor his head were burned. The high-voltage power cable was supposed to have been moved out into an open field years ago but it was never done. Bishop Wang is already the seventh victim and, according to the diocesan spokesman, the one who got off the lightest. Five of the six other victims were so severely wounded that they succumbed to their injuries. The whole diocese was praying for the bishop and the young people appealed online for volunteers to pray the rosary for his recovery. On June 3, *UCAN* reported that Bishop Wang was discharged from the hospital on May 26 and that he is doing well again (www.china.ucanews.com April 21; May 06; June 03; *UCAN* April 23).

From April 22, 2015:

ChinaChange.org publishes Uighur scholar Ilham Tohti's analyses and recommendations regarding ethnic problems in Xinjiang

According to ChinaChange.org, a website about civil rights in China, the text was published on the site Daxiong Gonghui after Ilham Tohti's arrest in January 2014. It contains one chapter each on the main problem areas: unemployment, (lack of) bilingual education, religion, segregation of ethnic groups from each other, distrust (in the party) toward Uighur officials, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the competence and credibility of the government, Han chauvinism and ethnic autonomy. Each chapter contains an overview of the problem, lists the problem's causes and offers recommendations toward a possible solution. With regard to religion, the author establishes among other things, that since 2009 there has been a steady climb in the level of religious zeal, not least among young people. Restrictive religious policies – such as the one requiring one cadre per mosque to be responsible for denying admittance to outsiders, youths, or regular worshippers beyond the allotted quota – have produced great dissatisfaction. In reaction to those tactics, underground activities have been on

a steady rise, with ultra-conservative currents from Afghanistan, Pakistan and other places spreading rapidly across Xinjiang. Most Uighur intellectuals are wary of and opposed to extremist religious views, nevertheless they too find the government's draconian religious policies in Xinjiang repugnant, Ilham Tohti's paper says.

According to ChangeChina.org, Daxiong Gonghui has declared that Ilham Tohti wrote the text in response to a request which high ranking Chinese officials had addressed to him in 2011, revised the first draft in October of 2013 but after that was unable to produce a final version of the text. ChinaChange.org has declared that it has been able to verify the origin and the authenticity of the document.

Ilham Tohti, an Uighur, was occupied as a professor of economics at the Minzu University in Beijing. On September 23, 2014, he was sentenced to life in prison on allegations of having fostered separatism. The document can be found at: https://chinachangedotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/ilham-tohti_present-day-ethnic-problems-in-xinjiang-uighur-autonomous-region-overview-and-recommendations_complete-translation2.pdf.

April 23, 2015:

During the Easter Vigil of 2015, the Catholic Church of mainland China celebrated the baptisms of 19,554 new Catholics



2015 Easter Vigil in the parish of Longgang, Diocese of Wenzhou. Photo: *Xinde*.

For the eighth time since 2007, the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (Shijiazhuang) has compiled statistics on Easter baptisms in mainland China. For the first time the Faith Institute has collaborated with the Chinese Catholic Research Centre (Zhongguo tianzhujiao yanjiushi 中国天主教研究室), which is under the Catholic Patriotic Association and the official Bishops' Conference. The statistic, published in the Catholic weekly newspaper *Xinde (Faith)*, shows the numbers of newly baptized at Easter of 2015 and indicates that number as 19,554. This is a slight decrease of about 500 from the total number of 20,004 baptisms registered in 2014. The dioceses in Hebei Province are still in first place in terms of absolute figures – 3,368 baptisms – but there were about 600 fewer newly baptized this year than last year. The dioceses of

the provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang show the greatest positive change: Zhejiang 2014: 1,054, 2015: 1,803; in Fujian: the number of newly baptized increased by almost 200% to 1,557.

According to the pastoral letter of John Cardinal Tong of the Archdiocese of Hong Kong, this past Easter 3,600 adults were baptized. In Taipei there were clear signs this year of a positive development. *AsiaNews* reports that there were hundreds of baptisms, with 67 in Holy Family parish alone. There the positive trend has been attributed not only to the personal commitment of the local Catholics but also to what has come to be called “the Francis effect.” This indicates not only that there is a positive trend in the numbers of prospective and newly baptized persons in the Catholic Church of Taipei, but that one of the reasons for that increase has been the positive image that Pope Francis lends to the Catholic Church (*AsiaNews* April 07; Easter pastoral letter of John Cardinal Tong of Hong Kong, end of March; *Xinde* April 23).

April 23, 2015:

A stripper to bring joy to one's final rest? *Renmin ribao* announces strict penalties

Traditionally, one can generally say of Chinese funerals that the greater the number of participants, the louder the wailing of the mourners and the longer the funeral rites drag on, it proportionally indicates how much one honors the dear departed. Since funeral celebrations no longer seem to be attracting the numbers of guests they once did, users of the social media site *Weibo* are reporting that over the past 20 years in the rural areas in eastern China (particularly in the provinces of Hebei and Jiangsu) there has emerged a demand for strippers to perform at funerals. In fact there are organized troupes of strippers who move through the rural areas and offer their services at funerals. Chinese generally spend a lot of money for elaborate funerals and according to a 2006 story broadcast on state run *CCTV*, grieving relatives can schedule a striptease performance at prices ranging from 2,000 RMB (approximately 285 Euro) and upwards. Under previous administrations these practices were rather widely tolerated, even though they are prohibited by law. But according to the Chinese Ministry of Culture, in keeping with the government's new stringency with regard to violations of the law, more and more controls are being carried out in this trade, due to concerns about the impact of such activities on the social environment. The *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*) subsequently headlined: "Obscene performances in the villages will be strictly prosecuted and severely punished!" One manager of an "Exotic Dance Troupe" in Hebei was sentenced to 15 days imprisonment and a fine of 70,000 RMB (about 10,000 Euro) and three dancers were arrested in Jiangsu in the middle of the performance of an "obscene act" (*Renmin ribao* April 23; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* April 27; *UCAN* April 24).

April 25, 2015:

Catastrophic earthquake in Nepal devastates 242 temples in neighboring Tibet

As the religious affairs bureau of the Tibet Autonomous Region reported on May 19, the devastated temples all lie in the administrative territory of Xigaze. The 2,566 monks and nuns displaced by the disaster have been housed in temporary shelters, where religious routines can be observed, the bureau said. According to *Xinhua*, the Nepal earthquake claimed 25 victims in Tibet; 797 suffered injuries and four remain missing. More than 52,000 were rendered homeless. On May 6 President Xi issued a call for comprehensive rescue and aid efforts as well as for the safeguarding of social stability in Tibet. In Nepal itself, approximately 9,000 people lost their lives in the April 25 earthquake and in the successive aftershocks (*Xinhua* May 7, 19).

April 27, 2015:

Mass in Shanghai's Cathedral to mark 2nd anniversary of the death of Bishop Jin Luxian

The Mass of Suffrage for the deceased official bishop of Shanghai, Bishop Jin Luxian, who died two years ago, was presided over by Fr. Wu Jianlin, pastor of Shanghai's Cathedral parish. Few believers and priests from the underground Catholic community took part in the Mass, according to *AsiaNews*. One year after the death of Bishop Jin, the old underground bishop of Shanghai, Bishop Fan Zhongliang, also died. Since Auxiliary Bishop Xing Wenzhi resigned for reasons that are not fully understood and

Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daquin remains under house arrest after publicly declaring his withdrawal from the Patriotic Association at the time of his consecration in 2012, the diocese of Shanghai has no free bishop at its helm (*AsiaNews* April 27).

April 28 and 29, 2015:

First bishops elected in the official Church since resumption of Sino-Vatican talks in June 2014

According to *UCAN*, at the elections of bishops in two dioceses in Henan Province – strictly supervised by the authorities – there was only one candidate for each diocese: Fr. Cosmos Ji Chengyi for the Diocese of Zhumadian and Fr. Joseph Zhang Yinlin for the Diocese of Anyang. In accordance with the government-sanctioned procedure for bishops' elections, the electoral colleges were composed of priests (in both cases 50% or more), sisters and lay people voting together. The election in Zhumadian was presided over by the vicar general of the diocese and by the administrators of the neighboring dioceses of Xinxiang and Kaifeng. In Anyang, the election was overseen by members of the Catholic *lianghui* (Patriotic Association and Commission for Church Affairs). Both candidates were elected with only a few abstentions, something which, according to *china.ucanews.com*, was “not surprising, since both bishop candidates had already been appointed by Rome long ago.” So the Vatican and China seem to have arrived at some kind of understanding with regard to those two candidates for the office of bishop. The last official election of a bishop to take place – in the diocese of Chengdu (Sichuan) on May 8, 2014 – was carried out “unilaterally” (i.e., by China alone) since the candidate chosen, Fr. Tang Yuange, had no papal mandate. To date, however, he has not been consecrated (*china.ucanews.com* April 29; *UCAN* April 30; see also: *RCTC* 2014, No. 3, pp. 5-6). – See also entry of August 4, 2015 about the episcopal consecration of Fr. Zhang Yinlin.

May to August 2015:

26 adherents of the “Church of the Almighty God” sentenced to prison terms – In 2014 20,000 “cult members” were arrested

Official Chinese media reported on the following sentences handed down against a total of 26 members of the “Church of the Almighty God,” officially labeled a “cult” and outlawed in China :

Date (2015)*	Location of the Court	Number sentenced	Length of sentence
May 5	Wuling District, Changde City (Hunan)	6	2 to 4 years
July 2	Xinzhou District, Wuhan City (Hubei)	5	3 to 4 years
July 25	Panjin City (Liaoning)	5	2 to 3 years
July 26	Zigui County (Hubei)	9	18 months to 3 years
August 19	Yinan County (Shandong)	1	3 year suspended sentence

* Date the sentence was announced either in court or in the press: *Qilu wanbao* Aug. 19; *Wuhan wanbao* July 2; *Xinhua* (Chinese) May 13; *Xinhua* (English) July 25-26.

Most reports stated that those condemned had been found guilty of “organizing/using a cult organization (*xiejiao zuzhi* 邪教组织) to undermine implementation of the law.” Since 1997, this offence against article 300 of the Criminal Law has been punishable with prison sentences of 3–7 years, in more

serious cases with sentences of more than 7 years – and according to the latest Criminal Law Amendment, as of November 1, 2015 even with life imprisonment.

According to the U.S.-based organization China Aid, during the year 2014, more than 20,000 religious practitioners were accused of belonging to a heretical cult and taken into police custody. About 1,100 of them were prosecuted and sentenced.

The “Church of the Almighty God,” founded in the 1990s and also known as the “Doctrine of the Eastern Lightning,” proclaims Almighty God or Second Christ, a reincarnation of Christ in the form of a Chinese woman. For years the sect has been trying to win over members from among the faithful of the various Christian communities. Since it came out all across China towards the end of 2012 with Doomsday prophecies, and after a murder in a McDonald’s restaurant in Zhaoyuan in May of 2014, the authorities have been cracking down on the group in a massive fashion (China Aid Association, “2014 Annual Report on Religious and Human Rights Persecution in China,” April 2015, www.chinaaid.org). – See also the entry of August 29, 2015.

May 4, 23, 2015:

Muslim protests in Xining and Xi’an against violations of *halal* regulations

After pork products (pork sausages and hams) were discovered on May 4 in a delivery van outside a *halal* bakery in Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai, rioting broke out, during the course of which the bakery was demolished. According to *UCAN*, police arrested eleven people involved. In Xi’an, provincial capital of Shaanxi, on the evening of May 23, hundreds of Muslims demonstrated in the Muslim quarter surrounding the Great Mosque, demanding an end to the sale of alcohol in the neighborhood’s *halal* restaurants, which cater to many of the city’s tourists. The demonstrations were reported by *UCAN*, with references to state media. The Muslims in both cities are predominantly members of the Chinese-speaking Hui minority.

On May 12, the state-controlled *Global Times* reported on an “alleged ban” on headscarves at Shaanxi Normal University in Xi’an, a ban which supposedly had been imposed last April after some female students were reported to have covered their ears and necks with their headscarves. However, according to *Global Times*, an “instructor” at the university clarified on the “Question and Answer” portal www.zhihu.com that the school had never prohibited the wearing of headscarves but required only that they be worn “in a traditional ethnic fashion, rather than in a religious way” (*Global Times* May 12, ; *UCAN* May 4, 12, 25).

May 5, 2015:

Zhejiang Province launches consultation on “Standards for Religious Buildings” – Crosses are to be mounted on façades

The “Standards of Zhejiang Province for Religious Buildings (For Trial Implementation) (Draft for Consultation)” 浙江省宗教建筑规范 (试行) (征求意见稿) contain detailed specifications for the buildings of the five major religions. Among other provisions, religious buildings may not exceed 24 meters in height and their superstructures may not exceed 6 meters in height. In future, crosses are to be mounted on the façades of churches [i.e., not on the roof or steeple], and the height of such a cross may not exceed 1/10 of the height of the façade. By the end of the consultation period on May 20, several Protestant churches and the Diocese of Wenzhou had submitted position papers critical of the provisions. Whether the “Standards” have since actually been put into effect is not known (see also

entry of July 10, 2015). Since the beginning of 2014, numerous “illegal” religious buildings and parts of buildings have been demolished and many crosses have been torn down from the roofs and steeples of Christian churches (text of the document: www.zjjs.gov.cn/jsxx/file/201505/20150505901.pdf; see also *China heute* 2015, No. 2, pp. 72-75 [in German]).

Mai 8, 2015:

President Xi Jinping and Patriarch Kirill speak at their meeting on the value of spiritual tradition and patriotism



Meeting of Patriarch Kirill and President Xi on May 8 in the Kremlin. Photo: Press Service of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with his Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia in the Kremlin in Moscow. It was the second meeting of the two after Patriarch Kirill's 2013 trip to China. The occasion for Xi's Russia trip were the May 9 celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of Russia's victory in the “Great Patriotic War”. In this connection, Xi Jinping praised the great service which the Orthodox Church had rendered in the battle against fascism. In their discussions, both underlined the value of a spiritual tradition and the development of patriotic feelings for the whole of society. They stressed the esteem each held for the other's efforts to maintain national traditions, cul-

ture and spirituality, thus supporting a moral aspect in the shaping of national life and human personalities. Both, the President and the Patriarch, said that it is good for bilateral relations between Moscow and Beijing if the Orthodoxy in Russia and the Chinese government would continue to cultivate good relations. At the conclusion of their meeting, Xi Jinping said that he felt His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's cordial attitude toward the Chinese people. “The Russian Orthodox Church has brought a special positive energy into the development of Russia-China strategic partnership,” Mr. Xi Jinping said. “I hope that Your Holiness will continue to contribute to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation between our two peoples” (*Interfax* May 08; www.mospat.ru May 08).

May 11, 2015:

Journalist Gerald O'Connell on the number of “illegitimate” Chinese bishops

O'Connell, who specializes in Vatican questions and has often reported on Sino-Vatican relations, wrote in an article that mainland China's Catholic dioceses are governed by 59 state-recognized (so-called open) bishops and 42 “underground” bishops. Many are very old. Some 40 dioceses are without a pastor. O'Connell warned that in the event of a failure to reach an agreement on the appointment of bishops, China could decide to go ahead and independently choose a whole row of new bishops without papal permission – bishops who would then be illegitimate. According to O'Connell, a Vatican source told him that if the number of illegitimate bishops were to reach 20 or more, the Church in China would be in schism. At present, O'Connell calculates that there 8 illegitimate bishops in the Chinese Catholic Church (*America Magazine* May 11).

May 12, 2015:

Arrest of underground Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo and a priest in Hebei

Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhending (Hebei Province) was taken away by officials on May 12 and was later brought back to his cathedral on time for the celebration of Mass on Pentecost Sunday on May 24, as priests of his diocese reported to *UCAN*. Also, at the beginning of May, Fr. Liu Honggeng of Baoding (Hebei) was carried away to an unknown location. His relatives spoke with him for the last time over his mobile phone on May 7. After eight years of detention (without trial) for having refused to join the Patriotic Association, Fr. Liu, a member of the underground Church, was released only last August (see *RCTC* 2014, No. 4, pp. 12-13; 2015, No. 1, p. 10).

Also in the Diocese of Baoding, two Catholic laywomen were injured at an underground prayer house in Anzhuang when they tried to protect the altar, which had been constructed last February, as it was being demolished by 40 police officers. Bishop An Shuxin, who hails from Anzhuang and is currently Coadjutor Bishop of Baoding, originally belonged to the underground community but finally in 2009 joined the Patriotic Association following his release after years in prison. He said that he could not mediate for the prayer house. “They are all underground Catholics who do not accept me” (*UCAN* May 27).



The authorities sealed an underground prayer house in Anzhuang, Diocese of Baoding. Photo: *UCAN*.

May 14–17, 2015:

Metropolitan Hilarion visits China – Government authorizes ordination of Orthodox priests on Chinese territory

Following the ordination of Anatolij Kung Ming Cheung in Hong Kong last year, Metropolitan Hilarion, the Moscow Patriarchate’s Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, has announced that there will soon be priestly ordinations. The Metropolitan made his announcement upon his return from a trip to China. Hilarion said that an agreement had been reached with the State Administration for Religious Affairs concerning the ordination to the priesthood of an ethnic Chinese man and that he hopes it will be possible to assign the new priest to the Russian Orthodox “Church of the Intercession” in Harbin. According to the Metropolitan, this ordination is linked to the hope that still other ordinations will follow in the future and that the Orthodox Church in China may grow. China’s rap-



On May 17, Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Dormition, which stands in the grounds of the Russian Embassy in Beijing. Photo: www.mospat.ru.

prochement with the Russian Orthodox Church is seen in conjunction with the fact that the Chinese government is beginning to better understand just what political influence Orthodoxy wields in Russia. The recent encounter between Patriarch Kirill and President Xi Jinping is part of this development (see entry above of May 8, 2015). The Russian side will also be using this theme to improve its relations with its eastern neighbors in these times when there seems to be a “second Cold War” developing. Thus, the three sides – the Moscow Patriarchate, the Russian and the Chinese governments – all emphasize the political dimension of this theme and hope that the religious question might have a positive influence on Sino-Russian relations (*AsiaNews* May 19). – For background on this item, see: *China heute* 2014, No. 4, pp. 208-210 (in German).

May 17, 2015:

Tibetan exiles commemorate the Panchen Lama abducted by the Chinese authorities 20 years ago

Three days after Gedhun Choekyi Nyima had been confirmed by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, the then 6-year-old was brought by the Chinese authorities to an unknown location on May 18, 1995, where he, according to the government, leads a “normal life.” Six months later, under the supervision of the Chinese authorities, a second, “official” Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, was installed. On May 17, 2015, in a speech in Dharamsala, Penpa Tsering, speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, said the only goal of the kidnapping had been to deprive the Panchen Lama of his Buddhist training and in so doing to prevent him from exerting his spiritual influence on future generations of Tibetans (*UCAN* May 18). See also the entries of March 4, March 9 and 11; June 10, 2015.

May 20, 2015:

Xi Jinping to United Front Work meeting: [Concerning religious work] Sinicization must be adhered to

The Party chairman said this in an “important speech” before the CPC Central Committee’s United Front Work meeting, held in Beijing from May 18-20, 2015. Religious work is by its very nature mass work, said Xi. The policy of freedom of religious belief is to be comprehensively carried out and reli-

gious affairs are to be managed according to the law, he said. [We must] hold fast to the principle of the independent self-government of religion and actively guide religion in its adaptation to socialism, Xi continued. [We must] adhere to the path of Sinicization (*Zhongguohua* 中國化) and heighten the level of rule by law (*fazhi* 法治) in religious work. – Religion was only one of a number of themes which Xi Jinping addressed in his speech (*China Daily* May 21; *Global Times* May 22; *Xinhua* May 20). While most of the religious policy slogans used in his speech have been in use for some time, the two key-words of “Sinicization” and “rule by law” have taken on added weight under Xi Jinping.

See also entry of September 23, 2015 for the new “Regulations on the United Front Work of the Communist Party of China (For Trial Implementation)” which took effect on May 18, 2015.

May 20, 2015:

Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong publishes results of the questionnaire in preparation for the Synod on the Family

The questionnaires, which were part of the preparations for the 14th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome (October 4-25, 2015) on “The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World,” were filled out by 181 individuals and groups from the diocese (4 curia members, 5 diocesan priests, 4 permanent deacons, 4 members of religious orders, 15 lay organizations in pastoral care, 10 lay associations and 139 individuals / families). From the results coming from the questionnaires you could see that “the parish is still considered to be the major locus responsible for providing a full range of faith formation and pastoral services for the family” although the parents are identified as bearing the principal responsibility for the religious education of their children. Most expressed the desire for a strengthening of family catechesis (including questions of the family’s vocation, family planning, etc.). Due to a lack of knowledge they would have difficulty in applying the Bible’s teachings to everyday life. “The Church should consider marriage and family ministry as a top priority” in pastoral work. Among young people, two trends were observed: on the one hand there is a smaller number of young people who lead a “mature spiritual life” strengthened by intensive communal life in a parish and by participation in a Church group or lay movement, and secondly, there is the larger group of young people formed above all else by the “secularized, individualistic and pleasure-seeking worldly culture” (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* May 30, 2015).

May 21, 2015:

Pope Francis calls for prayer for China on May 24

Following the May 20 general audience, the Pope recalled the upcoming Day of Prayer for the Church in China: “On May 24, the Catholics in China will implore with devotion Our Lady Help of Christians, venerated in the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai. In the statue, which towers above the Shrine, we see Mary who holds her Son high, presenting him to the world with arms opened wide in a gesture of love and mercy. We too will ask Mary to help Catholics in China to be always credible witnesses of this merciful love among their fellow citizens and to live spiritually united to the rock of Peter upon whom the Church is built” (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150520_udienza-generale.html).

May 27, 2015:

Tibetan woman burns herself to death in front of police building – fifth self-immolation of 2015, 140th since 2011

Sangye Tso, a 36 year old mother of two, set herself on fire in Chone County in the Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province. She died of her burns. According to a report by the group International Campaign for Tibet (savetibet.org, June 1), she left behind a note in which she said the following: “Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama, where is the Panchen Lama, and freedom for Tibetans.” Reportedly, the local authorities warned the family that they are not allowed to organize any religious service for Sangye Tso, and have detained at least one of her relatives.

Including Sangye Tso, a total of either 139 or 140 Tibetan men and women from the Tibetan regions have committed self-immolation as an act of protest: 12 in 2011, 85 in 2012, 26 in 2013, 11 in 2014 and 5 in 2015. Many of them were monks and nuns. Depending on the sources, either 113 or 114 of them died of their burns (totals differ according to source: www.tibet.net and www.savetibet.org).

May 27, 2015:

Archbishop of Canterbury travels to China



Press photo (*Xinhua*) of the meeting between Archbishop Welby and Yu Zhengsheng.

The head of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, visited Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing from May 27 to June 5, 2015, at the joint invitation of the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the China Christian Council / Three-Self Patriotic Movement. In Beijing, the archbishop met among others Yu Zhengsheng, member of the Politburo and Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. According to the state-run *Global Times*, at that meeting the archbishop called for stronger cooperation between Chinese and British churches. “Chinese citizens’ freedom of belief and the religious circle’s legitimate rights and interests are protected by law,” Yu was quoted as

telling the archbishop. In Beijing, the archbishop delivered a lecture at Beijing University on religion and business ethics and met with religious leaders. His visit to Shanghai included, among other things, a stop at the Catholic St. Ignatius Cathedral and he also preached in the Mu’en Church. The program for his visit in Nanjing included stops at the Jinling Union Seminary and a few social projects. His visit also elicited criticism from some quarters. According to a report by *UCAN*, in a Protestant community in Zhejiang, where since last year many churches and crosses have been forcibly demolished, the faithful had hoped that the archbishop would be allowed to visit the area, and they expressed the fear that his visit was being manipulated for propaganda purposes by the government. Archbishop Welby is the highest ranking Anglican church leader to visit China since his predecessor, Rowan Williams, visited China in 2006. He is the fourth Archbishop of Canterbury to visit the country (*Global Times* May 28; *The Telegraph* June 1; *UCAN* May 29; www.archbishopofcanterbury.org March 24).

May 27–28, 2015:

Conference in Beijing: “Development of the Catholic Church in Today’s China”

The Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was the main organizer of the conference, together with the Institute for Ethnic Development, a department of the State Council’s Development Research Center, and the Catholic Faith Institute for Cultural Studies. Researchers from state institutions as well as representatives of dioceses, of religious congregations of women and of other Catholic institutions took part in the conference, which in turn was a part of the government-financed key project led by the religious scholar Wang Meixiu and labeled: “The latest developments in the Vatican and in world Catholicism and their influence on our country” (see: *Fides* June 2; iwr.cass.cn/xw/201506/t20150602_18877.htm).

For more on the conference, see the excerpt from *UCAN*’s interview with Ms. Wang Meixiu in *China heute* 2015, No. 3, pp. 163-164 (in German).

May 30, 2015:

Hong Kong: Cardinal Tong’s Pastoral Letter on electoral reform

Ahead of the vote on the electoral reform for the election of the Chief Executive (see entry of June 18), Hong Kong’s Cardinal John Tong addressed the Catholic faithful in a Pastoral Letter on “Electoral Reform and the Well-Being of Hong Kong Society.” Quoting St. Paul, he wrote: “Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12). In his letter, he stressed again that “electoral reform and universal suffrage are also our concerns as Christians.” Quoting his pastoral letter of August 15, 2014, the cardinal pointed out once again that justice can be achieved neither by confrontation nor by violence, but only through dialogue. In his pastoral letter of May 30, he continued: “At the same time, the Diocese believes that there can be no true or sustainable peace and stability in society without justice. Thus, on the matter of electoral reform, the Diocese has made it clear that the ‘ultimate aim’ of universal suffrage as mandated by the Basic Law cannot be realized unless, among other things, the nominating committee is truly ‘broadly representative’ and the procedures adopted are genuinely ‘democratic.’ There should be no unreasonable or unjust restrictions to the choice of candidates.” He said that in taking such a stance the diocese was focusing on broad general principles rather than on the specifics of any particular model. Its role was not like that of a political party. The cardinal stressed that the diocese encourages all those involved to overcome all polarization and to remedy any democratic deficit, and he called on the faithful to continue to seek “constitutionally sound *and* morally just solutions that will contribute to the peace and well-being of Hong Kong society” (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* June 6, 2015).

June 3, 2015:

Pope Francis remembers the victims of the shipwreck on the Yangtze

“In a particular way I wish to express my closeness to the Chinese people in these difficult moments after the ferry disaster in the Yangtze River. I pray for the victims, their families and for all involved in the rescue efforts,” the Pope said at the end of the general audience. When the ferry sank on the night of June 1, 2015, 442 people lost their lives. There were only 12 survivors (www.vatican.va June 3; *Xinhua* June 14).

June 4, 2015:

Draft of Law on foreign NGOs – End of consultation period

June 4 marked the end of the phase of public consultation on the second reviewed draft of the Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations Management Law of the People's Republic of China, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jingwai feizhengfu zuzhi guanli fa* 中华人民共和国境外非政府组织管理法 (草案) (二次审议稿).

Fears have been expressed that one consequence to follow from the adoption of the law in its present form could be that many foreign charities would cease their activities in China, with the result that the work of domestic groups that are highly dependent on foreign NGOs for consulting and finance, would also be jeopardized. Complicated and restrictive licensing procedures, strict management of projects and financial resources, far-reaching police powers in investigating the operation of NGOs and the threat of harsh penalties would very much restrict the nature and scope of the projects and would greatly impede the activities of NGOs. In particular, the use of very vague terms in the list of punishable offenses makes it difficult to assess what behaviors are still permitted to NGOs within the framework of the law (*South China Morning Post* June 4; text of the draft at <http://chinalawtranslate.com/en/foreign-ngo-draft-2>).

Jan Kwee

June 4, 2015:

Vigil in Hong Kong to commemorate the victims of Tian'anmen Square

Once again this year, tens of thousands of Hong Kong residents gathered at Victoria Park to commemorate the victims of the massacre of Tian'anmen Square on June 4, 1989. Before the main rally, Christians gathered for a prayer vigil led by Hong Kong's Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha, chairman of the Justice & Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. As in previous years, Hong Kong's retired bishop, Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-kiun, SDB, also took part in the prayer vigil. – This year, there were also a number of parallel events in addition to the big rally, since some student groups, including the Hong Kong Federation of Students, did not wish to participate in the larger memorial service. This is partly due to a question of identity among many young people of Hong Kong, who increasingly regard Hong Kong's problems as being separate from China (*AsiaNews* June 4; *Time* June 4).

June 4–5, 2015:

Conference on the professional title assessment of teachers of Catholic theological seminaries in China

Following an anonymous vote at the meeting in Wuxi (Jiangsu Province), the titles of assistant, lecturer, associate professor or professor were approved for seminary teachers whose teaching qualifications had already been certified according to the new state regulations. This is considered an important step in the implementation of the “Measures for the Qualification Certification, Professional Title Assessment and Appointment of Teachers of Institutes for Religious Education (For Trial Implementation),” issued in 2012 by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) [see German translation of this document in *China heute* 2015, No. 3, pp. 164-169]. The conference, convened by the Commission for the Formation of Vocations of the Catholic Patriotic Association and the Bishops' Conference, also

adopted a document on the awarding of bachelor's degrees (B.A.) in Catholic seminaries (www.china-catholic.cn June 16). Such degrees, however, will be valid only within the Church. The official organizations of the other major religions in China have also adopted similar documents.

June 9–11, 2015:

Reeducation course for the clergy of Shanghai

Thirty-four priests and sixteen religious Sisters took part in the course for the clergy of the Diocese of Shanghai, held at the Shanghai Institute of Socialism. Another class will be held once again in September for a second group of priests and Sisters. Ever since the beginning of the house arrest of Bishop Ma Daqin three years ago, the clergy of the diocese has been repeatedly compelled to take part in such “learning classes,” *UCAN* writes. According to *UCAN*, the June course was run jointly by the diocese, the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau and by the Institute of Socialism. The course focused on the theme of rule of law. *UCAN* quoted one source, who described the theme as a “joke”: “We have to ask what law leads to the indefinite detention of our bishop on no charges.”

Moreover, *UCAN* reported of one source who confided that, during one of the “study sessions” during the past year, government officials had declared that Bishop Ma Daqin would only be permitted to return as leader of the diocese if China and the Vatican established diplomatic relations. Otherwise, the diocese could accept a new bishop from elsewhere or it could elect a new bishop from among the eligible clergy in the diocese. Naturally, the source said, both were not “feasible solutions.” According to another Catholic, as quoted by *UCAN*, officials had said that the bishop could be freed only if he would be ready to accept the leadership of the Patriotic Association. This, though, the bishop had decisively rejected, thus the source (*UCAN* July 8, 9).

June 10, 2015:

President Xi Jinping urges the official Panchen Lama to continue the glorious patriotic tradition of Tibetan Buddhism



According to a report in *Xinhua*, Xi Jinping greeted the Panchen Lama in Zhongnanhai and admonished him to study hard and to work on his own personal development. He should carry on the legacy of his predecessor, the 10th Panchen Lama, and actively engage in the cause of incorporating Tibetan Buddhism into socialist society and become “a Tibetan Buddhist leader with great religious acumen, deeply loved by the monks and secular followers,” the President said.

During the meeting, Panchen Lama presented President Xi with a *hada* – a long strip of silk used as a greeting gift among the Tibetan and Mongol people. He promised the President that he would follow his advice without fail and that he would not disappoint the expectations of the Party and of the Chinese people. Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and Sun Chunlan, head of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party, also attended the meeting (*Xinhua* [also Photo] June 10).

June 14, 2015:

700 “patriotic religious leaders” in Urumqi declare their support for the “Five Identities”

Representatives of six religions, including Islam, Buddhism and Protestant Christianity, declared that they wish to be models of holding fast to the “Five Identities.” According to a report in the state-run newspaper *Xinjiang ribao*, this involves identification with the great fatherland, with the Chinese (*Zhonghua* 中华) nation and Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics. One speaker said that Muslims were first and foremost citizens. As reported in the state-run *Global Times*, the Party chief of Xinjiang, Zhang Chunxian, warned at the meeting of an escalation of “infiltration and acts of sabotage in the name of religion.” He said that “the battle against religious extremism is a serious political struggle and there is no room for conciliation.” The newspaper even mentioned that “extremists are seeking to topple the government.” The *Global Times* reported that according to local government statistics, during 2014 police broke up 181 terrorist groups; ninety-six percent of the planned attacks were thwarted at an early stage (*Global Times* June 16; *South China Morning Post* June 16; *Xinjiang ribao* June 16).

June 18, 2015:

Hong Kong electoral reform rejected

Following a controversial two-day debate, the Hong Kong parliament vetoed the electoral reform vetted by China. When the matter came to a vote in the 70-member Legislative Council the required two-thirds majority was not reached. Curiously, at the moment of the vote there were only 37 lawmakers present, 8 of whom voted for the government bill, with 28 opposition deputies voting against. Due to the fact that one of their deputies was missing, a majority of the members in the government camp left the hall shortly before the vote in an attempt to force a postponement. However, the vote took place nonetheless in their absence.

Last fall, the controversial plans of the Beijing government for a limited direct election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive led to weeks of protests by tens of thousands of people in Hong Kong's streets and to a split in Hong Kong society (see *China heute* 2014, No. 3, pp. 145-149). According to the Government's model, the first direct election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive is to be held in 2017. Beijing, however, intends to allow only pre-approved candidates, something which would make the candidacy of a democratic deputy impossible.

After the failure of the electoral reform there will be no direct elections for the time being. The next election of the Chief Executive will once again be determined by a 1,200-member election committee made up, among others, of representatives of business, the professions and social organizations.

The government in Beijing responded with regret at the rejection of the electoral reform. The government in Beijing continues to support the plan to have the Chief Executive elected in a limited direct vote, a spokesman of the Chinese foreign ministry said.

In the days leading up to the vote there were renewed protests outside the government offices, in which the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong's Justice & Peace Commission also took part. On June 13 the Commission organized a “Way of the Cross” for democracy through Hong Kong's streets, led by Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-kiun, SDB, retired bishop of Hong Kong, and Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing. Hong Kong's current bishop, John Cardinal Tong, said in a statement following the vote that the results would not lead to an end to the divisions in Hong Kong society. “It will take time,” the Cardinal said, “for wounds to be healed. Nevertheless, we must spare no effort in addressing the real causes behind this polarized situation, and we must continue to promote democracy, justice and the well-being of the

people of Hong Kong.” (*AsiaNews* June 18; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* June 18; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* June 20; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* June 18; *UCAN* June 18; *Die Welt* June 18).

June 18, 2015:

White Paper on the psyche of “left-behind” children

A June 18, 2015, white paper produced by the Beijing Children’s Mental Health Care Center dealt with the psychological conditions of children left behind in the countryside. There are currently 61 million children growing up without their parents. Due to economic necessity, the parents work mostly in the large cities and have generally left their children in the care of grandparents. In one study, the non-profit organization “On the Way to School” (a group of psychologists under the leadership of Prof. Li Yifei of Beijing Normal University) has conducted interviews with 2,000 families in the rural areas of the provinces of Guizhou, Shandong, Hebei, Gansu, Yunnan and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. According to the study, an estimated 10 million children grow up entirely without their parents, that is, the parents do not return to their villages even for events such as the Spring Festival. Three million have not heard from their parents by telephone in more than a year. Approximately nine million have contact with their parents one or two times a year. More than fifteen million only speak with their parents by telephone every three months or so. – The white paper warns that children who are unable to meet their parents at least once every three months are at greater risk of experiencing mental problems. Because of the greater poverty, this reality affects children in the north- and southwest more deeply than those in the eastern part of the country. Also, it appears that girls suffer more from this deprivation than do boys (*Beijing Review* July 2, pp. 14-17).

June 26–29, 2015:

9th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Daoist Association



Li Guangfu, the new Chairman of the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA). Photo: Website of the CDA.

The National Assembly takes place every five years and is the highest ranking body of official Daoism in China. During its meeting in Beijing, the 9th National Assembly elected a new 199 member leadership board of the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA). The CDA’s new chairman is Li Guangfu 李光富 (born 1955 in Hubei), at the time chairman of the Daoist Association of Wudangshan. There are three women among the nineteen vice-chair persons.

The assembly adopted a number of measures in connection with the initiation of monks and priests of the Quanzhen and Zhengyi schools of Daoism respectively. According to an interview with the new chairmen, these rituals are essential for the continuation of the Daoist tradition and the formation of a qualified younger generation.

The CDA also wants to strengthen international exchange. Vice Chairman Huang Xinyang said in the interview that Daoist associations and temples outside China, which by now exist in twenty different

countries of the world, have asked the CDA to found a World Union of Daoists (*China Daily* July 2; *Xinhua* June 30; www.taoist.org.cn [Website of the CDA, with conference resolution, interview and texts of the documents adopted]).

June 29, August 6, 2015:

Excommunicated bishops ordain priests

On June 29, the illegitimate Bishop Lei Shiyin (Diocese of Leshan, Sichuan) ordained one new priest and presided at the profession of vows of two religious Sisters. Yue Fusheng, the illegitimate bishop of Heilongjiang, ordained three priests on August 6, just two days after the episcopal consecration in Anyang (see entry of August 4). Lei Shiyin and Yue Fusheng are among the three Chinese bishops who were expressly excommunicated by Rome following their own episcopal consecrations in 2011 and 2012 respectively, which had been carried out without papal approval. The canonical situation of the new priests ordained by them is also problematic. Because of that, one Chinese Church leader told *UCAN* that the newly ordained would not be accepted by the faithful, and saw the incidents as a sign of increasing controls over the Church on the part of the government (*UCAN* Aug. 14).

July / August 2015:

Cross removals on a massive scale in Zhejiang Province – Protests and arrests



Christians in Wuxing, Huzhou City, clamber onto the roof of their church in order to protect the cross. Photo: China Aid.

During July and August of 2015 the number of crosses removed from steeples and roofs of both Protestant and Catholic churches in the Province of Zhejiang took a drastic upturn. According to a number of sources, the removals were to have been completed within a certain time period (there was talk of a time limit of two months or until the end of August). Already by the middle of July, sources said that more than 1,200 churches in the province had been affected by the campaign. Many congregations attempted to mount some resistance: some kept watch over their churches, others blockaded access, still others wrote letters of protest or sought legal representation. Some simply put up a new cross as soon as the old one was torn down. The whole situation led to clashes with the cross removal teams and with the security

forces. A number of Protestant Christians were arrested. Among them was the attorney Zhang Kai, arrested on August 25, who had provided legal assistance to congregations in Zhejiang, and on September 12, Huang Yizi, Pastor of the Fengwo Church, who had only been released on August 1, after a year in prison (*China Aid* Aug. 5, 21; Sept. 16, 21; *South China Morning Post* Aug. 5, 6; *UCAN* Aug. 11, 27). For further protest actions, statements and incidents connected with the removal of the crosses, see the entries of July 5, July 10, July 14 / August 25, July 24 / 28 / 29, September 16 as well as *China heute* 2015, No. 3, pp. 140-143, 157-161 (in German).

July 1, 2015:

China enacts new National Security Law

Civil rights groups fear that the “sweeping” new law could make it easier to justify reprisals against dissidents, and are concerned that it defines national security in such a broad and vague manner, wrote the *South China Morning Post* (July 3).

According to article 27 of the law, religion, too, falls under the “tasks in preserving national security.” There it reads that the state protects freedom of religious belief and holds fast to the principle of the autonomous self-government of the religions. “It prevents, stops, and punishes, in accordance with the law, illegal and criminal activities carried out in the name of religion that threaten national security. It opposes the interference by foreign powers in domestic religious affairs and protects the normal order of religious activities. In accordance with the law, it prohibits heretical cult organizations, and in accordance with the law, it prevents, stops and punishes the illegal and criminal activities of heretical cults.”

Chinese text of the law: www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqcj/zgj/2015-07-01/content_13912103.html; unofficial English translation: <http://chinalawtranslate.com/2015nsl/?lang=en>.

July 1, 2015:

Fewer participants at protests for the anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover to China

After last year’s record number of protesters, estimated at 500,000, this year, on the 18th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China, only about 48,000 demonstrators took to the streets to call for more democracy. According to a report in the *South China Morning Post*, Daisy Chan Sin-ying of the Civil Human Rights Front explained that the lower numbers were due to the rejection in the Hong Kong Legislative Council on June 18, 2015, of China’s planned reform of the electoral law. Following that defeat, she said, “there is no burning issue so people may not feel any urgency to protest.” Ivan Choy Chi-keung, political scientist at the Chinese University, traced the reduced numbers back to a certain “post-Occupy Central fatigue.” – The protest march was preceded by an ecumenical prayer service, in which Joseph Cardinal Zen, Bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing and other Catholic priests and Protestant ministers took part (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* July 11).

July 5, 2015:

Zhejiang Province Catholic Patriotic Association and Catholic Commission for Church Affairs publish open letter of protest against government removal of crosses

The chairmen and vice-chairmen of the province’s two Catholic governing bodies decided to publish the open letter during an emergency meeting by telephone. In it, they appeal to the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the government of Zhejiang Province and call for the immediate cessation of the operation to dismantle the crosses. Both governing bodies observe, with regard to their role as a “bridge” between the Party / government and the Church, that they have already been turned into a “collapsed bridge” (text of the letter at www.chinaaid.net/2015/07/blog-post_37.html; German translation in *China heute* 2015, No. 3, p. 160).

In a similar letter, on July 10, the province's Christian Council addressed the authorities (see below). This means that the state-approved boards of both Christian confessions in Zhejiang Province took a public stand against the approach of the authorities.

July 6, 2015:

Dalai Lama turns eighty

The spiritual leader spent his 80th birthday in southern California, where supporters had organized a forum on the theme of "Global Compassion" from July 5–7. According to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, 18,000 people took part. As the Chinese state news agency *Xinhua* and other media reported, hundreds of devotees of the protector deity Dorje Shugden, a devotion which the Dalai Lama actively discourages, demonstrated in front of the conference venue and called upon the Dalai Lama to "allow religious freedom." *Xinhua* also reported that the "Dalai Lama clique" was trying to collect money from poor Tibetan shepherds to pay for the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations and that it was only thanks to the government's policies that a tragic loss of the population's property had been prevented. In line with the Tibetan moon calendar, the Dalai Lama had already celebrated his birthday on June 21 in his home in exile, the Indian city of Dharamsala (*Los Angeles Times* July 5, 6; *Xinhua* July 5, 7).

According to Thierry Dodin, an expert on Tibet, conflict over Dorje Shugden within the Gelugpa School of Tibetan Buddhism dates back to the 17th century. Dodin says that since the Dalai Lama and the devotees of Shugden are currently in opposition to one another, the Chinese government is taking advantage of the situation by giving its backing to the Dorje Shugden cult (<http://info-buddhismus.de/Proteste-Dalai-Lama-Dorje-Shugden-Konflikt-Interview-Dodin.html>).

July 7, 2015:

Renmin University presents its "2015 China Religion Survey Report"

According to the project's website, the China Religion Survey (CRS) is the first nationwide representative survey on the situation and development trends of religions in China. The survey is carried out by the School of Philosophy and the National Survey Research Center of Renmin University. The 2013–2015 research of the CRS focused on religious sites and the religious landscape at the county level, concentrating on the aspects of: organization, religiosity, social interactions and relations between religion and state. Between 2013 and 2015, the project organizers studied 4,392 religious sites in 243 counties of 31 provinces of China and in each case they also interviewed the person in charge of the religious site as well as the respective governmental officials in charge of religious affairs. Thus, the survey had its focus on the field of official religiosity. Nevertheless, the study came up with many interesting details, for example:

Local religious affairs departments visit religious sites on an average of 3.8 times a year, while the local United Front departments average 1.8 visits per year.

The average income of religious personnel in China is only 507 Yuan a month (US\$ 80.00), well below the average income of their respective local populations. Buddhist monks and nuns have an average monthly income of only 397 Yuan (US\$ 62.50).

82% of the Protestant, but only 51% of the Catholics and 40% of Muslim religious buildings incorporate Chinese architectural elements.

Buddhist temples give the most for charity (41,000 yuan pro temple per year, as opposed to an average total of all religions of about 18,000 yuan) and they are also by far the most active on the internet.

Catholic religious personnel have the highest levels of education. Of those active in teaching [at Catholic theological seminaries, etc.], 43% have a university degree or post-graduate degree, far above the average total of 18% for all five recognized religions.

Website of the 中国宗教调查 / China Religion Survey (in Chinese and English): <http://crs.ruc.edu.cn>. An English description of the survey results can be found at: www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/a-closer-look-at-the-china-religion-survey. See also: *Global Times* July 8; *iwr.cass.cn* July 7; *mzb.cn* July 14.

July 9, 2015:

UCAN: Tens of millions of yuan have disappeared from the accounts of the Diocese of Shanghai

A recent *UCAN* report claims that over the last year tens of millions of yuan have disappeared from the accounts of the Diocese of Shanghai and have been transferred to accounts belonging to the government and to private individuals. *UCAN* quoted a source who said that the transfer of funds had taken place “under instructions from the party’s Religious Affairs Bureau officials.” The government had used the time since the house arrest of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin for the past three years to deepen its control over the diocese. – Unlike other Chinese dioceses, the Diocese of Shanghai disposes of substantial assets, thanks to its holdings in land and buildings. The affairs of the diocese are currently being administered by a five-member management team. According to one source, which *UCAN* deems reliable, Religious Affairs Bureau officials are required to be present at every meeting of the team. “They are also arranging their people to work in important diocesan departments.” Another source said that the team had been put in place by Bishop Jin Luxian, before his death in April of 2013. “Before Bishop Jin passed away, he promised that the Catholic Patriotic Association could use some of the Church money. It was his way to buy some room for Church work that he wanted done. But after his death, no one dared to end this promise,” the source continued (*UCAN* July 8, 9).

From July 10, 2015:

Nationwide wave of repression against human rights lawyers and activists

Since July 10, at least 288 civil rights lawyers, employees in legal firms, human rights activists and members of their families have been [either temporarily or permanently] interrogated, summoned, forbidden to leave the country, held under residential surveillance, criminally detained or have gone missing, according to an October 2, 2015, update on the website of the “China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group” (Hong Kong). The report stated that, on October 2, twenty-six lawyers and other persons were held in criminal detention or subjected to “residential surveillance,” or were considered to be “forcibly disappeared.”

Media reported that the campaign began on July 10, with a raid in the Beijing offices of the Fengrui Law Firm, which had represented, among others, the artist Ai Weiwei and the Uyghur academic Ilham Tohti. The detained lawyers were alleged to have used controversial cases for the purposes of self-enrichment and to have incited attacks on the Party and campaigns against the courts. Eva Pils, of Kings College London, who has done research on rights activists in China, told *The Guardian* that the arrests were part of a campaign against an independent civil society and that, in the short term, they would have a terrorizing effect on China’s civil rights groups. Pils estimated that there are about 300 rights

defenders in China (*The Guardian* July 14; *New York Times* July 22; *Radio Free Asia* July 21; *South China Morning Post* July 11, 19; *Die Welt* Aug. 30; *Die Zeit* July 11; www.chrlawyers.hk Oct. 2).

July 10, 2015:

Group of experts pass “Standards of Zhejiang Province for Religious Buildings (For Trial Implementation)”

A revision of the building code, which stipulates, among other things, that crosses are to be placed on the facades of churches, rather than on steeples or roofs, and which is being used as the “legal basis” for the tearing down of crosses throughout the province, was published on May 5 by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee (ERAC) and Construction Office of Zhejiang Province as a draft for consultation (see entry of May 5, 2015). A July 16 report on the ERAC website (www.mzw.zj.gov.cn) said that the document has been passed by a group of experts on July 10 and will be published by the two respective regulatory bodies.

Whether or not the provision has really been published is not yet clear. For more on the document, see: *China heute* 2015, No. 2, pp. 72-75 (in German).

July 10, 2015:

Christian Council of Zhejiang Province protests in open letter against tearing down of crosses. More than 1,200 churches affected

The enlarged council-affairs conference of the Protestant Christian Council of Zhejiang Province decided in a telephone conference to compose and send the open letter. The letter to the government’s Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee (ERAC) of Zhejiang Province makes the claim that during the past 18 months crosses had been torn down from more than 1,200 Christian [presumably: Protestant] sites for religious activities, including the crosses of fully permitted churches which had been in total compliance with all government regulations. According to the letter, this action has seriously hurt the feelings of Zhejiang’s more than 2 million Christians, causing relations between the Party and the masses to become negative and even confrontational. The authorities’ “administration” of religion has been so unreasonable and violent that the Christian Council can no longer carry out its role as a “bridge,” the letter states. It concludes: “In view of this and considering that previous attempts by our officials to demand in person or by telephone that your committee cease all demolition, we now make this solemn appeal in writing: We hereby request that you observe the Constitution and the law, consider the special and complex nature of religion, and immediately cease this mistaken policy of removing crosses that is tearing the Party and the masses apart.”

According to information on the website www.chinachange.org, following the publication of the open letter, the government reacted by confiscating the official seal of the Zhejiang Province Christian Council (<http://chinachange.org/2015/08/07/christian-sentiment-in-zhejiang-against-cross-removal-three-statements/>; see also: *Duihua – mit China im Dialog* No. 31, Aug. 2015; *UCAN* July 17).

July 10, 2015:

After years of house arrest, Bishop Martin Wu Qinjing is officially installed as Bishop of Zhouzhi (Shaanxi)



Bishop Martin Wu at his installation. Photo: www.chinacath.org.

Back on October 19, 2005 (date given on the website of the Diocese of Zhouzhi), Bishop Martin Wu was secretly consecrated bishop, with Papal approval. Now, his official installation as Bishop of Zhouzhi, almost ten years later, was presided over by Bishop Yang Xiaoting of Yulin (Yan'an, Shaanxi), a vice-chairman of the official Bishops' Conference, together with Bishop Anthony Dang Mingyan of Xi'an. As stipulated in the official regulations, a letter of approval by the official Bishops' Conference was read out during the ceremony in the presence of United Front and Religious Affairs

officials from the central and the provincial Party and government authorities. Seventy-three priests concelebrated at the Mass presided over by Bishop Wu and more than 100 Sisters and members of the faithful attended. Eight diocesan priests did not come to the Mass. Eyewitnesses quoted by *UCAN* told of the strictest supervision of all diocesan priests before the ceremony as well as of close inspection of all texts of speeches, technical equipment in the church, etc., and spoke of large police contingents in place outside the church.

Bishop Wu Qinjing, born in 1968, is a priest of the official Church. After his studies at Sheshan major seminary in Shanghai, he taught at the seminary of Xi'an. From 2000 until 2005 he earned two Master's Degrees in the United States, an M.A. in Liturgy and an M.A. in Spirituality. Secretely consecrated bishop shortly after his return from the USA, he informed the priests of the diocese of his consecration later, on May 22, 2006 – three days prior to the death of Bishop Li Du'an of Xi'an. Bishop Wu was then interrogated by the government and in September 2006 was taken away for a time. From 2007 onwards, he was under house arrest at the minor seminary of the diocese of Xi'an, and was only permitted to return to the Diocese of Zhouzhi in 2014. His installation means that, after a hiatus of more than ten years, the Diocese of Zhouzhi once again has a leader, who can openly function as a bishop (*AsiaNews* July 10; *UCAN* Aug. 14; www.china.ucanews.com July 13; www.chinacatholic.cn July 10, 30; www.zzjq.org).

July 12, 2015:

Respected Tibetan monk Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche dies during the 13th year of his imprisonment

In December of 2002, in connection with bombings in Sichuan Province, the monk Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche was sentenced to death with a two year suspended sentence, "for having caused an explosion and for incitement to separatism," a sentence which was later commuted to life imprisonment. His assistant, the monk Lobsang Dondrub, was executed in January of 2003. Reports at the time called it the first politically motivated death sentences in Tibet in years and spoke of an unfair trial. In a recording

smuggled out of the prison, Tenzin Rinpoche also proclaimed his innocence. Prior to his arrest, the spiritual teacher, who had studied in India during the 1980s, and who had been recognized by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of a high-ranking Lama of the Lithang Monastery, had enjoyed great influence and popularity in the region of Lithang (Sichuan Province). He founded schools, renovated monasteries and devoted himself to charitable work. He was also said to speak out resolutely in opposition to the cult of the protective deity Shugden, a cult popular in Lithang (see: *China heute* 2002, No. 4-5, p. 108; 2003, No. 1-2, pp. 3-4 [in German]; sources there).

His relatives only succeeded in visiting the Rinpoche once during the whole time of his imprisonment; that was in 2013. According to a *Xinhua* report, he died of sudden cardiac failure after emergency treatment had failed. As the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) reported, about 1,000 monks and local Tibetans living in the vicinity of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche's monastery at Nyagchuka (Chinese: Yajiang) demanded of the local authorities to negotiate the release of his body with the prison authorities. The situation degenerated into clashes with the police. Finally, on July 16, a small group of monks and relatives was given permission to enter the prison to clothe his body in his monk's robes and to chant the traditional prayers for the dead. Following the ceremonies, the body was cremated under heavy guard in the prison crematory and the ashes were handed over to the family and monks, a source told ICT.

On July 15, a spokesperson for the European Union sent deepest condolences to the family, friends and supporters of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche. "The EU had consistently called for his release or adequate medical treatment. We expect the Chinese authorities to investigate and make public the circumstances surrounding his death," the spokesperson said (*Xinhua* July 18; www.eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150715_03_en.htm; www.savetibet.org July 14, 16).

July 14 / August 25, 2015:

Formation of the group "Lawyers for Protection of the Cross" / Arrest of attorney Zhang Kai

On July 14, a group of Christian human rights lawyers, led by attorney Zhang Kai, announced the formation of an organization called: "Lawyers for Protection of the Cross." According to *UCAN*, the group provided legal advice to more than 100 Protestant congregations in Zhejiang, who wished to protect the crosses on their buildings. For example, in a statement of July 15, the group threatened an administrative lawsuit against the local government of Huzhou.

On August 25, Zhang Kai, together with his assistant, Liu Peng, was arrested. China Aid reported that Zhang was being held on charges of "gathering a mob to disturb public order" as well as "stealing, collecting, purchasing and illegally providing state secrets and intelligence to overseas organizations." Although he was initially sentenced to six months confinement in an unofficial detention center, he could still be looking at more than ten years in prison, China Aid said. Zhang was arrested one day before a scheduled meeting with the US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, David Saperstein. Zhang Kai's case is very important because it constitutes an intersection between China's unprecedented campaign against human rights lawyers and the campaign against Christians and other forms of unauthorized religiosity, William Nee of Amnesty International told *UCAN*. The *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* has claimed that 25% of all civil rights lawyers in China are Christians (*AsiaNews* Aug. 27; Sept. 2.; *China Aid* July 14; Aug. 5, 31; Sept. 4, 14; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Aug. 22; *UCAN* Aug. 27).

July 15 / 16, 2015:

Chinese media report on trial against “cult leader” – Earlier, U.S. commission had condemned the arrest of Wu Zeheng

Both *Xinhua* and *Global Times* reported that July 13 marked the beginning of the trial before the People’s Court in Zhuhai (Guangdong) of Wu Zeheng and four other adherents of the Buddhist sect Huazang zongmen. All were charged with organizing a cult organization to undermine implementation of the law, rape, fraud and the production and sale of harmful foods. *Xinhua* also quoted a declaration by Mingsheng, one of the co-chairmen of the Chinese Buddhist Association, to the effect that Huazang zongmen does not conform to Buddhism and is nothing more than a “cult in disguise.” The *Global Times*, however, pointed out that, according to his lawyer, Wu Zeheng has rejected all of the accusations made by the prosecution.

According to accounts by *UCAN* and other media sources, in 1999, in an open letter to the then President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji, Wu Zeheng criticized violations of the law and called for reforms. Shortly thereafter he was condemned to eleven years imprisonment for economic crimes. He was released from prison in 2010 but was arrested once again on July 30, 2014, together with 80 of his supporters. On October 30, 2014, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom condemned the arrest of Wu Zeheng (*Global Times* July 15; *UCAN* July 16; *USCIRF* Press Release October 18, 2014; *Wall Street Journal* March 18; *Xinhua* July 16; <http://perseus-strategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Wu-Zeheng-UNWGAD-Petition-03.19.15.pdf>).

July 16, 2015:

Disputed qigong grandmaster Wang Lin arrested in murder case under suspicion of kidnapping

According to Chinese media reports, the victim, a company president whose surname was Zou, is supposed to have been a disciple of Wang Lin. On August 20, Wang and another person were formally arrested for “unlawful detention” and two others were arrested for murder. Previously, on July 22, the *Global Times* had warned of the danger of a prejudgement of Wang by public opinion.

As a qigong master with alleged supernatural powers, Wang Lin had built up a network of contacts since the 1990s, including high ranking cadres, business people and other prominent figures. Already in July 2013 Wang was accused in Chinese media and on websites of fraud, tax evasion and connections to criminals and corrupt cadres. On July 30 an editorial in the Party newspaper *Renmin ribao* attacked Wang and described him as a “mirror of insatiable greed” and of the ugly spirit of some officials. They are weak-willed, unreliable at work and, acting from a bad conscience, they seek support in “feudal superstition,” the editorial said (*Global Times* July 22; Aug. 21; *New York Times* July 30, 2013; *Renmin ribao* July 30, 2013; *Xinhua* July 17; see: *RCTC* 2013, No. 4, pp. 9-10.).

Recently, the media have reported that Party cadres, made insecure by the anti-corruption campaign of President Xi, were seeking salvation in soothsayers and in the practices of popular religion – as reported for instance by *Reuters* on July 29.

July 17, 2015:

Eleven adherents of the “Society of Disciples” sentenced to prison on charges of belonging to a “cult”

After having been found guilty by a court in the Autonomous Region of Ningxia of “with the cult’s doctrine instigating believers to defy law and regulations,” eleven members of the “Society of Disciples” (Mentuhui 门徒会) were sentenced to prison terms of between three and eight and a half years. The state news agency *Xinhua* reported this news, citing the speaker of the “anti-cult” office of the City of Zhizuishan. In November of 2014, police in Shizuishan arrested 137 adherents of the group.

The “Society of Disciples” are a Christian sect, which had its beginnings in 1989 in Shaanxi. *Xinhua* has reported that the movement was classified as a “[heretical] cult” (*xiejiao* 邪教) in 1995. According to the Dui Hua Foundation (USA) a list published in 2014 by the Chinese Anti-Cult Association contained the names of 20 “cults,” of which the majority were of Christian inspiration. Among them were the “Church of the Almighty God” (also known as “Eastern Lightning”) and the “Society of Disciples.” In a search of government documents, Dui Hua found still other groups designated as cults [one example of which is the group Huazang zongmen, see entry of July 15/16]. (Dui Hua Foundation, “Identifying Cult Organizations in China,” July 10, 2014, www.duihuaresearch.org; *Xinhua* July 17, 2015).



Heading of the list issued in 2014 by the Chinese Anti-Cult Association, entitled: “The True Face of the cult organizations active in China,” <http://zgws.xinhuanet.com/info.aspx?id=49958&typeid=146>.

July 24 / 28 / 29, 2015:

Diocese of Wenzhou protests against removal of crosses: Demonstration and open letter of the official Catholic Church – Appeal of the Underground Church – Declarations of solidarity from all over China

Eighty-nine year old Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang and 20 priests belonging to the official section of the Diocese of Wenzhou demonstrated for about two hours on July 24 before the government offices of the City of Wenzhou. During the demonstration, they held aloft a large banner with the inscription “Protect the dignity of the Faith, [we] protest against the forced removal of the crosses.” Police appeared at the venue of the demonstration, but they did not intervene.

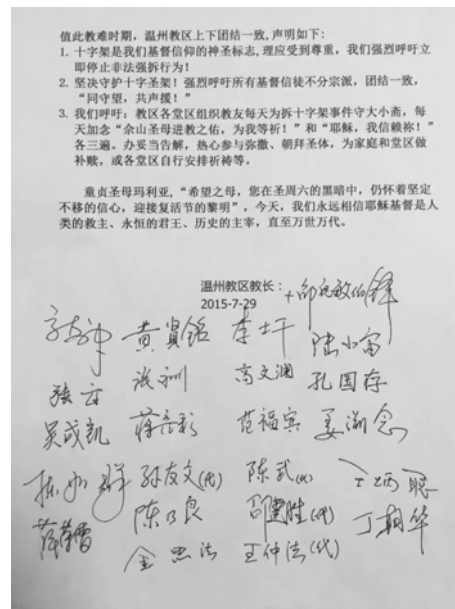
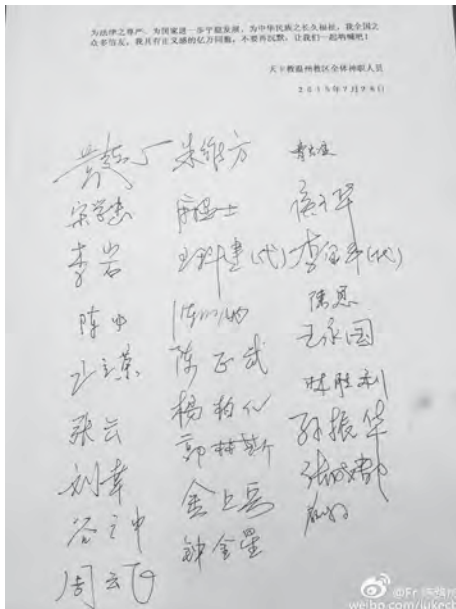


Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang and priests belonging to the official section of the Diocese of Wenzhou demonstrate on July 24 before the government offices of the City of Wenzhou. Photo: www.shizijia.org.

On July 28, the priests of the official section of the diocese led by Bishop Zhu Weifang published an open letter and on July 29, the priests of the underground section of the diocese led by Coadjutor Bishop Shao Zhumin published their own open letter, in which they all used sharp language to protest against the removal of the crosses. A total of 50 clerics signed their names to the letters.

At the end of July and the beginning of August, several other Catholic dioceses, groups and individual persons in other parts of China, both from the official as well as from the underground Church, issued declarations of solidarity with the protests in Wenzhou (UCAN July 24; Aug. 4; www.china.ucanews.com July 24, 29, 31; www.chinacath.org and www.shizijia.org, at several places).

Chinese texts of both open letters have been published by china.ucanews.com July 30 and other sources. A German translation of the open letters can be found in *China heute* 2015, No. 3, pp. 157-160. An English translation of the letter of the open community can be found at www.chinaaid.org/2015/08/zhejiang-government-continues-cross.html.



Each photo shows the second page respectively of the open letters of protest of the Diocese of Wenzhou: On the left the letter of the priests of the official part of the Diocese with the signatures of 27 priests, including Bishop Zhu Weifang; two of the signatures are marked "Substitute". On the right the letter of the priests of the Underground community of the Diocese with the signatures of Bishop Shao Zhumin and a further 22 priests; four of the signatures are marked "Substitute". Photos: www.shizijia.org

August 4, 2015:

Episcopal consecration in Anyang with approval of the Pope and of the Chinese authorities



Coadjutor Bishop Zhang Yinlin. Photo: Internet.

Fr. Joseph Zhang Yinlin, born in 1971, has been consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Anyang (Henan Province). It was the first public episcopal consecration in Mainland China since 2012. All of the bishops present were recognized by both the Pope and the government. Thus, the consecration, which was strictly monitored by the authorities, fulfilled the canonical requirements, a fact which some observers interpreted as a positive signal from the Chinese government towards the Vatican. The ninety year old Ordinary, or local bishop, Bishop Zhang Huaixin, was the principal consecrator, along with Bishops Shen Bin (Haimen), Yang Yongqiang (Zhoucun) and Wang Renlei (Xuzhou).

In accordance with the official Chinese method, Zhang Yinlin was elected in late April 2015 as bishop candidate in his diocese (see entry of April 28 and 29, 2015). When elected, he already had a papal appointment as bishop. Fr. Ji Chengyi,

elected bishop candidate for the Diocese of Zhumadian (Henan Province) at the end of April, has also received a papal appointment, although he has not yet been consecrated. The Diocese of Anyang now has two bishops, 30–36 priests, 120 religious Sisters and anywhere from 40,000–50,000 Catholics (*AsiaNews* Aug. 4; *china.ucanews.com* Aug. 4; *UCAN* July 31; Aug. 4).

August 5, 2015:

Appeal for the release of the journalist Gao Yu

In a joint open letter to China's President Xi Jinping, various groups – including the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong – made a public appeal for the release of journalist Gao Yu and other political prisoners. The renowned 71 year-old woman journalist was arrested in April of 2014 on charges of “illegal disclosure of state secrets to foreigners” and was sentenced to seven years in prison. She was accused of having handed over the internal “Party Document No. 9” to a foreign website. In the document, seven taboos are enumerated, things that may not be spoken of in the Chinese media or in the universities, etc. They include topics such as: “universal values,” “freedom of the press” and “civil society.” According to a statement of the German Foreign Ministry, Gao Yu had recently been working as a free-lance writer for various internet platforms and radio broadcasters, such as *Deutsche Welle*. The signatories of the open letter refer to reports that she is currently in a poor state of health. Among the signatories are: Amnesty International, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, Human Rights in China, Human Rights Watch, Independent Chinese Pen, Reporters Without Borders, Tiananmen Mothers Campaign and other groups (Amnesty International Aug. 6; www.auswaertiges-amt.de April 17; Translated text of Document No. 9: www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation).

August 15, 2015:

Pope remembers the victims of the Tianjin disaster

In his remarks following the noonday 'Angelus' prayers on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Francis commemorated the many victims killed or injured in the violent explosion at the port city of Tianjin: "Dear brothers and sisters, my thought at this moment goes to the people of the city of Tianjin in northern China, where several explosions in the industrial area have claimed many lives and caused injuries and serious damage. I assure my prayers for those who have lost their lives and for all the people tried by this disaster; may the Lord give relief to them and support to those involved in alleviating their suffering." – On the evening of August 12, a series of violent explosions in a warehouse filled with highly hazardous chemicals in the port city of Tianjin had left more than 170 dead, many of them firefighters, and nearly 800 injured. Among the volunteers who made themselves available immediately after the disaster there were also Catholics, under the direction of the Social Service Center of the Diocese of Tianjin (*AP* Sept. 11; *UCAN* Aug. 17; *Xinhua* Aug. 24; Sept. 1, 10; http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/angelus/2015/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20150815.html).

August 16, 2015:

Vatican Secretary of State Parolin expresses appreciation for the Catholic Church in Singapore

During a visit to Singapore, the last stop of his trip through Southeast Asia, Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Cardinal Parolin, praised the vitality of the Catholic Church in Singapore. Although only a small percentage of Singapore's population is Catholic (360,000 out of 5,000,000), nevertheless, the Church's role in the society and in the history of the country is very important. On August 16, Parolin joined the Catholic community at a celebration for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. In his homily he stressed the fact that in the 50-year history of Singapore's independence, and after 200 years of the Church's presence there, much had already been achieved, but that today's Catholics need "to look with some urgency at new and creative ways of carrying forward the proclamation of the gospel of salvation in a changing society." He praised Church organizations and institutions, in the fields of education and health, but also in care for the poor, the elderly, the sick and also offenders. – On July 4, the Catholic Church in Singapore celebrated the country's independence with a Mass of Thanksgiving, attended by 10,000 of the faithful. During the Mass, in addition to Archbishop William Goh, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong also addressed the crowd. The Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli read out the congratulatory message sent by Pope Francis for the occasion. Various religious communities also celebrated the anniversary on the eve of Singapore's national day (August 9). (*Fides* Aug. 19; *The Straits Times* July 4; *Vatican Radio* Aug. 17).

August 26, 2015:

New York Times: Hong Kong Christian groups under pressure from China

According to an article in the *New York Times*, various Protestant groups in Hong Kong feel themselves increasingly under pressure from China. Thus, the paper mentions, in recent months, Chinese officials have barred mainland residents from attending some religious conferences in Hong Kong. They also had increased oversight of mainland programs run by Hong Kong pastors and issued warnings to

outspoken church leaders. Just recently, the Rev. Philip Woo, head of the Christian Church of Chinese Ministry in Hong Kong, was “invited to come for tea” at the offices of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). During the meeting officials presented him with a list of laws they said he had violated. According to the *New York Times*, Woo has delivered fiery speeches on human rights, led seminars on social problems for students from Mainland China and ordained pastors on the mainland without permission from the authorities. The officials seem to have been exasperated by what they considered his “aggressive” use of the social networks to attract seminar participants from the Mainland. He was informed that he could no longer invite students from the mainland to come to Hong Kong for their formation. The *New York Times* also reported that Woo is still at liberty in Mainland China, but that he has moved the Shenzhen branch of his church to a remote location. – Tens of thousands of persons from the mainland reportedly take part each year in Sunday Schools, seminars and huge religious services in Hong Kong. For example, in July of 2015, more than 10,000 persons – the majority of whom were from the mainland – took part in an annual prayer meeting in Hong Kong, sponsored by the Christian group “Homecoming.” According to a survey by the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement, 60% of Hong Kong’s churches are engaged on the mainland in programs such as ongoing formation in theology. In the process, residents of Hong Kong are treated in Mainland China as if they were foreigners: they are not permitted to engage in any kind of evangelizing efforts, the paper says (*Hong Kong Economic Journal* Sept. 1; *Hong Kong Free Press* July 6; *New York Times* Aug. 26; www.nzz.ch July 12; www.spiegel.de July 1).

August 28, 2015:

Orthodox “Divine Liturgy” celebrated in Beijing Catholic Church



At the request of Chinese Orthodox believers, on August 28, the Rev. Sergiy Voronin, Rector of the Dormitio-Church, located on the grounds of the Russian Embassy in Beijing, celebrated an Orthodox Divine Liturgy in one of the Catholic churches of Beijing to mark the Feast of the “Dormition of the Mother of God” (Catholic: “Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven”). More than 80 persons attended the liturgy, including Chinese Albazins, young Chinese converts who have chosen Orthodoxy as their faith, employees of the Russian Embassy and other Russian believers. The Orthodox community of the church of the Assumption presented the Chinese faithful with icons of the “222 Chinese martyrs” and other icons for their homes (www.mospat.ru Aug. 29).

Chinese and Russian faithful take part in an Orthodox Divine Liturgy held in a Catholic Church in Beijing on August 28, 2015. Photos: www.mospat.ru.

August 29, 2015:

National People's Congress adopts revision of Criminal Law – Articles on terrorism and cults expanded

The Criminal Law Amendment abolished the death penalty for 9 offenses, thereby reducing to 46 the number of offenses for which the death penalty may be applied in China.

The number of terrorist offenses listed in article 120 was significantly expanded, making it problematic – as one comment on the website www.chinalawtranslate.com explained – both because of the harsh penalties for crimes increasingly distant from actual violent acts of terror, as well as for the tendency to conflate religious extremism with violent terrorism.

Also expanded was article 300 which deals with the organization or use of a heretical cult organization to undermine implementation of the law. In severe cases the maximum penalty for this crime has been increased to life imprisonment plus a fine or the confiscation of one's property.

The Criminal Law Amendment goes into effect on November 1, 2015. For an English translation and notes on the most important changes, see www.chinalawtranslate.com Sept. 1 and 27.

August 29, 2015:

Catholics appeal to government to release Bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding

Catholics from the Province of Hebei have repeatedly appealed to the government for the release of underground Bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding, who has been in prison since 1996. Their appeal – already the third one submitted – was made in the context of the government's August 29th amnesty of imprisoned war veterans and of bedridden and disabled elderly prisoners. The amnesty was declared to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. The most recent letter of appeal was addressed to the United Front Work Department of Baoding. The signatories included: Su Tianyou, a nephew of Bishop Su and a lay leader in Baoding; Fr. Pietro Cui Xingang, former rector of the Marian shrine in Donglü (Baoding), now working in Rome; and Fr. Lu Genjun, Vicar General of the underground community of Baoding, who had been released in August of 2014 after eight years of detention.

Bishop Su, 82, was arrested in 1996 as a “counter revolutionary” because he refused to join the Patriotic Association. In 1997, he managed to escape, but was soon re-arrested. By sheer chance, his family happened to catch sight of him one day in a Baoding hospital. Since then, he has not been seen again in public. On August 28, officials of the United Front Work Department told the family that Bishop Su had been arrested by officials of the Political and Legal Commission of the Party and that they therefore knew nothing about where the Bishop was being held, thus a source close to the bishop's family told *UCAN*. “The officials said the bishop is a bargaining chip. It is difficult to release him if China-Vatican relations do not improve,” the source continued.

Also missing are Coadjutor Bishop Cui Tai of Xuanhua, who has not been seen after his arrest in August of 2014, and Bishop Cosmas Shi Enxiang of Yixian, 94, who has been missing for 14 years. It was recently reported that Bishop Shi had died in detention in January, but the government later denied that the reports were true (*UCAN* Sept. 1, 2015; see also: *China heute* 2015, No. 1, pp. 4-5 [in German]).

September 4, 2015:

UCAN: Hong Kong's Cardinals on the status of Sino-Vatican relations

There are always ups and downs, but the atmosphere has been quite good lately, said Hong Kong's Bishop, John Cardinal Tong, in an interview given to *UCAN*. In recent months there have been positive signals from both sides, he added. Tong mentioned the official installation of Bishop Wu Qinjing of Zhouzhi and the episcopal ordination in Anyang (see the entries of July 10 and August 4). He remarked that he is watching the developments "as an outsider," as the Pope's point men who are actually in charge of the Sino-Vatican dialogue are Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Archbishop Claudio Celli of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and Msgr. Gianfranco Rota Graziiosi, Director of the Section for Relations with States within the Vatican Secretariat of State.

Hong Kong's Bishop Emeritus Joseph Cardinal Zen, however, told *UCAN* in an interview, that the Chinese government has no intention of creating dialogue, it just demands.

According to *UCAN*, Sino-Vatican negotiations were resumed in June of 2014 and a second round was expected to be held in the coming months [it took place in October, see *UCAN* Oct. 16] (*UCAN* Sept. 4).

September 6, 2015:

Chinese State Council publishes second White Paper on Tibet this year

The White Paper, entitled "Successful Practice of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet," describes the "dark and backward" old Tibet. It presents the history of Tibet as an "integral part of China" since the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), the abolition of the "feudal serfdom" in the 1950s and the emergence of the Tibet Autonomous Region. The document describes the achievements of today's regional autonomy including, in Chapter VII, "Respecting and Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief." The "Dalai Lama clique" has negated the achievements of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet, and for this reason, their separatist activities have met strong opposition from all ethnic groups in Tibet, and are doomed to failure, the authors declare at the end of the White Paper.

The White Paper was published on the occasion of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region on September 1, 1965 – 50 years ago. At the ceremonial presentation of the White Paper in Beijing, Norbu Dunzhub, member of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party in Tibet, declared that "no matter what the Dalai Lama says or does, the central government's recognised rights toward reincarnation cannot be denied." He said that the boy who was illegally and "without authorisation" identified as reincarnation of the Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama [and abducted in May 1995 by the Chinese authorities] was getting a good education, was healthy and growing up normally and did not wish to be disturbed (*Global Times* Sept. 1; *The Guardian* Sept. 6; *Xinhua* Sept. 6 and 7).

See also the entries of April 15 (White Paper "Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide") and May 17, 2015.

September 6, 2015:

Dedication of the Shanghai Jewish Memorial Park

The memorial in the Fushouyuan Cemetery in Shanghai's Qingpu District recalls the history of Jewish refugees to Shanghai during the Second World War. It was endowed by the Shanghai Jewish commu-

nity, the Shanghai Center of Jewish Studies and the Fu Shou Yuan International Group (Hong Kong). The 200 square meter park (1/2 acre) contains several pieces of sculpture as well as a Memorial Wall, bearing the names of 24 Jews who were involved in the development of Shanghai during the 20th century. The wall also contains the name of Ho Fengshan, Chinese Consul General in Vienna, who at great personal risk, issued some 3,000 visas to Jews toward the end of the 1930s. There are also two Jewish tombstones in the park.

Between 1933 and 1941, more than 20,000 European Jews came to Shanghai, fleeing from the National Socialist regime. The eastern Chinese port city was at that time one of the very few places on earth which granted entry to Jews, even without visas (*South China Morning Post* Sept. 7; see: *MERICCS China Update* 31/2015).

September 15, 2015:

Death of noted Evangelical theologian Wang Weifan

The popular theologian Wang Weifan 汪维藩 has died in Nanjing at the age of 88. As a close friend and companion of Bishop K. H. Ting, he put his stamp on the theological training at the central seminary of the Protestant Church back in the 1950s and once again from the end of the Cultural Revolution to the present day. Professor Wang lectured in systematic theology with a strong Chinese-contextual character. He wrote poems, painted Chinese calligraphy and was much loved as an impassioned preacher. For more than 20 years, he served as editor of the most important theological publication of the Protestant Church in China, the quarterly journal *Jinling shenxue zhi* 金陵神学志. One memorial service was held for him in the morning of September 17 at the Jinling Seminary (Nanjing Union Theological Seminary), a second took place that afternoon in the Mouchoulu Church in the city center. Further information can be found at the seminary's website: www.njuts.cn. A more extensive obituary of Prof. Wang Weifan is scheduled to appear in the next number of *China heute*.

Isabel Hess-Friemann

September 15, 2015:

Taiwan's Bishops' Conference calls for prayers for refugees

In the face of the current global refugee crisis, the regional Taiwanese Bishops' Conference has called on the country's 260,000 Catholics to fast, pray and spend time in Eucharistic adoration, so that the dignity and the human rights of today's refugees, including our "Christian brothers and sisters," might be respected and that they might find a safe abode as soon as possible. As the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference said in an interview with *UCAN*, each member of the faithful should answer the Bishops' call to solidarity according to his or her own possibilities. If prayer and fasting prove difficult due to some physical or occupational circumstance, one alternative would be to substitute giving up an evening of television or some other amusements (<http://china.ucanews.com/2015/09/15>).

September 16, 2015:

Religious affairs authority of Zhejiang Province adopts Discretionary Guidelines for Administrative Penalties

The discretionary guidelines include a catalog of 23 illegal acts. For each, the underlying legal paragraph is given as well as the type of penalty (correction within a specified time, fines, confiscation, change of management, closure, etc.) and criteria for the level of penalties.

Of the 23 illegal acts, 9 relate to institutes for religious education, 6 to religious organizations and sites for religious activities (e.g., lack of registration, breach of the principle of autonomous self-government, unlawful acceptance of domestic and foreign donations, non-acceptance of control by the competent authorities). Others regard unauthorized performance of major religious activities or Islamic pilgrimages abroad, proselytizing outside of the confines of authorized religious sites, the leading of religious activities by unregistered staff and “non-normal religious activities” (including infiltration by foreign powers).

Point 22 seems to have particular relevance to the current problem of the removal of crosses: “Installing religious devices in public places by individuals or non-religious organizations, or structural expansion or relocation of religious sites without prior authorization.” Among the penalties foreseen are correction or even closure for religious activities, as well as fines of anywhere from 1,000 to 50,000 yuan, depending on the seriousness of the particular case.

The new guidelines came into effect on October 1, 2015. They replace an older document of 2010, which bears a similar title but which is not, however, available on the internet, so that it is not possible to determine exactly which points are new.

The text of the “Discretionary Guidelines for Administrative Penalties of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of Zhejiang Province” 浙江省民族宗教事务委员会行政处罚裁量基准 can be found at: www.zjsmzw.gov.cn/Public/NewsInfo.aspx?type=&id=3e3c4c2a-0d6d-47f5-BA06-f782254f1c4c.

September 18, 2015:

North Korean refugees arrested on the road to Kunming

The man and three teenage girls were picked up by police in Liuzhou as they were making their way across southwest China by bus towards Kunming. Kunming is one of the main transit points for North Korean defectors who want to travel from there to Laos or to other Southeast Asian countries. It is there, also, that they usually ask for help before they are allowed to travel on to South Korea. The *South Korean News Agency* says that, as a rule, China sends the defectors straight back to North Korea, where they face harsh penalties. Seoul maintains its policy of taking in North Koreans who wish to emigrate from third countries to South Korea. – It is estimated that there are tens of thousands of North Koreans currently in China in the hope of one day continuing their journey via third countries until they are finally be able to enter South Korea. As the agency states further, South Korea is now home to more than 27,500 North Korean defectors (*South Korean News Agency* Sept. 19).

September 18–20, 2015:

Conference on the Chinese initiative for a New Silk Road and on religious exchanges with other countries

Since 2013, China has been propagating a strategic initiative in the fields of the economy and development which it calls “One Belt, One Road” (*yi dai yi lu* 一帶一路). Building on the ancient Silk Road, the new “Silk Road Economic Belt” is meant to link the countries of Central Asia, West Asia, the Middle East and Europe, and by means of a “Maritime Silk Road” it hopes to link the countries of Southeast Asia, Oceania and Africa. This “core of China’s new foreign policy under Xi Jinping” is meant to bring together 65 countries and 4.4 billion people, according to Chinese indications (see Ruth Kirchner, *Deutschlandfunk* May 21).

For some time now, the “One Belt, One Road” initiative has been up for discussion also in the arena of religion and religious policy. A conference in Beijing on this issue was organized by the State Adminis-

tration of Religious Affairs (SARA) together with the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Among the more than 100 participants there were also experts from abroad as well as representatives of the official Chinese religious organizations. In his opening speech, SARA Deputy Director Chen Zongrong spoke of the special role of religions for the development, exchange and mutual reflection of civilizations. He said that there are already a lot of religious exchanges with China's countries along the "One Belt, One Road" – such as Buddhist exchanges with East and South-east Asia, Islamic exchange with Central and West Asia and North Africa, Catholic and Protestant exchanges with Europe. But this is far from being enough, he argued, adding that the Chinese government encourages exchange between the country's religious circles and other countries on the basis of autonomy, equality and mutual respect (see: report on the website of the SARA, www.sara.gov.cn Sept. 21).

September 22, 2015:

Corruption investigations against Zhang Lebin, Deputy Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA)

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of China's Communist Party announced on September 22, that the disciplinary authorities are investigating against Zhang due to suspicions that he was guilty of a "serious breach of discipline." As reported by *Xinjingbao* (*The Beijing News*), Zhang's name has not appeared in the state media since the end of December 2014. According to the website of the SARA, Zhang was responsible for the Muslims, for religious groups other than the five officially recognized major religions and for popular religion, but he was also seen in recent years at Buddhist events.

First speculations about the background of the fall of Zhang Lebin in the Chinese media – in *Xinjingbao*, among others – mention his connections to the ousted former head of the United Front Department of the Communist Party of China, Ling Jihua, who is said to have recommended Zhang to the SARA, as well as his contacts to Buddhist Abbot Shi Yongxin of the Shaolin Monastery. According to a commentary on the website Sina, the abbot has been the subject of increased attacks in the media since last July. Among others, the *Global Times* reported this past July 29 about allegations being made by a "whistleblower" against Abbot Yongxin.

In addition to Director Wang Zuo'an, the SARA currently still has two Deputy Directors, Jiang Jianyong and Chen Zongrong (*Global Times* July 29; *UCAN* Sept. 23; *Xinhua* Sept. 22; *Xinjingbao* Sept. 23; *Xinlang Xinwen* [Sina] Sept. 22).

September 22–27 / 22–28, 2015:

Pope Francis and President Xi Jinping on simultaneous visits to the USA

On September 22, Pope Francis landed in Washington, D.C., and that same day President Xi Jinping landed in Seattle. The Pope met President Obama on the 23rd, addressed a joint meeting of the United States Congress on the 24th, and gave a speech to the members of the Plenary Assembly of the United Nations on the 25th. President Xi was a guest of the President on September 24th and 25th, and on the 26th he in turn spoke before the Plenary Assembly of the United Nations. The remarkable synchronicity between the two visits has unleashed a lot of speculation, but there has been no indication of any contact between the two delegations. The visit of the Pontiff had a far greater echo in the U.S. media than did the visit of President Xi. And conversely, the Chinese media made scarcely any reference to

the Pope's visit. According to *Reuters*, the spokesman for the Chinese delegation, Lu Kang, said: "The Pope's visit, we noticed that, and that ... he is welcomed by the public. His visit has its own bearing here. President Xi's visit has its own bearing" (*Reuters* Sept. 27; *South China Morning Post* Sept. 24; *UCAN* Sept. 28).

September 23, 2015:

Publication of the first Regulations on the United Front Work of the Communist Party of China, including a chapter on religious work

The document contains the first internal party rules for the Party's United Front Work, according to an article in the Party newspaper *People's Daily*, which published the text on September 23, 2015. The "Regulations on the United Front Work of the Communist Party of China (For Trial Implementation)" 中国共产党统一战线工作条例 (试行) were adopted by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on April 30, 2015, and took effect on May 18, 2015.

Chapter 6 of the document deals with the "religious work" (*zongjiao gongzuo* 宗教工作) of the Party, and for the most part, reviews already well-known principles of religious policy. In this chapter, the document reaffirms the principle of autonomous self-government of the religions and the defense against foreign interference and infiltration – one reason why commentators see in the paper a not very auspicious omen for the future of the Sino-Vatican relations. The religions are to be "instructed" to interpret their teaching in a way that "does justice to the requirements of the progress of time." The document notes quite explicitly, that "members of the Communist Party [...] are not allowed to believe in a religion." In recent years there have been some voices within the Chinese Communist Party who were trying to bring this principle into question.

The United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China is the Party organ in charge of religious policy, among other things, and is thus responsible for the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), which in turn oversees the religious organizations (*UCAN* Sept. 25).

The Chinese text of the provisions can be found at: <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0923/c1001-27621618.html>. A German translation of Chapter 6 on "Religious Work" can be found in *China heute* 2015, No. 3, p. 156.

Until September 25, 2015:

Three members of the official Chinese Bishops' Conference visit the USA on a "mission of reconciliation"

Conference President Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin (Kunming) and two of the Conference's vice-presidents, Bishop John Baptist Yang Xiaoting (Yan'an) and Bishop Vincent Zhan Silu (Mindong), were in the U.S. for a 10 day visit at the invitation of several universities and Church groups. Their visit partly overlapped with the visits of both Pope Francis and of President Xi. Bishop Ma and Bishop Zhang were consecrated without a papal appointment and therefore are not recognized by the Vatican. Bishop Yang, on the other hand, has obtained both papal and government recognition. The official Bishops' Conference is itself not recognized by Rome. On September 17, Bishop Ma addressed the Divinity School of Yale University. The three bishops were "on a holy pilgrimage to seek reconciliation with the universal Church," said John Worthley, former Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic Seton Hall University and an expert on the Church in China, in an interview given to *UCAN*. According to Worthley, the Chinese bishops are seeking the help of the American Church for their reconciliation efforts. It was

reported that they had given a high-ranking American cleric a Bible for Pope Francis, on the wrapping of which the three bishops had written: “We love you, we pray for you, we wait for you in China” (*UCAN* Sept. 24).

September 27, 2015:

During the return flight to Rome from the U.S., Pope Francis speaks of his love for the Chinese people

During the now traditional press conference aboard the flight home to Rome, the Pope responded to a question on Sino-Vatican relations by saying: “China is a great nation which offers the world a great culture and so many good things. I once said as we were flying over China, returning from Korea, that I would very much like to go to China. I love the Chinese people, I wish them well, and I hope for a possibility of good relations. We do have contacts, we talk, we are moving forward, but for me, having as a friend a country like China, which has a great culture and such opportunity to do good, would be a joy” (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150927_usa-conferenza-stampa.html).

September 28, 2015:

Anniversary of the “Occupy Movement” in Hong Kong

On the anniversary of the commencement of last year’s Hong Kong protests for more democracy and universal suffrage, around 1,000 people gathered in front of the government headquarters in Hong Kong for a demonstration which began with 15 minutes of silence.

At a prayer service that same evening outside the Legislative Council building – organized by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong – the Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, Joseph Cardinal Zen, took part together with some 100 of the faithful. He called on the participants to work for unity. Prior to the prayer meeting, he had celebrated an outdoor Holy Mass outside government headquarters together with about 150 Catholics. The Mass was organized by the “Yellow Umbrella Christian Base Communities,” a group of Catholic laity who have been holding a Holy Mass in the open every Sunday afternoon since the beginning of the movement. The group also advocates on behalf of those who have been arrested as part of the Umbrella Movement.

Although John Cardinal Tong, Bishop of Hong Kong, had not taken an active part in the protests, he has written repeatedly on the subject and has been active in calling for dialogue. In an August interview with *UCAN*, he spoke positively about the democracy movement: “That means Hong Kong is a free society.” He considers dialogue still relevant and said: “Dialogue does not mean that we ... don’t talk about political things. We still have to talk about it because this is part of our life” (*UCAN* Sept. 29).

2015 (undated):

“Daoist Digital Museum” opens in Hong Kong

The website is a project of the Centre for Studies of Daoist Culture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, under the direction of Professor Lai Chi-Tim. According to information provided on the museum’s website, to date, the project has collected materials related to 150 Daoist temples of Guangzhou City (Guangdong Province) and the surrounding counties. These include historical documents, architectural and iconographic data, stela inscriptions and video recordings. The index of this database has

been already completed and the digital version of the sources has been uploaded in the Museum and includes use of GIS (Geographic Information System) technology. The collected material should make possible better research into Daoism in the region. The URL (internet address) of the digital museum is as follows: <http://dao.crs.cuhk.edu.hk/digitalmuseum/CH>.



Portal of the “Daoist Digital Museum.”

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