

**Refugee Review Tribunal
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Questions

- 1. Please provide information on underground Catholic church groups in China, specifically in Guangdong.**
- 2. Would members be expected to have a baptism certificate?**
- 3. What relationship do these groups have to the official Catholic Church in Rome?**
- 4. What relationship do they have to the official Catholic Church in China?**
- 5. Is there evidence that members of the underground Catholic Churches are ill-treated especially in Guangdong?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide information on underground Catholic church groups in China, specifically in Guangdong.**

According to the latest edition of the *Guide to the Catholic Church in China* – the population of Guangdong Province is numbered at 83,04 million – some 110,000 of these are Catholics. The Province has 4 dioceses with 4 Bishops, 60 priests and 70 nuns. There are 200 churches in an area of 178,000 sq km. (Charbonnier, Fr. J. 2008, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication, Singapore, pp. 326- 327 – Attachment 1).

Official figures from the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) indicate that there are 5.2 million Catholics in the whole of China, with an average of 70,000 people being baptised each year. There is no definite figure on the number underground Catholics – because the authorities discourage surveys:

However, the total number of practitioners in both the sanctioned Catholic Church and in the unofficial Roman Catholic Church in China is difficult to ascertain (*Economist* 21 Apr. 2005; see also BBC 9 Nov. 2004) and reported numbers vary among sources consulted by the

Research Directorate. *The Economist* states that Chinese authorities "try to prevent surveys by foreign or Chinese researchers that might challenge the official view that Christianity is still a marginal phenomenon" (21 Apr. 2005). The Vatican estimates that altogether there are approximately ten million Catholics in China (*The Economist* 21 Apr. 2005; *International Religious Freedom Report* 15 Sep. 2004, Sec. 1), while the BBC states that about eight million people belong to unregistered churches, in addition to the more than five million who practise in the state-sanctioned Church (8 Apr. 2005). Other sources put the estimated total number of Catholics in China at 12 million (*Calgary Herald* 8 Feb. 2004; *IHT* 5 April 2005; *Tripod* Autumn 2004).

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There are reportedly 70 bishops and 1,200 priests serving at least 90 dioceses under the authority of the CCPA (*China Daily* 21 June 2004). Estimates of the total number of bishops belonging to the unofficial Church vary from 46 to 50 (Cardinal Kung Foundation n.d.; *Tripod* Autumn 2004). The Holy Spirit Study Centre, the research branch of the Diocese of Hong Kong principally concerned with the situation of Catholics in mainland China (Holy Spirit Study Centre n.d.), estimated that there are about 1,000 priests in the unofficial Church, along with 1,700 nuns and 10 seminaries (*Tripod* Autumn 2004).

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Practising Catholicism in China

According to a report by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), state-sanctioned churches must not have any contact with the Vatican and must teach, among other things, the use of contraceptives to adherents and preach that former Chinese leader Mao Zedong has ascended to heaven (24 Dec. 2003). AsiaNews.it reported that the leaders of the official Church are required to undergo months of "training" on the Government of China's religious policy and take courses on Marxism and the authority of the Chinese Communist Party (25 June 2004). The same news source noted, however, that the majority of bishops named by the CCPA since 2000 "have secretly requested the recognition of and reconciliation with the Holy See" (AsiaNews.it 25 June 2004). The IHT reported that in the last few years bishops nominated by the official Church have sought the written approval of the Vatican before assuming their duties (5 Apr. 2005). According to Father Benoît Vermander, the director of the Ricci Institute in Taiwan, more than half of the bishops practising in the official Church have "at least de facto recognition" of the Vatican (CathNews 10 Mar. 2004; see also Burton 24 Apr. 2003, 9; USA Today 4 Apr. 2005).

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Some leaders of unregistered congregations have cited pressure from the government to register with the Chinese state (*International Religious Freedom Report* 2004 15 Sep. 2004). According to the executive secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, who travels regularly throughout the mainland to gauge the state of religious freedom and who was most recently in China in August 2005, government officials periodically meet with leaders of unregistered churches to persuade them to register with the patriotic association (Executive secretary 1 Sept. 2005a). In June 2004, AsiaNews.it reported that a government campaign to have bishops of the unregistered Church break ties with the Vatican and answer instead to the Chinese leadership was unfolding (AsiaNews.it 25 June 2004). In response to allegations made by the Vatican that bishops had been arrested and detained, the Religious Affairs Office in Beijing explained that it had organized "courses for local clergy that teach [its] religious policy" and that the bishops were attending these "voluntarily" (ibid.).

Treatment of Catholics by Authorities

According to the Connecticut-based Cardinal Kung Foundation, which promotes the Roman Catholic Church in China, each one of the bishops of the unregistered Church is "either in jail, under house arrest, under strict surveillance, or in hiding" (Cardinal Kung Foundation n.d.). The president of the Foundation, Joseph Kung, was quoted in the Asian Wall Street Journal as saying that between January and April 2005 three bishops of the unregistered Church had

been imprisoned, and two others were put under 24-hour surveillance (7 April 2005). Priests of the Church have also been targeted for arrests (Cardinal Kung Foundation n.d.). In July 2002, three priests from the unregistered Church in Baoding, Hebei, were reportedly sentenced to three years in a labour camp under anti-cult laws (ibid.). Freedom House reports that according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), these laws have been used by authorities to sentence members of religious groups other than the Falun Gong, which has been the principal target of anti-cult laws (Freedom House 23 Aug. 2004).

The Cardinal Kung Foundation also states that a variety of penalties ranging from fines and house arrest to imprisonment and labour camp internment have been imposed on those belonging to the unofficial Church (n.d.). Raids and the demolition of unregistered churches by authorities have also been reported: The BBC noted that authorities had bulldozed a church in 2002 (24 Dec. 2003) while the Cardinal Kung Foundation reported on a church demolition that took place in June 2003 (n.d.). Agence France-Presse (AFP), with information obtained from the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy, reported that in December 2004 police officers had conducted a raid on an unregistered church in Zhejiang Province, dismantling a makeshift set-up for Christmas service, though not damaging the church itself (27 Dec. 2004).

However, the executive secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council stated in correspondence to the Research Directorate that the current view of the central government is that unregistered Christian groups should be discouraged but also tolerated (Executive secretary 1 Sept. 2005a). (Executive secretary 1 Sept. 2005a). Julius Jia Zhiguo, a bishop of the unofficial Church in Hebei, whose movements have reportedly been restricted by police since 1995, also told the *Washington Post* that conditions overall for unregistered Catholics were improving (29 Apr. 2005). According to the executive secretary, arrests of leaders take place occasionally, not as a result of religious policies, but when unregistered religious meetings "become too aggressive or high-profile" or when local officials attempt to extort money from unregistered churches (Executive secretary 1 Sept. 2005a).

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Other sources note that the treatment of Catholics in the unofficial Church in China varies from place to place (*Washington Post* 29 Apr. 2005; see also Chan and Carlson 2005, 16; *International Religious Freedom Report* 15 Sep. 2004, Sec. 2). Kim-Kwong Chan and Eric R. Carlson, who co-authored a research handbook on religious affairs in China, state the following:

Due to problems in coordination across all levels in a country as large as China, the implementation of the Party's very same policy on freedom of religious belief can range from endorsement of religion to suppression. Local politics dictate the final outcome of religious policy. ... Therefore, one needs to be extremely careful in interpreting the implementation of religious policies, as China is composed of thousands of local governments with cadres of varying levels of administrative skill and technical knowledge of religion (2005, 16).

The *Freedom in the World 2004* report notes that, "[i]n many areas, unregistered ... Catholic congregations - particularly those that are small and unobtrusive - worship freely," but elsewhere, local officials disrupt services of unregistered churches (Freedom House 23 Aug. 2004).

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Fujian and Guangdong

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However, the executive secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council commented that Fujian and Guangdong have "the most liberal policy on religion in China, especially on Christianity" (Executive secretary 1 Sept. 2005a). In his travels, the executive secretary has met with local authorities who, he said, usually tolerate activities of unregistered Christian groups (ibid.).

While authorities are of a more tolerant nature in rural areas than in urban centres, they would usually take steps to discourage religious activity if it had a link to groups from outside China (ibid.). The executive secretary stated that he is aware of a number of unregistered churches that have been allowed to function for years (ibid.). Though he has received a few reports of arrests of Catholic priests in the years 2003 to 2005, the executive secretary noted that overall, Christians in Fujian and Guangdong "enjoy one of the most liberal polic[ies] on religious freedom in China" (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005, *CHN100386.E – China: Situation of Catholics and treatment by authorities, particularly in Fujian and Guangdong (2001-2005)*, 1 September http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=449524 – Attachment 2)

A study from the *Journal of Church & State* conducted in 2007 notes that the situation between state-registered churches and non-registered is more complicated than depicted by commentators:

Meanwhile, the Catholic Patriotic Association identified the total number of Chinese Catholics around 5.3 million.

But many Western scholars and church watchers are skeptical of the official Chinese sources. In 2003, David Aikman stated that out of China's total population of 1.3 billion, 70 million were Protestants and 12 million were Catholics...(p3)

...

The relations between officially registered churches and autonomous Christian groups remain very complex. (p7)

...

Analysis and interpretation of this dual Chinese Catholic experience, from 1949 until 1976, is complex and emotional. Oftentimes, the ordinary worldwide Catholic commentators become trapped by terminologies such as "open church" and "underground church." In reality, the definitions of these terms have remained fluid and vague. (p8)

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The main challenge facing Chinese Catholics today is how to live a religious life in an increasingly modernized society. Many Catholics reside in rural areas and dominate certain occupational groups such as fishermen in the Lower Yangtze River and along the southeast coast. They are poor, less educated, and still influenced by traditional culture. The church acts as a barrier that separates them from the outside world, and is the social center for the faithful with several masses and prayer meetings a day. (41) It promotes marriages among Catholics in surrounding villages and preaches that other religions such as Protestant Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Taoism are erroneous. Richard Madsen describes this type of inward-looking mentality as an "ethnic religion," because Catholic identity is transmitted primarily through kinship, lineage, and inter-village networks. He argues that geographic isolation and limited mobility have enabled the Catholic villagers on the North China Plain to maintain their "corporate identity" and religious practices. (42) But this enclosed environment makes it difficult for Catholics to adjust to the modern world after they migrate to the cities. Without the same support mechanism as in the villages, Catholics in urban areas find it difficult to integrate their faith with modernity.

Some highly mobile and successful Catholics, however, do not fit into Madsen's characterization. A good example is Eriberto P. Lozada's anthropological study of "Little Rome," a Hakka Catholic village in Guangdong province. These Hakka Catholics actively engage in entrepreneurial activities and successfully integrate their faith into ancestral traditions and modern lifestyles. They 'also establish transnational

contacts with other believers in Hong Kong, Macau, Southeast Asia, and the West for support and protection. (43) These Hakka Catholics in South China have long been exposed to the outside world and are more likely to embrace social and economic changes than the land-bound Catholics in Madsen's study (Lee, J. T. 2007, 'Christianity in contemporary China: an update', *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 49, no. 2, Spring – Attachment 3).

A Research Response which addressed this issue is attached. (RRT Research and Information Services Research 2006, *Research Response CHN30006*, 14 March - Attachment 4)

Furthermore a study carried out by *Forum 18* – an organisation made of a group of Norwegian NGOs - remarked 'it is cause for considerable concern to the authorities that it is the underground church that has been growing the most over the last twenty years':

The Roman Catholic Church - a divided church

The Communist government has been at odds with the Vatican since the founding of the People's Republic. The issues at stake are one of politics and one of communion with the universal church. The result has been a division within the church between the state controlled China Catholic Patriotic Church and the Catholic underground church loyal to the Pope. Normalisation of the relationship between the two states has been blocked by the fact that the Vatican continues to maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan and that China continues to consecrate bishops without papal approval. However, with regard to the latter, most bishops in the open church have sought and received recognition from the Vatican. This is viewed by the Communist authorities as a gross interference in China's internal affairs. At a time when China is faced with serious problems at home, unemployment and social discontent, they are fearful of the church's potential political influence. Chinese leaders are wary of the role the church played in the downfall of Communism in Eastern Europe. They would not like to see a repeat of this scenario. In light of these worries the government staged consecration of five bishops in Beijing 6 January 2000 is easier to understand. The government wanted to assert its authority over the church. At the same time it was also clear that the leadership of the church once again had become a tool in the hands of the political bodies charged with executing religious policy in China.

It is cause for considerable concern to the authorities that it is the underground church that has been growing the most over the last twenty years. The figure is probably double that of the officially recognised church. The underground church, however, is completely non-existent in all official documents and papers which means that it is dealt with as an illegal social entity. Persecutions and arrests of clergy and lay people have been the order of the day for years, but during the last 18 months the authorities have intensified their effort in curbing the activities of the church by more arrests. Hundreds of bishops, priests and Catholic believers have been sent to prisons or labour reform camps. Illegal church structures have been torn down. CCPA offices (China Catholic Patriotic Association) have been established in areas where it was unknown before. Party cadres are travelling to the countryside where the impact of the underground church is especially strong to put pressure on bishops to register their church with the CCPA and to promise obedience, and if not, to face the consequences.

There are strong indications that among the five candidates elected for consecration in January some would rather have refrained, but that they were forced to go along as a gesture of patriotism, which is nothing less than an interference in the freedom of conscience of these people. This is also very much the case for the 130 seminarians of

the Beijing National Seminary who refused to participate at the politically staged ordination. Their defiance has made them subject to tremendous pressure and 'political re-education'. They will have to admit to a wrong political view-point or be deemed unfit for further theological studies.

The canonisation of 120 martyrs 1 October 2000 has further strained the relationship between China and the Vatican, but more than that it has revealed the lack of independence of the Christian church from that of the State. Most of the martyrs (87) were Chinese citizens, many of them women and teenagers, including children who suffered violent death during the Boxer rebellion (1900). For the Chinese Communists the Boxer rebellion is a patriotic movement against western encroachment of China. The canonisation of the martyrs was therefore a sensitive issue. The Foreign Affairs Ministry expressed "righteous indignation and strong protest" against the canonisation of persons who had "participated in criminal activities". This strong condemnation was also echoed by the leaders of the Catholic and Protestant churches. Some even went further than the government. Luo Guanzhong, the chairman of Three-Self Patriotic Movement, called the canonisation a "distortion of historical truth" and a "farce neglecting the sovereignty of the Chinese church." However, it is difficult to see the justification of this outburst of anger. What about the other 20-30000 unknown martyrs who were massacred by the Boxers? Can all these deaths of innocent people be justified in the name of patriotism? And in view of this, is it possible that the same thing could happen again under the present political system? ('Freedom of Religion: A report with a special emphasis on the right to choose religion and registration systems' 2001, *Forum 18* website. February, pp. 29-30. <http://www.forum18.org/PDF/freedomofreligion.pdf> – Accessed 19 March 2007 – Attachment 5).

In June 2005, Betty Ann Maheu made the following observations in the course of the 21st National Catholic China Conference (Seattle University, Seattle, Washington) about the type religious practice in Catholic villages including Guangdong:

The Catholic Laity

Most of the Catholics in China are concentrated in the rural areas. This is a fact of history since missionaries were much more plentiful and successful in making converts in the countryside than in the cities. Catholics also tend to be concentrated in two provinces: Hebei and Shaanxi Provinces. Hebei is the home of at least one quarter of the country's Catholic population. As is well known, it is also the seat of the underground church, and the province where most arrests of bishops and the faithful still take place. Hebei boasts a number of "Catholic villages," that is, villages where most or all of the inhabitants are Catholic. There are similar villages also in other provinces such as Shaanxi, Guizhou and Guangdong. Catholics in these villages tend to be very devout but in pre-Vatican II style and forms. They also are quite clannish and find great solidarity in their common religious bond. In the village of Huangjia, in Shaanxi Province, for instance, the entire population at 5:00 o'clock each morning makes its way to the large parish church of Our Lady of the Rosary for Morning Prayer and Mass. The villagers are poor farmers who work in the fields all day and eke out very little in return. Most of the people are uneducated; they cannot read a newspaper or even write their name, but they have a staunch faith, which they endeavor to pass on to the next generation. (Maheu, Betty Ann, Sister, MM, 2005, *The Catholic Church in China: Journey of Faith. An Update on the Catholic Church in China: 2005*, (p 6), U.S. Catholic China Bureau website, June http://www.usccb.net/conference/conference21/Paper_BettyAnnMaheu13Jul05.pdf - Accessed 25 November 2008 – Attachment 6)

She cautions against a simplistic interpretation of what constitute an “open” and “underground” church:

The Open and Underground Church [emphasis by the author]

For most Americans, the very mention of the Catholic Church in China conjures up an image of an open church and an underground church. The simplistic approach to this situation goes something like this: The open church is a patriotic church loyal to the government, and not in communion with the Holy Father or the Universal Church. The underground church, on the other hand, is the loyal church in communion with the Holy See and the Universal Church. This is far from the reality of the situation. The reality is extremely complicated historically, ecclesiastically and canonically. First of all, we must understand that there are not two Catholic Churches in China. **There is only one Catholic Church in China.** Pope John Paul II was always so careful about speaking of the Church in China as one. Second, China does not have a patriotic Catholic Church. There is a Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which is a political organization set up by the Party to monitor and direct the activities of the open church. The Association operates under the United Front and the Religious Affairs Bureau at the local levels and the State Administration of Religious Affairs on the national level. I should add here that the Chinese Patriotic Association is not an organization unite to the Catholic Church.

Similar associations monitor each of the five approved religions in China. Just how freely the churches operate depends almost entirely on the quality of the individuals who serve on these associations, on their motivation and their knowledge of and respect for religion. The make up of these associations can sometimes be bizarre. I asked a bishop in the west of the country recently whether he had a cooperative Patriotic Association. “No problem at all,” he said, “The government put all Muslims on my Association and they are all religious men and understand.” That, of course, is not always the case. Many on these organizations are there because they see it as a good job with steady remuneration and with power. A third point to remember is that the division within the Catholic Church in China is political and not doctrinal.

The terms “open” and “underground” are not accurate descriptions of the reality of the Church in China. **Churches are either registered or unregistered.** Government regulations require places of worship to be registered. Ye Xiaowen, the Director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs has said “Our aim is not registration for its own sake but ...to tighten control over places of religious activities as well as on all religious activities themselves”. Open, official or government approved, churches are all registered. China governments traditionally have always been suspicious of groups that can put any loyalty, including spiritual loyalty, such as is the case with the Catholic Church, ahead of civic loyalty. The current government continues this tradition and remains suspicious of religion an religious movements of any kind. No loyalty can compete with civic loyalty.

Underground churches are unregistered and sites that refuse to register are illegal and subject to closure and repression. Authorities in different places, however, deal very differently with both the registered and unregistered groups. Some groups are relatively free in both the open and underground sectors to go their own way, while others, for example in Hebei Province, are arrested, detained, and subject to crackdowns.

The underground church is not underground in the literal sense. In certain areas that I have visited recently, the church is large and beautiful. It is built in view of everyone and in the middle of the city. In some places, it is literally on the 7th floor! In other places the underground church is the only Catholic Church; there are no official church. In still other places people meet for Mass or prayer in people’s homes. These are the communities most vulnerable to the surveillance of the Public Security Bureau. In some seminaries, underground

bishops may serve as professors. In a few places, both the open and the unregistered church share the same building for services while in other places the two groups are at complete loggerheads.

Let me give you a very concrete example of how confused the situation can be at times. One day a bishop from the north arrived at our office. He was a small man but obviously enterprising. He had received an invitation to visit Germany, and he had obtained his passport from the government. He arrived with a terrible cold so Bishop Tong asked one of our men to take him to St. Paul's Hospital for treatment since there was no way for him to get on a plane in that condition. Within a few days he had recuperated sufficiently, and set off for Germany. His passport did not permit him to travel beyond Germany. Nonetheless, once in Germany he said, "This is so close to Rome, why don't I drop in on the Holy Father?" Someone arranged for him to go to Rome to see the Holy Father and somewhere along the way, he managed to obtain the entire bishop's regalia. Anyone acquainted with Rome is aware that the most ubiquitous person in the world is the papal photographer! When the bishop saw the photographs of him with the Holy Father, he was ecstatic! So he got many of them and had some of them enlarged. When he returned to Hong Kong, we cautioned him that it might not be a good idea to display these publicly since he had no permission to go to Rome. But his enthusiasm got the better of him and he threw caution to the wind. When he got home, he framed the photos and put them in the vestibule where they were prominently visible to anyone. The authorities came in, took one look at the photos and asked: "Who made you a Bishop?" Not willing to divulge the name of the bishop who had originally ordained him, he said, "The Holy Father!" They did not believe him, of course. This man that we knew as a bishop was, in reality, a bishop in the underground church and a priest in the open church! We in the West, who like things neatly boxed in their individual categories, are not comfortable with this kind of ambiguity. Every year, I give the orientation on the situation of the Church in China to the AITECE teachers going to China to teach for the first time. I say to them, "If you can't stand ambiguity, don't get on the plane!" (Maheu, Betty Ann, Sister, MM, 2005, *The Catholic Church in China: Journey of Faith. An Update on the Catholic Church in China: 2005*, U.S. Catholic China Bureau website, June http://www.usccb.net/conference/conference21/Paper_BettyAnnMaheu13Jul05.pdf - Accessed 25 November 2008 – Attachment 6)

2. Would members be expected to have a baptism certificate?

One source indicates that a person who belongs to an 'unregistered church' may not possess a baptism certificate:

During a 4 June 2004 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Cardinal Kung Foundation stated that there are no standardized baptismal certificates within underground Catholic churches in China nor are baptismal certificates issued as a matter of course. Instead, if a baptismal certificate were requested at the time of baptism, the priest might issue an informal document that would most likely be written in Chinese (ibid) (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2004, *CHN42650.E – China: Whether underground Catholic Churches issue baptismal certificates; if so, in what language*, 8 June http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=416315 – Accessed 1 August 2008 – Attachment 7)

3. What relationship do these groups have to the official Catholic Church in Rome?

Please refer to 'Freedom of Religion: A report with a special emphasis on the right to choose religion and registration systems' 2001, *Forum 18* website. February, pp. 29-30.

<http://www.forum18.org/PDF/freedomofreligion.pdf> – Accessed 19 March 2007 (Attachment 5) and Maheu, Betty Ann, Sister, MM, 2005, '*The Catholic Church in China: Journey of Faith. An Update on the Catholic Church in China: 2005*', U.S. Catholic China Bureau website, June

http://www.usccb.net/conference/conference21/Paper_BettyAnnMaheu13Jul05.pdf - Accessed 25 November 2008 (Attachment 6) for detailed analyses of this issue.

A relevant Research Response is attached (RRT Research and Information Services Research 2007, *Research Response CHN31675*, 7 May. (Q 1) - Attachment 9).

4. What relationship do they have to the official Catholic Church in China?

Betty Ann Maheu indicates that the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association is not a church:

“China does not have a patriotic Catholic church. There is a Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which is political organization set up by the Party to monitor and direct the activity of the open church. The Association operates under the United Front and the Religious Affairs Bureau at the local levels and the State Administration of Religious Affairs on the national level.” (Maheu, Betty Ann, Sister, MM, 2005, '*The Catholic Church in China: Journey of Faith. An Update on the Catholic Church in China: 2005*', U.S. Catholic China Bureau website, June

http://www.usccb.net/conference/conference21/Paper_BettyAnnMaheu13Jul05.pdf - Accessed 25 November 2008 – Attachment 6)

The following article highlights the problems that unregistered churches can encounter in the course of their dealings with the monitoring agency:

At the conclusion of the Vatican meeting on the Church in China, faithful of the official and underground Church point their finger at the violence, suppression and persecution of the AP, which puts at risk the efforts of the Holy See to reconcile the Church in China...

“The greatest obstacle in diplomatic relations between the Vatican and China in the omnipresence of the Patriotic Association (Ap). It is also the most serious problem for the life of the Church, because it risks corrupting the dogmatic fundamentals of Catholicism. The Vatican must seek to neutralize it”: Catholics from the official and underground Church tell AsiaNews .

Ideological control

Founded on August 2nd 1957, with the aim of mediating between the ideals of the Party and the Catholic Church, the AP has taken a lethal stranglehold of the life of Chinese communities.

With over 3 thousand secretaries, vice secretaries, chief officials and many more local officials the AP is able to control and dominate the small group of circa. 5 million official Catholics, thus preventing that any step by the Church escapes their notice: they nominate bishops, they “advise” the bishops on parish appointments, they decide who can teach seminarians; they evaluate vocations male and female for the entrance to seminaries and convents; they superintend diocesan administration.

Their “ideological” control is more or less total. “When something happens in a diocese or in a parish – says a Catholic from Northern China – the AP secretary does not advise the Bishop first, but his provincial and regional bosses. They organize a meeting to see what to do and

how to face the question and *then* they communicate the problem and the solution to the Bishop”. Thanks to their alert vigilance, seminarians receive a supplementary lesson on the Party’s religious policies each month and they are tested each time to verify whether they have assimilated the lesson.

...

In the last decades, many Bishops from the official Church have recognised their ambiguous situation and have secretly asked the Pope’s forgiveness, reconciling themselves with the Holy See and belonging to the AP in name only. Thanks to a more frequent communication with China – and a certain détente with the Chinese government – the Holy See even succeeded in having bishops chosen by her elected. But the situation is rather precarious, as is proven by the recent illicit ordinations which took place last year. At least 45 dioceses (out of 97) of the official Church are without a bishop or with elderly bishops. If the AP proceeds with a series of quick ordinations it risks creating a parallel Church, destroying the efforts of reconciliation carried out by the Vatican in these years.

Underground Catholics arrested by the AP

The AP is also the cause of the persecutions. In China, all Catholics who refuse AP control meet in place that are not recognised by the Government, with priests who are not registered and Bishops tied to the Holy See, but not recognised by the ministry for Religious Affairs.

According to a retired member of the Ministry, “the members of the AP reveal the places of the underground communities; they lead the police there and insist on the arrest of the non official Catholics”.

...

Some official bishops confirm that there has been a hardening in AP ideology in recent years. It is due above all to the fact that “the most part of secretaries are not Catholic, but atheist, among the most radical members of the Party whose scope is to destroy all religions or at least closely control them”.

The AP only obstacle between the Holy See and China

This hardening is noted in the increased persecution of the underground communities and the tighter control of the official communities. According to Catholics interviewed by *AsiaNews*, the motive is found in the small advances in dialogue between China and the Vatican. “The AP – they say – is now the only real obstacle in the way of re-establishing diplomatic relations between Rome and Beijing. This is why they block every step taken by the Government and suggest that there is no need for relations with the Holy See because China is strong and powerful. The Vatican must try to push for the neutralization of this organisation”.

Even the recent illicit ordinations are seen as a “stumbling block” in the way of the détente between Beijing and the Holy See.

Another element which increases tension is the increase in believers faithful to the Pope and the Catholic Church, and who increasingly despise the AP. This contempt is fed by the scandals surrounding members of the AP and Ministry for Religious Affairs who in the course of the years have taken possession of diocesan property and land. According to Chinese law, following the seizure of the Cultural Revolution, this property should be restored to the Catholic Church. Instead the “controllers” of the Church have signed the property over to themselves, sold them or transformed them into Hotels, pocketing the profits. According to data of the *Holy Spirit Study Centre* in Hong Kong, profits illegally pocketed by the AP and ministry amount to 130 billion Yuan (circa 13 billion Euro) (Cervellera, Bernardo, 2007, ‘Chinese Catholics: The Patriotic Association is the real obstacle to China-Vatican relations’, Asia News website, 20 January

<http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=8286&size=A> – Attachment 10)

In December 2007, a new Bishop was ordained in the Guangdong Province:

The Catholic diocese of Guangzhou ordained Joseph Gan as the new bishop of the capital of southern China's Guangdong Province, China's state-sanctioned Catholic church confirmed Tuesday.

Liu Bainian, vice chairman of the state-sanctioned China Catholic Patriotic Association, told Kyodo News that Gan has served the Guangzhou diocese for a long time and was elected bishop by many votes.

"The foreign press reported that (the Vatican) has agreed to Gan's ordination," Liu said.

"We would not know for sure as China does not have official ties with the Vatican, but if it was true, (the approval) would be beneficial to restoring the severed ties," he said.

On whether more bishops are to be ordained in other Chinese dioceses, Liu said decisions are to be made by individual dioceses and declined to comment further.

The Vatican-affiliated AsiaNews website said Gan pledged his allegiance to the Pope after his election in late 2006 and that "the delay in celebrating the ordination is due to the obstructionism of the Patriotic Association, which tries to impose its own bishops without the consent of the Vatican." ('China ordains Vatican-approved bishop' 2007, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 4 December – Attachment 11)

Another source confirms that his ordination was delayed because of government interference:

Before imparting his final blessing on the faithful, Msgr. Gan recalled that the Church is "one, holy Catholic and Apostolic". A "massive" delegation of police agents and members of the Patriotic Association present at the ceremony, to keep an eye on the faithful gathered in the Sacred Heart Cathedral. The Bishop's embrace of the only foreigners present

...

The Catholic Church, even in China is "one holy Catholic and apostolic". It was underlined by the new archbishop of Guangzhou, Msgr. Joseph Gan Junqiu, and minutes before he gave his parting blessing to the faithful who had gathered in Sacred Heart Cathedral to participate in his ordination.

...

The solemn mass took place this morning in the "House of Stone", the great cathedral that lies in the centre of the city. Press and faithful from other diocese were not allowed attend due to "lack of space". About 900 people participated, each given an admission pass with the number of the pew assigned to them as well as their position within the same pew.

A "massive" police presence as well as members of the Patriotic Association of Chinese Catholics [PA, a government organism not recognised by the Holy See, which interferes in the life of the church and tries to impose its own bishops on diocese without Vatican consensus ed], were there, "to keep an eye on all of the people gathered in the square for the duration of the mass".

Despite this climate, Msgr. Gan took advantage of the moment in which the congregation exchanged the sign of peace to come down from the altar, leave the cathedral and make his way to a room close by the Church, where other Catholics were following the mass via a giant screen. There he embraced the only foreigners who were present in a sign of communion with the Universal Church.

Catholics from the Archdiocese of Guangzhou place a lot of hope in their new pastor. They tell AsiaNews, that he "has an open heart and mind and is held in high esteem by many people. He does not love compromise, but he knows how to find balance there where it is often difficult to put tolerance into practise. All of this costs him dearly and shows his deep love for his people and for the Church, which is universal. We have been without a pastor for far too long and this grace from God has made us very, very happy".

Msgr. Gan was elected archbishop in November 2006. Immediately after his election, he received Holy See approval and communicated this to the local faithful. Thanks to the obstructionism of the PA who did not view this public declaration of loyalty to the Pope

kindly, his ordination was blocked until today ('New Archbishop of Guangzhou: Also in China the Church is One and Catholic' 2007, Monitor China website, 12 April http://www.monitorchina.org/english_site/document_details.php?id=5155 – Accessed 26 November 2008 – Attachment 12).

In Guangzhou – the provincial capital of Guangdong – renovation of the Sacred Heart Cathedral was carried out with the government meeting most of the costs:

After two years of renovation work, a solemn mass will inaugurate the building again. Local and provincial government officials will attend. Government money paid for most of the work. Known as the Stone House Church, it is mainland China's only granite Gothic church.

...

Guangzhou's historic Sacred Heart Cathedral, the only granite Gothic church in mainland China, is scheduled to reopen on February 9, after more than two years of renovation work, paid almost entirely from the coffers of the provincial Communist government.

...

The cathedral is located in downtown Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, and is commonly known as the Shishi or Stone House Church because its walls and pillars were built with large granite blocks. Over the years it has become a major point of interest for Chinese and foreign worshippers and tourists ('Guangzhou's Sacred Heart Cathedral to reopen tomorrow' 2007, Asia News website, 2 August - Accessed 26 November 2008 – Attachment 12).

5. Is there evidence that members of the underground Catholic Churches are ill-treated especially in Guangdong?

In recent times there have been reports of the following arrests in 2007:

Fr Zeng Zhongliang, rector of the Yujiang diocese seminary in Jiangxi (Central China), was arrested two days ago along with a seminarian, Wang Bin, during a visit to the southern province of Guangdong. Presently, both are being held in a prison in Yujiang.

The two were arrested a few days after the clergy of their diocese held a meeting organised by Father Zeng himself in the town of Fuzhou. The priest acted on behalf of the diocese's bishop, 85-year-old Mgr Thomas Zeng Jingmu, who has been under house arrest at the Bishop's Residence for quite some time.

Police agents raided the room where the meeting was held but found no one inside. They were however able to confirm that a meeting did indeed take place and so sought out its participants. One of them, Father Lei, was arrested on 17 November and released a few days ago ('People's Republic of China: Rector of Yujiang seminary arrested, he had organised a meeting of the diocesan clergy' 2007, Asia News website, 27 November – Attachment 14).

In 2006, two priests from the unregistered church were arrested:

Two clandestine priests arrested in Guangdong

Fr Shao Zhoumin and Fr Jiang Sunian, who had just returned from Europe, have already spent time in prison. AsiaNews sources in China said the release of the bishop of Zhengding, Mgr Jia, was decided "for fear of popular protests" and they warned that "he could be arrested again".

...

Police in the southern Guangdong province arrested two priests of China's unofficial church on 25 September as they were returning from a trip to Europe, said the Kung Foundation, a US-based organization lobbying for religious freedom in China.

...

The police apprehended Fr Shao Zhoumin, vicar general of Wenzhou diocese (in the eastern Zhejiang Province), and Fr Jiang Sunian, chancellor of the same diocese, without giving any reasons for their arrest. Both priests were arrested at 7pm, three hours after they landed in Shenzhen, while they were at the home of friends.

The police took away a large number of books and photos that the priests brought back from Europe. The place of their detention is unknown.

Both Fr Shao and Fr Jiang have already been imprisoned twice. The first time was in 1999. Later, Fr Shao was admitted to hospital with urgency to be treated for a sickness contracted during his imprisonment and was released. In November of the same year, Fr Jiang was apprehended for illegally publishing 120,000 hymn books and was formally arrested on 23 December. He was sentenced to six years in prison and a fine of 270,000 yuan, but he was released on Christmas day of 2003 ('Two clandestine priests arrested in Guangdong' 2006, Asia News website, 30 September <http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=7353> – Accessed 27 November 2008 – Attachment 15)

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Immigration and Refugee Board Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) website <http://www.hrw.org/>

Topic Specific Links

Zenit www.zenit.org

Asianews <http://www.asianews.it/>

The Cardinal Kung Foundation <http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/>

Catholic Online www.catholic.org

U.S. Catholic China Bureau <http://www.usccb.net/>

Monitor China www.monitorchina.org

Search Engines

AlltheWeb search engine <http://www.alltheweb.com/>

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

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Yahoo search engine <http://search.yahoo.com>

Copernic search engine

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

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