

B. Hoster, D. Kuhlmann, Z. Wesołowski (eds.)

---

扎根于望遠中

馬雷凱教授六十五壽辰紀念文集



**Rooted in Hope**  
**In der Hoffnung**  
**verwurzelt**

Festschrift in Honor of Roman Malek S.V.D.  
on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday

Festschrift für Roman Malek S.V.D.  
zu seinem 65. Geburtstag

Volume 2

---

MONUMENTA SERICA MONOGRAPH SERIES LXVIII/2

---

MONUMENTA SERICA MONOGRAPH SERIES  
LXVIII/2

Editor: ZBIGNIEW WESOŁOWSKI S.V.D.  
Sankt Augustin

---

Rooted in Hope / In der Hoffnung verwurzelt  
Festschrift in Honor of / Festschrift für  
Roman Malek S.V.D.

Edited by / Herausgegeben von:  
BARBARA HOSTER, DIRK KUHLMANN, ZBIGNIEW WESOŁOWSKI S.V.D.

Volume 2



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

MONUMENTA SERICA MONOGRAPH SERIES

—LXVIII/2—

# **Rooted in Hope**

**China – Religion – Christianity**

# **In der Hoffnung verwurzelt**

**China – Religion – Christentum**

Festschrift in Honor of  
Festschrift für

**Roman Malek S.V.D.**

on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday  
zu seinem 65. Geburtstag

**Volume 2**

Edited by  
Herausgegeben von

BARBARA HOSTER

DIRK KUHLMANN

ZBIGNIEW WESOŁOWSKI S.V.D.

Institut Monumenta Serica • Sankt Augustin

**Sumptibus Societatis Verbi Divini (S.V.D.)**

Cover: Chinese Calligraphy: 扎根于望德中—马雷凯教授六十五寿辰纪念文集,  
by Ren Dayuan 任大援

Copy Editors: BARBARA HOSTER, DIRK KUHLMANN, ZBIGNIEW WESOŁOWSKI S.V.D.

English Language Editor: DANIEL BAUER S.V.D.

Cover and Layout: JOZEF BIŠTUŤ S.V.D.

Monumenta Serica Institute  
Arnold-Janssen-Str. 20  
53757 Sankt Augustin, Germany  
Fax: +49-2241-237-486  
E-mail: institut@monumenta-serica.de  
www.monumenta-serica.de

First published 2017  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2017 Monumenta Serica Institute

The right of Barbara Hoster, Dirk Kuhlmann and Zbigniew Wesolowski S.V.D.  
to be identified as authors of the editorial material, and of the authors  
for their individual chapters, has been asserted by them in accordance  
with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any  
form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented,  
including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system,  
without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks,  
and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*  
A catalog record for this book has been requested.

ISBN: 978-1-138-71805-0 (hbk)  
ISBN: 978-1-315-16392-5 (ebk)  
ISBN: 978-1-138-71808-1 (Set, vols. 1 & 2)  
ISSN 0179-261X

Typeset by Monumenta Serica Institute

# TABLE OF CONTENTS / INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

## Volume 2 / Band 2

XI-XVI List of Abbreviations / Abkürzungsverzeichnis

### Christianity in Today's China / Christentum im heutigen China

- 433-466** Rediscovering Christian Life in China during Crucial Years (1978–1983). In Honour of Roman Malek  
Die Neuentdeckung christlichen Lebens in China in den wichtigen Jahren von 1978–1983. Zu Ehren von Roman Malek  
ANGELO S. LAZZAROTTO P.I.M.E.
- 467-480** Updating the China Mission. Guided by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis  
Die Chinamission auf den neuesten Stand bringen unter Führung von Papst Benedikt XVI und Papst Franziskus  
JEROOM HEYNDRICKX C.I.C.M.
- 481-505** Fit for Religious Services? The Requirements on Religious Personnel in Today's China. With a Special Focus on the Official Protestant Churches  
Fit für religiöse Dienstleistungen? Die Anforderungen an religiöses Personal im heutigen China mit einem besonderen Fokus auf die offiziellen evangelischen Kirchen  
EVELINE WARODE

### Other Religions in China / Andere Religionen in China

- 509-526** The Textual Canonization of Guandi  
Die Entstehung des Schriftenkanons zu Guandi  
VINCENT GOOSSAERT
- 527-539** Islam and Confucianism. An Offering to Fr. Malek  
Islam und Konfuzianismus. P. Malek zugeeignet  
FRANÇOISE AUBIN
- 541-569** Der Einfluss der Urbanisierung auf die muslimischen Gemeinschaften in China im Spiegel chinesischer Fachzeitschriften  
The Influence of Urbanization on Muslim Communities in China as Reflected in Chinese Academic Journals  
KATHARINA WENZEL-TEUBER
- 571-596** Qianliyan und Shunfeng'er in *xiaoshuo* und anderen Texten der Yuan- und Ming-Zeit

Qianliyan und Shunfeng'er in *xiaoshuo* and Other Texts of the Yuan- and Ming-Period

RODERICH PTAK

- 597-605** Jews and Jewish Studies in China. Notes for a Bibliography  
 Juden und die Forschung über Judentum in China. Notizen für eine Bibliographie  
 PIER FRANCESCO FUMAGALLI

### **Chinese Language and Literature / Chinesische Sprache und Literatur**

- 609-616** Translating King David  
 Die Übersetzung der Geschichte von König David  
 IRENE EBER
- 617-647** Shandong Drum Songs of the Bible  
 Biblische Geschichten in Trommelgesängen aus Shandong  
 MONIKA MOTSCH
- 649-664** “Omnia Consummata sunt.” Xiang Peiliang’s Version of the Biblical Story of Jesus between Bethany and Gethsemane  
 „Omnia Consummata sunt“. Xiang Peiliangs Darstellung der biblischen Erzählung von Jesus auf dem Weg von Bethanien nach Gethsemane  
 MARIÁN GÁLIK
- 665-682** “A Fortunate Encounter.” Su Xuelin as a Chinese Catholic Writer  
 „Eine glückliche Begegnung“. Su Xuelin als chinesische Schriftstellerin und Katholikin  
 BARBARA HOSTER
- 683-711** „Erst jetzt wusste er, dass es keine einfache Sache war, an Gott zu glauben.“ Die Religion in der Gegenwartsliteratur Chinas  
 “Only then Did He Realize that It Is Not an Easy Thing to Believe in God.” Religion in Contemporary Chinese Literature  
 THOMAS ZIMMER
- 713-726** The Competitiveness of Modern Han-Chinese  
 Die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit des modernen Han-Chinesisch  
 LEOPOLD LEEB S.V.D.

### **Encounter of Cultures / Begegnung der Kulturen**

- 729-759** Buddhistische Malerei im mingzeitlichen Beijing. Begegnungen von Völkern und Kulturen im Spiegel der Kunst

Buddhist Painting in Ming-dynasty Beijing. Encounters of Peoples and Cultures as Reflected in Art

URSULA TOYKA

- 761-787** Communication and Exchange of Knowledge between West and East (17th and 18th c.). The Routes, Illustrated by the Case of the “Via Ostendana”  
Kommunikation und Wissenstransfer zwischen West und Ost im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Die Routen am Beispiel der „Via Ostendana“  
NOËL GOLVERS
- 789-809** 明清之际“西学汉籍”的文化意义  
Cultural Significance of the “Chinese Books on Western Learning” in Late Ming and Early Qing  
Die kulturelle Bedeutung „chinesischer Bücher über westliches Wissen“ am Ende der Ming- und zu Beginn der Qing-Dynastie  
ZHANG XIPING 张西平 – REN DAYUAN 任大援
- 811-844** Die Sammlung Kowalewski. Der erste europäische Katalog mongolischer, tibetischer, manjurischer und chinesischer Bücher (1834)  
The Kowalewski Collection. The First European Catalogue of Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and Chinese Books (1834)  
HARTMUT WALRAVENS
- 845-859** Die Neuvermessung einer alten Kultur. *Monumenta Serica* und die wissenschaftliche Beschäftigung mit China und seinen Nachbarn  
Remapping an Ancient Culture. *Monumenta Serica* and the Academic Research on China and Her Neighbours  
HELWIG SCHMIDT-GLINTZER
- 861-871** African Muslims and Christians and Their “Chinese Dream”  
Der „chinesische Traum“ von afrikanischen Muslimen und Christen  
PIOTR ADAMEK S.V.D.
- 873-887** The Mission of Multi-faceted Christianity in a Globalized World  
Die Mission eines vielfältigen Christentums in einer globalisierten Welt  
FRANZ GÜNTHER GESSINGER S.V.D.
- 889-899** Notes on Contributors
- 901-907** Appendix. Colored Illustrations from Ursula Toyka, “Buddhistische Malerei im mingzeitlichen Beijing. Begegnungen von Völkern und Kulturen im Spiegel der Kunst”

## List of Illustrations and Tables / Verzeichnis der Abbildungen und Tabellen

Cover Volume 2: Chinese Calligraphy: 扎根于望德中—马雷凯教授六十五寿辰纪念文集, by Ren Dayuan 任大援

- 481-505** Fit for Religious Services? The Requirements on Religious Personnel in Today's China. With a Special Focus on the Official Protestant Churches  
EVELINE WARODE  
p. 482: Diagram 1: Clergy/laity ratios of Kaifeng and Nanyang. Source: Compare data as quoted in Duan Qi 2013, p. 254; Wenzel-Teuber 2014, p. 31  
p. 483: Diagram 2: Attendance at religious activities. Source: Compare data of CFPS 2012 as quoted in Lu Yunfeng 2014, p. 23
- 527-539** Islam and Confucianism. An Offering to Fr. Malek  
FRANÇOISE AUBIN  
p. 534: Table: The Three Levels of the Knowledge of God
- 541-569** Der Einfluss der Urbanisierung auf die muslimischen Gemeinschaften in China im Spiegel chinesischer Fachzeitschriften  
KATHARINA WENZEL-TEUBER  
p. 559: Tabelle: Muslimische Gebetsteilnehmer in Shanghai nach Gruppen. (Ge Zhuang 2011, S. 152, Tabelle 1. Zahlen: Islamische Vereinigung Shanghai.)
- 617-647** Shandong Drum Songs of the Bible  
MONIKA MOTSCH  
p. 642: Fig. 1. Drum Song *The Great Flood* by Fei Jinbiao  
Fig. 2. Latin imprimatur for *The Great Flood*  
p. 643: Fig. 3. The scene "I am the Angel" in Drum Song *The Great Flood*  
Fig. 4. Advertisement of the Yanzhou Press for Fei Jinbiao  
p. 644: Fig. 5. *Fabiola* by Cardinal Wiseman (New York 1886)  
Fig. 6. Chinese Drumsong of *Fabiola* by Fei Jinbiao  
p. 645: Fig. 7. *Valeria* by de Waal (Regensburg 1884)  
Fig. 8. The Chinese *Valeria*, ed. Fr. Röser  
p. 646: Fig. 9. *The Filial Son*, ed. Fr. Stenz  
Fig. 10. *The Black Prince*, ed. Fr. Stenz  
p. 647: Fig. 11. The Nonni Fountain in Cologne  
Fig. 12. The Chinese *Iceland Boys* of Jón Svensson
- 713-726** The Competitiveness of Modern Han-Chinese  
LEOPOLD LEEB S.V.D.  
p. 713: "Yan: Goutong" 言: 沟通 (Word: Communication). Drawing by Leopold Leeb in: Lei Libo 雷立柏, *Xifangren kan Hanzi de aomiao. Han-Ying duizhao* 西方人看汉字的奥妙—汉英对照. *How a Westerner Sees the Mysteries of Chinese Characters* (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 2012, p. 13)

**729-759** Buddhistische Malerei im mingzeitlichen Beijing. Begegnungen von Völkern und Kulturen im Spiegel der Kunst

URSULA TOYKA

- p. 901: Abb. 1: „Vajranairātmyā-Maṇḍala“, datiert 1479, 151 x 99,1 cm, Gouache mit Gold auf präparierter Baumwolle, Peabody Museum, Salem, E. 61-1911. © 2009 Peabody Essex Museum. Photograph by Jeffrey R. Dykes
- p. 902: Abb. 2: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, datiert 1479, 153 x 102 cm, Gouache mit Gold auf präparierter Baumwolle, Verbleib unbekannt
- p. 903: Abb. 3: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Buddha Vajradhara  
Abb. 4: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Bodhisattva Saḍakṣarilokeśvara
- p. 904: Abb. 5: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Buddha Vairocana mit *thathāgata-mudrā*  
Abb. 6: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Bodhisattva Ratnapaṇi  
Abb. 7: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Bodhisattva Vajrapaṇi  
Abb. 8: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Schutzgottheit Bhairava
- p. 905: Abb. 9: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Schutzgottheit Prañjara Mahākāla  
Abb. 10: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Schutzgottheit Kuro Mahākāla  
Abb. 11: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Segnender Bodhisattva auf der rechten Bildseite  
Abb. 12: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Segnender Bodhisattva auf der linken Bildseite
- p. 906: Abb. 13: „Tausendarmige Guanyin“, Meister des Fahai si (Wan Fuqing, Wang Shu *et al.*) zugeschrieben, Mitte 15. Jh., Farben mit Tusche und Gold auf Seide, Gesamtmaße 223 x 117 cm (87 13/16 x 46 1/16 inches), Bildmaße 139 x 81 cm (54 3/4 x 31 7/8 inches), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Special Chinese and Japanese Fund, Inv. No. 06.1902, Photograph © 2016 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- p. 907: Abb. 14: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: 1479 datierte Stiftungsinschrift „Am 15. Tag des 4. Monats im 15. Jahr (der Ära) Chenghua der Großen Ming gestiftet“



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACMR	Archivio della Congregazione della Missione – Roma
AFH	<i>Archivum Franciscanum Historicum</i>
AHSI	<i>Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu</i>
AIHS	<i>Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences</i>
AM	<i>Asia Major</i>
Annotationes	„G.W. Leibniz, <i>Annotationes de cultu religioneque Sinensium</i> “, in: <i>Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois</i> , S. 265-270. See under <i>Discours</i>
AOV	<i>Acta Orientalia Vlnensia</i>
AP	<i>Asian Philosophy</i>
APF	Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, Rome
APF, SOCP	Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide: Scritture originali della congregazioni particolari
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
AS/EA	<i>Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques</i>
BA	Bundesarchiv
BEFEO	<i>Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient</i>
BHStA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (München)
BM	<i>Bibliotheca Missionum</i> , vols. 1, 4, 5, 7. Freiburg 1963, 1929–1932.
BMFEA	<i>Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BUAR	KU Leuven, Universiteitsarchieff: OU/G/D 126/3
BVE	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II (Rome)
CAFFC	Chinese Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCC	China Christian Council
CCCM	Centro Científico e Cultural de Macao
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPA	Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association
Chh	<i>China heute</i>
China-Korrespondenz	G.[ottfried] W.[ilhelm] Leibniz, <i>Der Briefwechsel mit den Jesuiten in China (1689–1714)</i> , herausgegeben und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Rita Widmaier. Textherstellung und Übersetzung von Malte-Ludolf Babin. Französisch/lateinisch – deutsch (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2006)

- Clark *Bibliographies of Mongolian, Manchu-Tungus, and Tibetan Dictionaries*. Compiled by Larry V. Clark, John R. Krueger, Manfred Taube, Hartmut Walravens, Michael L. Walter. *Orientalistik, Bibliographien und Dokumentationen* 20 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005)
- CPF Congregationis de Propaganda Fide
- CPPCC Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
- CRep *The Chinese Repository*
- CT *Collectanea Theologica* (Warszawa)
- CWME Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
- Dehergne Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Roma et al.: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1973)
- Discours G.W. Leibniz, *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*. Mit einem Anhang: Nicolas Longobardi, *Traité sur quelques points de la religion des Chinois*, Antoine de Sainte Marie, *Traité sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine*, Leibniz, *Annotationes de cultu religioneque Sinensium*, [et al.]. Hrsg. und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Wenchao Li und Hans Poser (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002)
- DZ *Daozang* 道藏
- EBA Erfgoedbibliotheek Antwerpen
- EIC East India Company
- FABC Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences
- FR Pasquale M. d'Elia (ed.), *Fonti Ricciane*, 3 vols. (Roma: La Libreria dello Stato, 1942–1949)
- GP Carl Immanuel Gerhardt (Hrsg.), *Die philosophischen Schriften von G.W. Leibniz*, Bde. I–VII (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–1890; Neudruck: Hildesheim 1960–1961)
- GWLB Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek
- HCC 1 Nicolas Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China I: 635–1800*, *Handbook of Oriental Studies Section 4: China*, 15/1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001)
- HCC 2 Rolf G. Tiedemann (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume Two: 1800–Present*. *Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 4: China* 15/2. *Handbuch der Orientalistik, Abt. 4: China*, 15/2 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2010)
- Heissig Walther Heissig (mit Klaus Sagaster), *Mongolische Handschriften, Blockdrucke, Landkarten*; mit 16 Lichtdrucktafeln. *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* 1 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1961)
- HJAS *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*

- HWP* *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, herausgegeben von Joachim Ritter, Karl Gründer *et al.*, 13 Bde. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971–2007).
- ICI Italian-Chinese Institute
- Inc. Incipit (first words of a document)
- j.* *juan* 卷
- JA* *Journal Asiatique*
- Jachontov – Walravens  
K.S. Jachontov – H. Walravens, *Katalog der mandjurischen Handschriften und Blockdrucke in den Sammlungen der Bibliothek der Orientalischen Fakultät der Sankt-Petersburger Universität*. Aus dem russischen Manuskript übersetzt und herausgegeben. Orientalistik, Bibliographien und Dokumentationen 14 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001)
- JAH* *Journal of Asian History*
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- Jap. Sin. Japonica et Sinica in ARSI
- JAS* *Journal of Asian Studies*
- JCP* *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*
- JCR* *Journal of Chinese Religions*
- Jinian liu wei guoji zhujiao*  
Furen daxue Tianzhujiao shi yanjiu zhongxin 輔仁大學天主教史研究中心 (ed.), *Jinian liu wei guoji zhujiao zhusheng qishi zhounian wo guo jianli shengtongzhi wushi zhounian ji Tian gong Gengxin jinsheng shuji wushi zhounian xueshu yantao huiyi* 紀念六位國籍主教祝聖七十週年我國建立聖統制五十週年暨田公耕莘晉陞樞機五十週年學術研討會議 (*Symposium in Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the Consecration of the First Six Native Chinese Bishops and the Elevation to the Cardinalate of Thomas Tien SVD and the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Roman Catholic Hierarchy in China, May 9–10, 1997*) (Taipei: Chengban, 1997)
- JRAS* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
- JY* (*Chongkan*) *Daozang jiyao* (重刊) 道藏輯要, 1906 (electronic version: <http://www.kanripo.org/dzjy/texts/dzjy>)
- KBR Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (Brussels)
- KPCh Kommunistische Partei Chinas
- KSB* *Kalendarz Stowa Bożego*
- LAA* *Leibniz-Akademie-Ausgabe. Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, hrsg. von der Preußischen [später Deutschen, zuletzt: Berlin-Brandenburgischen] Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen (Darmstadt [später: Leipzig, zuletzt: Berlin] 1923ff.)

- Lebbe I,II,III* Recueil des Archives Vincent Lebbe: *Pour l'église chinoise. I. La visite apostolique des missions de Chine 1919–20.* Introduction et notes par Cl[au]de Soetens, (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de la Faculté de Théologie, 1982). *II. Une Nonciature à Pékin en 1918?* Introduction et notes par Cl[au]de Soetens, (*ibid.* 1983). *III. L'encyclique Maximum illud.* Introduction et notes par Cl[au]de Soetens (*ibid.* 1983)
- LEC* M. Louis Aimé-Martin (ed.), *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses concernant l'Asie, l'Afrique et l'Amérique, avec quelques relations nouvelles des missions, et des notes géographiques et historiques* (Paris: Paul Daffis Libraire-Éditeur, 1875–1877)
- Lettre* *Lettre sur la philosophie chinoise à Nicolas de Rémond*, in: G.W. Leibniz, *Zwei Briefe über das binäre Zahlensystem und die chinesische Philosophie*, franz./dt., aus dem Urtext neu ediert, übersetzt und kommentiert von Renate Loosen und Franz Vonessen (Stuttgart: Belser, 1968), S. 39-132
- Longobardi, *Traité*  
 “Nicolas Longobardi, *Traité sur quelques points de la religion des Chinois*,” in: *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, S. 113-156. See under *Discours*
- LThK* *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, hrsg. von Joseph Höfer und Karl Rahner, Bd. 1-10, 2. Aufl. (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1957–1965). Bd. 1-11, 3. Aufl. (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1993–2001)
- MEP* Missions Etrangères de Paris
- MSMS* Monumenta Serica Monograph Series
- MZWX* *Mazu wenxian shiliao huibian* 媽祖文獻史料彙編, hrsg. von Zheng Lihang 鄭麗航, Jiang Weitan 蔣維鈞 *et al.*, several series, various places and publishers
- Novissima Sinica*  
 G.W. Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica (1697). Das Neueste von China*, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Heinz-G. Nesselrath und Herman Reinbothe (Köln 1979), aktualisierter Nachdruck von Gregor Paul und Adolf Grünert (München: Judicium Verlag, 2010)
- NPC* National People's Congress
- NTR* *Nanjing Theological Review / Jinling shenxue zhi* 金陵神學志
- NZM* *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*
- OE* *Oriens Extremus*
- OS* Pietro Tacchi Venturi (ed.), *Opere storiche del P. M. Ricci*, 2 vols. (Macerata: Filippo Giorgetti, 1911–1913)
- PAAA* Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes in Berlin
- PEW* *Philosophy East and West*

- PIBA            Prosopographia Iesuitica Belgica Antiqua
- P.I.M.E.        Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere
- PLB            Walther Heissig, *Die Pekinger lamaistischen Blockdrucke*. Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1954)
- PRC            People's Republic of China
- QTS            *Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan* 中國第一歷史檔案館 (ed.), *Qing zhong qianqi Xiyang Tianzhujiào zài Huà huódòng dang'an shìliào* 清中前期西洋天主教在華活動檔案史料 (Historical Materials on the Activities in China of Catholicism in the Early Qing) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003)
- Sainte Marie, *Traité*  
                   "Antoine de Sainte Marie, *Traité sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine*," in: *Discours*, S. 157-206
- Sazykin        A.G. Sazykin, *Katalog mongol'skich rukopisej i ksilografov Instituta Vostokovedenija Akademii Nauk SSSR*. Tom 1 (Moskva: Nauka, 1988)
- SCR            "Succincta chronologica relatio et historia Missionis Sinensis conscripta a R.P Kiliano Stumpf Missionario Sinensi et in Europam missa mense Octobri 1710. Dedicatoria ad Sanctos Angelos super remedio conservandæ Missionis Sinicæ"
- SF              *Sinica Franciscana*
- SWCRJ         *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal*
- Taube          Manfred Taube: *Tibetische Handschriften und Blockdrucke*. Bd. 1-4 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1966)
- Théodicée, Discours*  
                   *Essais de Théodicée, Discours de la conformité de la foi avec la raison*, in: *GP VI*, S. 45-101.
- TF              *Tianfeng* 天風 (中国基督教杂志) / *Tianfeng: The Magazine of the Protestant Churches in China*
- TP              *T'oung Pao*
- TSPM          Three-Self Patriotic Movement
- Uspensky      *Catalogue of Mongolian Manuscripts and Xylographs in the St. Petersburg State University Library*. Compiled by Vladimir Uspensky, with assistance from Osamu Inoue. Edited and foreword by Tatsuo Nakami (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1999)
- Visschers     Pieter Jozef Visschers, *Onuitgegeven brieven van eenige paters der Sociëteit van Jesus [sic], Missionarissen in China, van de 17e en 18e eeuw, met aantekeningen [sic]* (Arnhem: Witz, 1857)
- VOC            Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie
- VR              Volksrepubliek

- WCC World Council of Churches
- YTS Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan 中國第一歷史檔案館 (ed.), *Yongzheng chao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* 雍正朝漢文朱批奏摺彙編 (A Compilation of Chinese Language Vermillion Rescripted Memorials from the Court of the Yongzheng Emperor) (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989).
- YXYX *Yuzhi Xiaojing yanyi xu* 御製孝經衍義序 (Imperial Preface to “Expanded Explications of the *Classic of Filial Piety*”) in: Ye Fang'ai 葉方藹 – Zhang Ying 張英 (eds.), *Siku quanshu. Zi bu rujia lei* 四庫全書—子部儒家類
- YZM Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan 中國第一歷史檔案館 (ed.), *Yongzheng chao Manwen zhupi zouzhe quan yi* 雍正朝滿文朱批奏摺全譯 (A Complete Translation of the Manchu Language Secret Memorials with Vermilion Endorsement of the Yongzheng Period) (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1998)
- ZDMG *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
- ZMATK *Zeszyty Misjologiczne ATK* (Warszawa)
- ZMR *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*

**Christianity in Today's China**  
**Christentum im heutigen China**

今日中國基督宗教



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# REDISCOVERING CHRISTIAN LIFE IN CHINA DURING CRUCIAL YEARS (1978–1983)

IN HONOUR OF ROMAN MALEK\*

ANGELO S. LAZZAROTTO

*I feel it my duty to honour Roman Malek. On the occasion of my 85th birthday, the Festschrift Light a Candle – Encounters and Friendship with China, edited by Roman Malek and Gianni Criveller, proved a sign of shared friendship and a gift beyond any expectation.*

*Sadly, on that 14 May 2010, Father Roman could not join the family gathering held at the P.I.M.E. Cultural Centre in Milan. He had to hurry home, to Poland, because the health of his mother was deteriorating. And for several months thereafter, he kept travelling back and forth between his home town and Sankt Augustin, anxious to keep up with his duties at the Monumenta Serica Institute.*

*The stress proved beyond his generous determination. The Risen Christ, in His mysterious ways, was asking Father Roman to continue his missionary endeavour for China while carrying a heavy cross.*

*May the solidarity of so many friends and their prayers give him strength, confirming that he is always present among us with his example and enthusiasm.*

*In this spirit, I am happy and honoured to have the opportunity to add my little voice to the choir of appreciation, on the 65th birthday of Father Roman.*

A.S.L.

## 1. A New Chance for the Chinese people

I visited Mainland China for the first time in May 1978, a year of transition, heavy with untold sufferings and unexpressed hopes. The political scene was difficult to assess. Soon after the death of Mao Zedong (September 1976), China was shocked by the arrest of the “Gang of Four” headed by Mao’s powerful wife Jiang Qing. The following public trial allowed the world to know something of the atrocities perpetrated during the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), which had been acclaimed as a triumph of Mao Zedong’s leadership. The Eleventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) held in mid-1977 chose Hua Guofeng as leader, confirming that a new day was dawning for the People’s Republic of China (PRC), but nobody dared to guess how the country would develop. Deng Xiaoping, recalled once more to join the leading group, was made head of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Feb-

---

\* N.B.: The following notes should not be expected to give full cover to the slow re-emerging and development of the Chinese Church after the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution. They simply represent a personal impression and commentary to the official history.

ruary 1978, originally created by the Party's United Front to co-opt non-communist sectors of Chinese society to fight Japanese invasion. Such a Consultative Conference, disregarded for thirteen years as a useless infrastructure, was convened to support the legislators at the Fifth National Assembly of the People. The international press stressed the unexpected participation, among the 1,989 delegates of the resurrected CPPCC, of 16 representatives of "religious circles."<sup>1</sup> It was such marginal news item that prompted me to look around for a way to enter the PRC, curious to understand what was really happening there in regard with religions.<sup>2</sup> What could be expected, after the protracted radical efforts to destroy all "superstitious beliefs" among the people? As a matter of fact, the fate of Chinese Christianity was discussed in recent years at some ecumenical meetings in Europe, jointly sponsored by the Lutheran Federation and the Catholic "Pro Mundi Vita" Centre. In the specific group "Catholics in Europe concerned with China" (formed in Bruges in autumn 1976), we were anxious to know more about the new opening.

The meaning of the event was far from clear.<sup>3</sup> On 5 March, the Fifth National People's Congress (NPC) approved a new Constitution of the Country. Many abnormalities imposed by the Cultural Revolution were amended, but the sentence touching on religion was repeated as before: "Citizens enjoy freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion and to propagate atheism"; only it was made into a separate article (No. 46). Yet things were changing: the *Renmin ribao* (12 and 13 March 1978) revealed that since the downfall of the "Gang of Four" over ten thousand citizens and leaders had been rehabilitated in Shanghai (but no religious people were mentioned). An encouraging sign seemed to be also the re-organization of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), with one of its ten research institutes studying world religions (Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity). But at a seminar held in Beijing in April Ren Jiyu, in charge of an institute interested in religions, stressed "the need to resolutely safeguard the atheistic theory of Marxism." Obviously, our attention centred mostly on the two Catholic prelates attending the CPPCC, Archbishop Pi Shushi of Mukden in Manchuria<sup>4</sup> and Bishop Zhang Jiashu of Shanghai.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In Paris, *Le Monde* (beginning of March 1978) carried a column on "La Chine et les religions." In Italy, most papers, like the lay weekly *Panorama* (14 March) amply commented the fact; even the communist daily *L'Unità* carried a detailed article (9 March), hinting at possible new developments between Beijing and the Vatican. The Catholic daily *Avvenire*, besides the specific news, dedicated a full page (on 24 March) to explain the difficult situation of the Church in China.

<sup>2</sup> The religious leaders mentioned by *Renmin ribao* included Daoists, Muslims, and Buddhists (the Panchen Lama and lay leader Zhao Puzhu); also two Catholics were mentioned, and among the Protestants the well known bishop Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting) from Nanjing.

<sup>3</sup> Curiously, the French edition of the semi-official magazine *Peking Information* (of March 1978) mentioned the expression "liberté de pratiquer la religion" (instead of "de croire"), with regard to the religious situation in China.

<sup>4</sup> Ignatius Pi Shushi, appointed in mid-1949 by Pope Pius XII, for some years was given as dead by the *Annuario Pontificio*. In the summer of 1957, summoned to attend the Confer-

Aware of the ambivalence of many signs coming from the PRC, I perceived the opportunity of entering the country thanks to Italian Senator Vittorino Colombo, a politician of the Christian Democratic Party. As a member of the Italian government, he worked for an early diplomatic *entente* of Italy with China, and was known for his endeavour to open dialogue with the Communist regime. Colombo was inspired by Giorgio La Pira, the charismatic Mayor of Florence, who did not hesitate to dialogue with leaders of the Soviet Block, when “cold war” seemed to be the only correct line for the free world. In early 1971, Senator Colombo established in Milano the “Italian-Chinese Institute for Economic and Cultural Relations” (ICI), and in November of that year, visiting China for the first time, he had the privilege of a long personal meeting with premier Zhou Enlai.<sup>6</sup> And on the following Sunday morning, as well known, he could attend Mass at the Southern church (Nantang), which remained since then the only venue accessible for worship (at least to foreigners) in the whole country. Senator Colombo made other journeys to China, always adding to his official duties a discreet but close attention to the cause of religious freedom. When I learned that in May 1978 Vittorino Colombo (then minister of Transportation and of Mercantile Marine) was to lead a new delegation to China, I wrote to him sharing my thoughts about the new situation emerging in Chinese society,<sup>7</sup> and he did not hesitate to add my name as a member of his staff, introducing me as his “religious adviser.” To my surprise, this rather strange designation was accepted by China and I was granted my first visa to the Mainland.

## 2. 1978: Mixed Feelings at the First Impact

Our official delegation and the accompanying groups of businessmen and technicians approached China via Hong Kong, reaching Guangzhou by train, and then boarding a plane for Shanghai in the afternoon of May 15, 1978. Unfortunately, Senator Colombo was not with us. He had to postpone his departure from Rome in order to attend the funeral service of Aldo Moro, the great Italian statesman killed by the Red Brigades just a few days earlier; he would reach the delegation in Beijing. The inviting Chinese Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CAFFC) offered us special attention, with several interpreters and escorts helping us; most of them had taken language courses also in Italy. The rich pro-

---

ence of Catholic Representatives, he was elected the president of the newly formed Catholic Patriotic Association. In such capacity, between 1958 and 1962 Pi Shushi presided over the illicit ordination of several new bishops imposed by the official government structures.

<sup>5</sup> The legitimate bishop of Shanghai Ignatius Gong Pinmei was arrested in September 1955 and condemned to life imprisonment in March 1960. Soon after, Jesuit priest Louis Zhang Jiashu was chosen by official religious structures to replace him. As Zhang’s episcopal ordination was considered illegal, his name did not appear in the *Annuario Pontificio*.

<sup>6</sup> Though well aware that all religious structures had disappeared due to the Cultural Revolution, Colombo expressed the desire, as a Christian, of attending Mass on Sunday.

<sup>7</sup> I had just written a short commentary (“Is the Church Re-emerging in China?”) in *Mondo e Missione* No. 9 (May 1978), pp. 334–336.

gramme offered to us included one day in the beautiful city of Suzhou, a visit to the Shanghai Communication University (Jiaotong daxue), to the model commune of Machao and to some factories. At the official receptions to greet the “Italian friends,” the “Gang of Four” was often referred to with contempt, while Mao Zedong’s leadership was openly upheld; but it was difficult to perceive the real feelings of the common people. If some of us happened to touch on religious topics, the usual answer of our escorts was that now people in China felt no need for religion ... At the request of Antonio Marzotto (also a member of the Italian Parliament), who was the acting chairman of the delegation, some of us were offered the opportunity to visit the Jade Buddha Temple, then still officially closed. We met there some old men who presented themselves as retired monks, performing daily prayers and burning incense for foreign visitors; we were told that the temple had not been damaged by the Red Guards and were shown the treasure of the monastery library: some 7,000 ancient Buddhist volumes.

A certain Mr. Gao, who was introduced to me as representing Catholic circles, kept significantly silent. Yu Quanxi, an interpreter of the Foreign Office who had been assigned to assist Senator Colombo, followed me with some interest in Shanghai: while professing to be an atheist, he was curious perhaps at my qualification as “religious advisor.” He had spent some years in Rome at the Commercial Office before the opening of the Beijing Embassy and spoke very good Italian. One day, while travelling together on a car we had a long discussion on religious freedom. As I happened to carry with me a printed copy of the Constitution approved two months earlier, I pointed to the unfair treatment reserved to believers, as article 46 stated: “freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion *and to propagate atheism*”: “What about freedom to propagate religion?” I asked. He had no answer to the question.

Antonio Marzotto, recalling that Senator Colombo would have liked to meet the Shanghai Catholic bishop who had attended the CPPCC in Beijing, made the same request. The answer was uncommitted till the last day, when just a few of us were told to wait before dinner in our rooms, at the Jinjiang Tower. We were taken then to a reserved hall where two tables had been arranged; soon after, an elderly man in ordinary dress was introduced as the Catholic bishop Zhang Jia-shu. Being seated next to him, I tried to put him at ease by adding some Latin sentence, but was told by the interpreter to use the Italian language that he would translate. The conversation went on without addressing any delicate topic. Bishop Zhang said that, considering his old age, he was allowed to stay with relatives, and that he had been taken by car to our hotel; he was glad to meet Italian friends coming to China, etc. We were also “allowed” to take some photos. At the end, Antonio Marzotto mentioned that we had some small presents to give to Bishop Zhang on behalf of Senator Colombo, and the three of us were taken to a separate room. While I reached out to collect the gifts, Marzotto recalled that among his sons he had also a priest presently working in Rome and asked bishop Zhang whether he had ordained any new priests in Shanghai; the answer was no; asked about other bishops in China, Zhang said he did not know how many there were ...

When I joined them, the bishop's escort was surprised to see that in fact our gifts were some Chinese books: the Vatican Council documents, the Mass liturgy and a copy of the Bible in Chinese. Mentioning that the Second Vatican Council was held over 20 years earlier in Rome, I explained that all the Council documents were available also in Chinese and that Catholics around the world could now celebrate Mass in the local languages. Bishop Zhang, who appeared in good health and alert, did not hide his surprise. When I added that I was taking to him the special greetings from the Jesuit Superior General in Rome, Bishop Zhang said that in his youth years the General (Ledochowski) was a Pole; then, while studying in Paris, he had a chance to meet with J.B. Janssens, the Belgian provincial who at the end of the war was elected General (and died in 1964). He had not heard of the present General, Pedro Arrupe and was glad to know that he had been a missionary in Japan. Mentioning that in Beijing we expected to attend Mass, I expressed the hope that soon also in Shanghai some churches could be reopened; he smiled, but gave no answer. While leaving the room, I was able to tell him: "*Etiam Summus Pontifex cogitat de vobis et orat pro vobis*" (The Pope also thinks of you and prays for you); he understood well and answered very clearly: "*Gratias, gratias ago!*" (Many thanks!). As we tried to accompany the bishop down, his "guardian" told us to remain behind; he then took the bag, saying that he would have a look at the books.

We were supposed to depart for Beijing in the early afternoon of 18 May, but our plane left with seven hours delay; transportation was obviously an aspect needing attention in the modernization of China. While sitting at the airport, I had a long chat with Mr. Gao, our "Catholic representative." When I happened to mention Bishop Gong Pinmei, at first he seemed not to understand; but then he burst out: "This man is a criminal!" I recalled that he was arrested with many of his priests and lay faithful in 1955 and then sentenced to life imprisonment in 1960: "But now, I added, also on account of his old age, his position might hopefully be re-considered: when in 1970 American bishop James Walsh was freed on humanitarian reasons, the world appreciated the gesture." He kept silent for a moment; then: "It is better you keep away from these matters! ..." And after a while, he added: "For us it is very uncomfortable to talk about such topics." I could only say: "Sorry!"

The next morning in Beijing, we were given a glimpse of the Temple of Heaven and the White Mongol Pagoda, as originally planned; in the afternoon a very competent and elegantly dressed Mrs. Wang introduced us to the treasures of the "Forbidden City." The dinner was offered to the Italian delegation by the Chinese Ministry of Postal Services. Back at the hotel, a few of us met in the room of Senator Colombo who had just reached the capital to assess the situation. He had been informed of the "privilege" granted to us in Shanghai of having dinner with Bishop Zhang Jiashu, "and even of having photos taken with him." Informed that Bishop Pi Shushi had just passed away, Colombo insisted to have a talk with a representative of the Beijing Church.

On Saturday 20 May, I accompanied Carlo M. Butti, director of the ICI, on a visit to the Foreign Languages Centre Guoji shudian, where new fields of coop-

eration were discussed. In the afternoon, Senator Colombo was entertained with a small delegation at the headquarter of the Chinese Association for Friendship. In the long and friendly conversation with the association's president, Wang Pingnan, Colombo explained that it was not easy to promote a positive perception of China in Italy, given the tendency of the so called "Eurocommunism" to privilege friendship with Russia rather than China. In mentioning the main areas of activity of the ICI, Colombo highlighted the cultural field, with the quarterly magazine *Mondo Cinese* started in 1973 and a positive presence in the academic world, particularly through Professor Piero Corradini and Professor Franco Demarchi.<sup>8</sup> The ICI was running courses of Chinese language and talks to explain specific aspects of life in China, sponsoring tourism to China with attention to prepare the participants to the impact of the ancient civilization. Thanks to a convention with the ministry of Postal services, the ICI could make Chinese stamps available in Italy. In cooperation with Italian firms, special courses were offered to visiting Chinese technicians, and Chinese artistic events were facilitated.

In thanking "our great Italian friend Vittorino Colombo," President Wang Pingnan underlined the philosophy of his CAFFC: "Pave the way to officiality through non-official work," adding that his Friendship Association entertained contacts with 64 countries. Though the ICI took inspiration from different ideological roots, it proved to be a sincere and steady friend of Communist China. This was remarkable, President Wang added, when we consider the other Italian friendship network, the Associazione Italia-Cina: they claim to have a socialist basis, but as a matter of fact have embraced the radical positions of the "Gang of Four" and are now in great difficulties ... In mentioning religious freedom, Wang Pingnan minimized the constitutional clause allowing "to propagate atheism": he saw in it a pragmatic recognition of the feelings of common people, who in the past suffered a lot without getting support from religion.

On Sunday morning, an ICI delegation went to the recently opened mausoleum of Mao Zedong, to lay a wreath on behalf of the Italian government. Then, after attending Mass at the Nantang church, Senator Colombo was led with a few of us to the clergy house next to the church, for a meeting with Bishop Yang Gaojian, who introduced himself as the bishop of Changde diocese (Hunan province) and vice secretary general of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA). He mentioned that the previous day he had gone to the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery to pay homage to the deceased bishop Pi Shushi, and noticed the presence also of members of the official government structures. The conversation, lasting over an hour in a friendly atmosphere, was translated by the interpreter Yu; some photos were taken. Pressed by Senator Colombo's specific questions, Yang Gaojian confessed that he had little information on the concrete

---

<sup>8</sup> Piero Corradini was teaching at the Macerata University, while Franco Demarchi, a priest, taught sociology at Trento University. Demarchi, who accompanied Senator Colombo in his first trip to China (1971), was asked to take the editorial responsibility of the new magazine *Mondo Cinese*. He also initiated a familiar association called *Ianua Coeli* (Gate of Heaven), to foster a "crusade of prayers" for China.

situation of the Chinese Church, on the number of bishops, priests etc. His own diocese, where the Augustinians from Spain first preached the Gospel, had some 5,000 Catholics and only five priests. As he stressed the principle of mutual independence of all bishops, he was questioned about the common faith in the leadership of the bishop of Rome as successor of St. Peter. From the point of view of China – Yang replied – the Chinese side was concerned with the role of the Pope as head of the Vatican State, with which Beijing had no diplomatic relations. This was an old problem in need of clarification, as they did not want outside people to interfere with their internal affairs. Senator Colombo mentioned that he had recently the opportunity to meet with Paul VI and was asked by the Pope to convey his love and prayers for all Chinese clergy and lay faithful. Thanking, Bishop Yang insisted on the need to add concrete political facts to the nice words. Colombo then asked: “How could past misunderstandings be overcome? Could the CCPA develop to offer a contribution to this end?” Bishop Yang did not have an answer. Asked finally whether he would accept an invitation by the ICI to go to Italy for a visit, he politely said “no,” due to poor health condition. But he accepted the books presented to him in the simple exchange of gifts.

A meeting with “a high personality of the State and the Party” was announced for Monday 22 May. That morning, in fact, the official delegation could meet with Deng Xiaoping in the Great Hall of the People, who shook hands with each of us,<sup>9</sup> and then had a private meeting with Senator Colombo and just six ICI officials. The main topics discussed were obviously of a political and economic nature, with the two sides agreeing on the need to foster cooperation between Europe and China to contrast Soviet hegemonic aims. And Senator Colombo remarked that Italy with her Christian heritage was a consistent promotor of peace, as this was “a battle for civilization and progress on which the whole of mankind can progress.”<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Probing the Wind of Change

On leaving China, I was fully aware of having caught just a glimpse of a complex reality. Yet, convinced of the importance of strengthening friendship, once back in Italy I suggested to the ICI directorate to act promptly on a few opportunities: finding teachers ready to go to Beijing to help young officials with the Italian language, as requested; fostering the exchange of technicians and scholars in different fields, including that of religious studies; providing some useful collections for the library of the Beijing Institute of World Religions, etc.

As a growing number of people, thanks to Deng Xiaoping’s new policies, were finding their way to Mainland China, it was somehow easy to glean new information from their experiences. An exceptional visit to China was made at

---

<sup>9</sup> The official photo of this encounter appeared the next day on the *Renmin ribao* with a *Xinhua* note.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Gli editoriali di Vittorino Colombo per le riviste “Italia Cina,” “Cina Notizie” e “Mondo Cinese” 1971–1995*, ed. Franco Cajani (Monza: Quaderni Brianza, 2006), pp. 63–64.

the end of 1978 (6 November – 27 December) by Peter Zhao Yunkun (Tchao Yun-koen), a priest living in Rome with whom I was quite familiar.<sup>11</sup> Holding an Italian passport, in September 1977 he applied to visit his family in China's northeastern provinces, after such a long absence. Permission was granted one year later, and an embassy official assured him that, since the "Gang of Four" had been overthrown also in Manchuria, he could go there safely and could meet freely with priests and bishops. Unexpected favours and facilities were offered to Peter Zhao's family in view of their reunion; besides informing all the relatives of his arrival, the authorities provided transportation for them to the Changchun airport, where a welcoming party was offered. The next day Fr. Zhao was given the opportunity to go some 10 km from the city to pray on the tomb (*saomu*) of his parents who had died in the 1960s; he was surprised to see that the original Catholic cemetery had not been converted to agricultural use as in other provinces; several tomb stones carried recently painted red crosses. His brothers and sisters working at a local car manufacture were granted fully paid holidays for the 21 days he spent at home, and their families were provided with chosen and abundant food: an exceptional privilege, Zhao underlined. He recalled also two very special attentions. His elder brother Zhao Yunhui, then 68 years old, who after graduating at the Shanghai Fudan Catholic University taught for years in the diocesan seminary, was imprisoned three times and deprived of his civil rights for 30 years. A few days before Fr. Peter's arrival, he was summoned by a Party cadre; as he was down with flu, a car was sent to take him to the office. To his great surprise, he found that many people had gathered there waiting for him, and a "rehabilitation process" was initiated. Investigation – it was stated – proved that his father, though a land-owner, did not exploit the workers and was always ready to help those in need; as for Yunhui, though a religious person, he was no longer considered a parasite, on the contrary he proved a very good worker. The leader's conclusion was: As of today, this man is a full-right citizen; he should not be called "the one carrying the hat" (i.e., one who is regarded as a "bad element"), nor one who was "freed from the hat": he was simply a comrade.<sup>12</sup> Also Fr. Zhao's elder sister, who had spent over three months in prison during the Cultural Revolution for corresponding with him, was reinstated to her original rank before his arrival, with her wage refunded; and his brother-in-law, a Catholic who kept away from the Party, was promoted office-head just in those days.

In meetings with Party officials, Fr. Zhao was often asked questions on the Vatican and the Church organization. He was told that, rejecting the religious

---

<sup>11</sup> Zhao Yunkun was born in the diocese of Siping (Jilin) in 1925; from 1947 he studied in Rome where he was ordained a priest in 1953. He then became a professor at the Pontifical Urbaniana University and a contributor to the Chinese programme of Vatican Radio. His untimely death in 1981 proved a great loss.

<sup>12</sup> There were also practical benefits, as he could enjoy a normal pension, besides a monetary indemnity for the years he had been deprived of the right wage. Fr. Zhao was sure that such decision had been taken at a high level.

policy of the “Gang of Four,” religion should not be a cause for social discrimination; temples and churches that had been destroyed, damaged or put to different use would be gradually restored. As a matter of fact, in his home city Changchun, the convent of the Sisters of Charity had been turned into a factory, where ten elderly priests and some sisters were kept doing manual work; the Manchuria Regional seminary had become a hospital for traditional medicine. The cathedral church, which had the cross at the top of the belfry torn down by the Red Guards using a tractor, was occupied by the army with the attached residence. For lack of alternative premises, the military did not move out, even after three orders from Beijing.

Fr. Zhao chose to celebrate Mass privately at home, even though in the city there were still about a hundred Catholic families. He intended to meet with Bishop Mathew Wang Weimin who lived in Changchun, but the local faithful stopped him, saying that “he was a traitor who had caused great harm.”<sup>13</sup> Fr. Zhao mentioned that in neighbouring dioceses priests and other believers freed after up to 25 years in labour camps were still under police supervision. While appreciating Deng Xiaoping’s new freedom and modernizations, people kept a prudential waiting attitude, as public expression of faith was still at one’s own risk.<sup>14</sup> In the Catholic village of Xiaobajiacun, some 25 km from Changchun, where the magnificent old church had been completely destroyed and the bricks used to build the agricultural commune, religious life was still heavily controlled. Up to March 1978 people were forbidden to use prayer books publicly, even hand copied; and after lifting such interdiction, cadres insisted that religious scripts should not be distributed. An elderly priest, Chen Jisheng, returning home in poor health condition after years in labour camp, was still “bearing the hat”; some ten old sisters lived privately by their regular work.<sup>15</sup>

While spending a few days in Beijing, Fr. Zhao visited the Nantang church. He was told that some 20 Beijing priests were kept at a factory in Ya’er hutong, No. 50, doing cardboard boxes and receiving some pay; but no visitors were admitted. He heard that a Beijing priest held in high esteem, Peter Wang Jizhi (at that time about 70), past vice-rector in the diocesan minor seminary, was confined to home and allowed to go out only once a week. The Beijing “Eastern Church,” the Dongtang in Wangfujing road, was used as an elementary school, while the huge compound of the “Northern Church,” the Beitang, housed the

---

<sup>13</sup> Mathew Wang Weimin (1915–1996) became a priest in 1943 and was illegally ordained as bishop of Jilin in 1959 by Pi Shushi; he was known to live a married life.

<sup>14</sup> Typical was the case of Mrs. Yan, a generous catechist of Changchun, who had been arrested several times; the last time in April 1978 for distributing a prayer composed for the “Holy Year 1975.” When Fr. Zhao arrived, she was out of prison but confined to home, and he had no opportunity to meet her.

<sup>15</sup> Fr. Zhao learned that the Sujiawobang Catholic community (also of Jilin diocese) had been kept united and faithful thanks to the heroic witness of two priests, John Baptist Xia Guiyi and Francis Ding Shiting who were buried alive on some unknown day between the years 1957–1960; they had publicly pardoned their executioners: cf. G. Politi, *Martiri in Cina* (Bologna: EMI, 1998), p. 161.

39th Beijing middle school. In Shanghai, where Fr. Zhao met Bishop Zhang Jia-shu, he learned that not far from the cathedral, some 30 priests (10 of them Jesuits) and 20 sisters lived in a convent turned into a factory, with no opportunity of doing pastoral activities. Also in Wuhan, he was told, a group of priests were kept working in a factory with some Buddhist bonzes.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. 1979: Returning to Hong Kong, with Eyes and Heart to China

With the conclusion of the 8th P.I.M.E. General Assembly (January 1978), my long service as an assistant to the superior in Rome had come to an end. Later that year I was happily re-assigned to my original mission, Hong Kong, with a special mandate: trying to follow and encourage the timidly re-emerging Christian communities in Mainland China.<sup>17</sup> After the May trip with his delegation, Senator Colombo had made me a consultant of the ICI, thus facilitating contacts also with cultural sectors of Chinese society.

In the meantime, Yu Quanxi had been sent to the Press Office of the Chinese embassy in Rome, where his main job was analysing political affairs. He and the cultural attaché, Chen Suizhi, were eager to understand the Church events that marked 1978 summer months: after Paul VI passed away (6 August), there was the brief service of John Paul I, and then the great surprise of the election of a Polish Pope. The Chinese observers kept wondering about the impact John Paul II might have on the general strategy of the Church. One of the first questions addressed to me was: could he be considered “anti-Russian”? The two Chinese officials were also asking what the Vatican meant for Catholics around the world and for the States entertaining diplomatic relations with it. Mr. Chen, who did not know Italian, was glad to get an English translation of the programmatic speech of the new Pope. The assurance given (in mid-December 1978) by John Paul II to the visiting Foreign Minister of Bulgaria was received favorably: the Holy See would not expect any privilege from the various states; simply freedom to contribute, according to its nature, to the good of mankind. And well appreciated was the evidence given by *L'Osservatore Romano* to the news that China was about to establish diplomatic relations with the USA, and to Hua Guofeng's declaration about it (17–19 December 1978).

That offered me the opportunity to remark that, before opening negotiations with the USA, the Beijing authorities had not imposed as a pre-condition the breaking of relations with Taiwan. For the Church, the active presence in Rome

---

<sup>16</sup> Fr. Zhao was kind enough to give me copy of the 21 page confidential report he wrote upon his return. Mentioning the special treatment given him in many cities he visited, he wrote (on page 4): “Was this a courtesy for me or for the Vatican?”

<sup>17</sup> The option that I might not be available for pastoral activities in Hong Kong was discussed by the Superior with Bishop John Baptist Wu Cheng-Chung. On 22 December 1978 the P.I.M.E. vicar general specified: “We would like him to devote his time and energy to study the problems connected with the situation of religion and Christianity in China,” adding: “We are encouraged by the interest that the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is showing for this important issue.”

of an “Embassy of China” (Taiwan) appeared in fact a formidable block to dialogue with Beijing, as recognized in an early June interview given by the Vatican Foreign Minister archbishop Agostino Casaroli. But Casaroli assured also that the Holy See was ready to look for an acceptable solution to that obstacle (born out of historical developments). Yet, I was reminded, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping had recently clearly repeated during a conversation with visiting Italian Minister Rinaldo Ossola: “Vatican must break ties with Taiwan before any dialogue could be considered by China.” Beijing expected a credible sign of good will and accountability of the Holy See; having sent a simple *Chargé d’Affairs* to the Taipei Nunciature *in lieu* of the archbishop was not enough. I tried to explain that the Vatican was conditioned by expectations of world Catholic believers, who did not trust the Beijing attitude to religion. In such a complex situation, we agreed, a constructive approach was offered by the words often repeated by President Wang Pingnan (CAFFC): “By using non-diplomatic channels, we prepare the way to diplomatic relations.” I was informed that Mr. Wang would come on an official visit to Italy during Spring, at the invitation of the ICI. Mr. Yu called my attention to the “Message to Taiwan compatriots” issued by the permanent committee of the National People’s Congress (1 January 1979): the Taiwanese population could continue living with their specific social features. Vice Premier Deng, preparing to visit the USA, had also mentioned his hope that the “Taiwan problem” could be solved peacefully within one year. More important appeared the document approved by the 3rd Session of the XI Party Congress (22 December 1979) endorsing Deng Xiaoping’s modernisation programme.

When in early February I could return to Hong Kong with a working permit requested by the diocesan chancery, I was happy to discover a more sympathetic attention to the social development and religious life “inside.” The local press had given evidence (on 22 January 1979) to a meeting of 800 “patriotic person-ages” in Shanghai earlier in the month, in which “the city angrily exposed and criticised political extremists in the past for undermining the Party’s policy on religions and ruthlessly persecuting religious believers.” It was stated that the Shanghai municipality had decided to restore the Bureau of Religious Affairs and to introduce constitutional provisions to help “religious patriotic organisations to develop normal activities.”<sup>18</sup> In Hong Kong I had the opportunity of contacts with people dealing for different reasons with Chinese affairs.<sup>19</sup> I was glad to discover also the serious work done by various groups on the Protestant side: Chinese Church Research Centre directed by Jonathan Chao, Hong Kong Bible Society,

---

<sup>18</sup> That seemed to encourage also new hopes for the presence of Christian witnesses. After a new visit to China made on behalf of the ICI in January 1979, Franco Demarchi wrote: “I would encourage religious congregations to prepare one third of their future missionaries towards China. Right from now.”

<sup>19</sup> Australian priest Douglas Conlan, who knew a member of the Chinese Foreign Affairs office, was trying to negotiate a visit to China of Mons. Pietro Rossano (of the Roman Secretariat of non-Christians).

Tao Fong Shan Centre, and China Study Project connected with Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland.

### 5. Sharing Experiences with Other Friends of China

There were numerous accounts of Catholics visiting relatives in the Mainland, with situations differing quite a lot from place to place. Rich in practical suggestions was a report on the Church in China written in March 1979 by Michael Chu, S.J., out of his personal experiences.

In June 1979, having returned to Europe, I attended a useful Colloquium organized in Hofheim, Germany, by the group "Catholics in Europe Concerned with China." During the same month, when the official delegation of the CAFFC came to Italy, I had the opportunity to accompany them on behalf of the ICI. Then, at the end of September, I gladly joined an Italian group visiting China, with three other priests, including a Chinese one.

Entering with the group by train from Hong Kong, I could carry also two parcels of books offered by the ICI, which proved very useful in the following months. In Guangzhou, besides visiting factories, communes and monuments according to programme, I had a special task from retired Hong Kong bishop Lawrence Bianchi, with whom I had enjoyed my first missionary experience two decades before. He had resigned and left Hong Kong in 1969 after 46 years of missionary activity. But obviously he kept a loving memory of the long years spent announcing the Gospel on Chinese soil, particularly in the Haifeng costal area, beyond the boundary of the Hong Kong colony. In 1962, he had been saddened to learn of the episcopal ordination imposed on one of his good priests, Joseph Ye Yinyun (in Cantonese Yip Yam-wan), who was made the head of a new "official" diocese, Huizhou. The project of the new diocese was de facto cancelled soon after, due to the Cultural Revolution's dramatic developments. In recent times, news that Bishop Ye was still alive and hiding somewhere in Guangzhou had reached Lawrence Bianchi; so he decided to send him a note of encouragement.

When reaching Guangzhou, we learned that Bishop Dominic Deng Yiming (in Cantonese Tang Yee-ming) was still in prison and were told that the Seksat (Shengxin, "Sacred Heart") cathedral was still closed, so we celebrated Mass in a hotel hall. As for Bishop Ye, I had a rather vague note stating that he lived at no. 30 of a lane at a junction not far from the cathedral. The last evening of our stay, reaching Seksat cathedral by taxi and taking time to walk around, I had no difficulty to find the lane; entering at the given number and climbing a wooden, dark staircase, I heard people talking; I then asked in Cantonese for "Mr. Yip." A young man explained that he was out and would be back rather late. As I mentioned that I was passing by Guangzhou and would like to bring him just the greetings of an old friend, he said that I could meet him early next morning and kindly promised to inform him. So when I returned the following morning at about 6.30 a.m., the same young man called out at the top of the stair: "*Ah suk*" (uncle); soon from the last room in the corridor, a short man appeared, thin and

looking uneasy but in good health. As I tried to kiss his ring, Bishop Ye took me into his poor, little room. When I mentioned Bishop Lawrence Bianchi, he was obviously moved and we embraced. After he went through Bishop Bianchi's letter, he accepted with pleasure also the books I brought (Council documents and New Testament in Chinese, liturgy books and Special Faculties granted by Propaganda Fide). Speaking with caution and in a low voice, he said that presently they experienced a little more freedom; the Seksat cathedral was due to open by mid-October. "Is it possible," I asked, "to do some pastoral work? Do you have contacts with the local priests?" – "A little," he answered, "a lot of patience is needed, and prudence also." – "And who will be given charge of this diocese?" – "That will depend on the 'will of the people'," he added with a timid smile. Touching on the usual accusations to the Vatican, I mentioned the friendly expressions towards China used by Pope John Paul II in a recent speech (19 August); he had not heard of it. I promised to bring his greetings to Bishop Bianchi, but he did not offer to write anything. Preparing for a photo, he wore a white shirt. As I was moving out, he inquired if somebody had noticed my coming to this place, because – he said – he was still under control and followed in his movements. Luckily I could assure him that nobody was around as I entered. He then accompanied me down, looking out to make sure that the lane was deserted.

Our group, moving on to Guangxi province, had a taste of the unique beauty of Guilin and of the minorities' cultural richness in Nanning. Then we reached Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, with its splendid views and important monuments. When I asked to see Bishop Paul Kong Lingzhong, who had been ordained in 1962, our national guide after inquiries answered that the provincial office looking after religions was not functioning yet. One hour flight on a four-engined old plane took us to Chengdu, capital of the large Sichuan province. Among the numerous tourist attractions, we visited an ancient Buddhist temple, where it was possible to talk to some monks. We had the opportunity of meeting also with the 70 years old Bishop Paul Li Xiting, who was accompanied by a lay man named Xiu Shi. He explained that the large cathedral church, built at the beginning of the century, along with the bishop's house, had been ravaged during the Cultural Revolution. Now the large structure was under repair: "You are invited to return next year and to take part in our liturgy," he said. Speaking good Latin, he told us that the diocese had about thirty thousand faithful (two to three thousand in the city); he could count on some ten priests altogether, four of whom were in the city. After a simple exchange of gifts, Bishop Li started singing the "Our Father" in Latin and offered his blessing to the group. As we moved around we met two middle aged men who said they were seminarians; they had to interrupt their studies two decades before, when the seminaries were disbanded. Surprised, I looked at the bishop, who answered simply: "*Magister docet et discipuli apprehendent ...*" (meaning that he was their teacher and tutor); obviously, some philosophical and theological texts in Latin would prove very useful to him, he added.

Another moving experience marked the time we spent in Chengdu. The family of Father Frank Yang, the Chinese priest travelling with us (presently working in

Florence), had undertaken a two-day journey to come to Chengdu from the Wanxian area in the eastern part of Sichuan (which was later merged with Chongqing), waiting for his arrival. Among the eight relatives who came, some nephews had been baptized by Fr. Yang's elder sister, acting as catechist in the village. At the Mass presided by father Yang in a hall of the hotel, a nephew and a niece received their first communion, surrounded in great joy by our whole group.

The final stage of our journey was Beijing; the 2,400 km flight on a Iliusin 18 took almost three hours. We were put up at the Qianmen Hotel in the central area, and Little Wu, our local Beijing guide, proved a good friend having accompanied various Italian groups. He was glad to tell us that for the first time the national TV programme had showed Pope John Paul II in his visit to Ireland. The following day, while the group went to the Great Wall, a few of us had a meeting at Nantang church. The exchange between Frs. Yang and Lawrence Shi Yukun was quite vivacious but friendly, with accusation of past missionary mistakes and admission of present limits in religious activity. When the following day, Sunday, the group went to attend a morning Mass at the Nantang church, I was surprised to find a more numerous attendance than the previous year, with about 300 persons present; together with some foreign personnel, there were many local people both old and young. After Mass several went to talk with the celebrant, Father Sun, a Lazarist: later he told me that he was busy translating some religious texts from French.

## **6. Looking for Christian Life in Beijing**

As the Italian group left a couple of days later, I was able to remain behind and moved to the Beijing Hotel. Armando Martinazzoli, a friend who was the Italian Embassy's scientific attaché, besides obtaining a fresh 10-day visa, was seeking for me a further extension of stay, to help me getting to know the great country a bit better. As mentioned, my main concern was about the re-emerging religious life. Walking east from Wangfujing road in the Dongdan Beidajie area, I reached a Protestant church. Being a week day it was closed. A lady who could speak English told me that three pastors were living there, one of Presbyterian origin, one Anglican and one Methodist. She recalled that since the 1950s the various Christian denominations had been merged into a sort of Union Church; now, on Sundays an inter-denominational communion service was held. There was no choir yet, but the whole congregation, mostly elderly persons, joined in singing and praying. The church, rather small, had been closed but was not damaged by the Cultural Revolution, and many Bibles and Hymn books could be saved. At a certain point, Pastor Kan, the Presbyterian, joined our conversation (with the lady translating for him): since September he was giving a course on "Bible classics" at the Institute for World Religions for a group of 20 young university graduates who had passed an examination to enter that new institution. Are they any believers? I asked. He did not know, because so far he had no contact with

them. Not far from that church a mosque had also been reopened; during the dark years its minaret had been toppled over.

In order to discuss possible cooperation opportunities, I visited the Friendship Association on behalf of the ICI, the publications department Guoji shudian, the international tourist office Lùxingshe and the CASS. Here, meeting with the Vice Director of the Institute for the Study of World Religions, Zhao Fushan, proved particularly interesting. Of Anglican formation and well acquainted with religious developments in the West, he asked many questions about the Vatican's new Secretariats. He was glad to receive a copy of the Catholic Bible (translated by Father Allegra's Biblical Institute) and of the documents of Vatican Council II which he did not know. Talking of the Institute's depleted library (presently he was using the Philosophy section's library of the CASS), mention was made also of the Monumenta Serica Monograph Series and the journal *Monumenta Serica*: I promised to verify with the Divine Word fathers in Germany the possibility to receive the missing publications, if he let me know when their collection was stopped. Commenting on the Catholic situation, Professor Zhao said that for the government the official level comes first; and this inevitably affects the contacts of the Chinese Church with the Bishop of Rome (conditioned by the Vatican diplomatic relations with Taiwan).

While in Beijing, I had a long interview also with the newly elected bishop Michael Fu Tieshan, at the Nantang residence next to the church; with him were two priests (Lawrence Shi and Anthony Liu) and a certain John Tian representing the Patriotic Association. I excused myself for not having been able to take along an interpreter, and Michael went on speaking English, slowly but clearly, and translated our whole conversation for the other persons. He gladly accepted the books I offered him on behalf of Senator Colombo (Chinese missal, New Testament and Vatican documents), and expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the ICI to strengthen friendship with China. At a certain point, Lawrence Shi handed me an envelope, saying that a Hong Kong visiting priest had given him – among other religious articles – also some photos with the blessing of the new pope John Paul II: “We cannot keep them, he added, because the Pope does not show respect for the Chinese Church ...”

As Bishop Michael Fu asked many questions about the liturgical reform and Church life in Italy and in Hong Kong, the conversation went on for about two and a half hours, in a simple and friendly atmosphere, even when touching on controversial points of Church history and the present situation, in which also the two priests and John Tian joined the discussion.<sup>20</sup> While repeating that the Chinese Church is part of the “*una, sancta, catholica, apostolica ecclesia ...*,” they would not accept that the Vatican could not approve its independent management. The recent criticism expressed by Rome over Michael Fu's “democratic election”

---

<sup>20</sup> As the whole conversation was carried out in the two languages, I was able to write down practically all that was said. Today, 35 years later, those pages appear a sad confirmation that none of the old problems and obstacles facing the Church in China has been removed yet ...

was proof of such “Vatican hostility,” I recalled the Canon Law rules valid for the universal Church, and also the ancient Chinese tradition, which asked the children in a family to be the first to express their respect for the father. The answer was that the real head of the Church is Jesus, who is above Peter (who even betrayed Jesus ...). As we went on with a long series of contentions, I took the liberty to insist that Bishop Michael Fu should write to the pope, asking for his approval and blessing, adding that my secret hope was that the pope himself, who was planning to visit Asia and the Philippines, might perform his ordination. As a matter of fact, Fu told me that three bishops had already been invited to perform the ceremony. In his Chinese translation he kept referring to me simply as “Liang shenfu” (Father Liang, my Chinese name), and the friendly contact built on that encounter continued also later: every time I passed through Beijing, even accompanying a group, Bishop Michael Fu would make himself available.

As I spent a few more days in Beijing preparing for my new trip, I could visit with some friends the old Guangqi Buddhist temple and monastery, northwest of the imperial city. Closed during the Cultural Revolution, it still had a dozen old monks living there, and now three days a month people were allowed in to pray and burn incense. At the Beijing Hotel I also happened to meet and exchange views with two other foreign guests: Karl Moser, auxiliary bishop of Vienna and Prelate Eberhard Mühlbacher, who were expecting to meet Bishop Michael Fu and the director of the Religious Affairs Office Xiao Xianfa. They told me that a few months later Franz Cardinal König of Vienna would also be visiting China.

### **7. A Precious Opportunity to Know More about Country and Church**

On 3 November 1979, I left Beijing by train on a hard sleeper coach to Zhengzhou (Henan). The programme arranged with the Lüxingshe included travel and hotel bookings, with local guides available in the various cities. At the new Zhengzhou city station, the guide waiting for me had arranged for an art and craft factory and an exhibition on the Yellow River. When I mentioned that, being Sunday, as a Christian I would like to go to a church, I received this answer: “There is no Christian church here. But you will see a Catholic church tomorrow in Kaifeng.” He explained that his family lived there and he had learned English at the Kaifeng Normal College. I was also interested to see that city, till recently capital of Henan province, where my confreres (of P.I.M.E., the Milan Foreign Missions Society) had been working for several decades. Among the Kaifeng ancient monuments I was shown the “Iron Pagoda” with a huge Buddha statue nearby. Then I spent some time walking around, and it was not difficult to discover the western style Catholic church with its bell tower; the compound taken over by a government school was full of children. But when I enquired about the old bishop He Chongming, the local guide confessed that he had never heard his name. But, confidentially, he then added: “Here in Kaifeng Christians have no priests and cannot hold their religious services in the church: so on Sundays they gather to pray in private houses ...” I asked how he knew that: “A friend of mine who is a believer told me ... He even invited me to join with them, but I said no.

I am not a believer, I am a Marxist.” My comment was that people were right to do so, since freedom to believe was now publicly acknowledged. As a token of friendship, I offered him a small size Gospel, explaining what it was about ...

The next leg of my journey took me to Wuhan (Hubei), where I spent the first day walking around the old commercial city of Hankou. People appeared curious and yet quite friendly to the few foreigners that could be seen on the streets. Reaching Shanghai street where I knew that the cathedral church was located, at the gate I asked in Chinese for Dong Guangqing. I was in fact looking for one of the very first two bishops ordained in China (in 1958), Bernardinus Dong, a Franciscan friar. The doorkeeper replied that he was out, but that he could be seen the next day in the early hours. As I returned the following morning before 7 a.m., finding the gate open I proceeded to the old residential building in the church compound. I repeated my enquiry to a man whom I met there, and he kindly took me upstairs and into a dark corridor. But the door he showed me was locked: he then went to inquire and told me that “Mr. Dong” would be back soon. The bishop arrived dressed as a worker, but we were quick to familiarise as we exchanged a couple of sentences in Latin. The room to which Bishop Bernardinus took me was marked by a plate “Patriotic Association.” He explained that he had returned to Hankou not long before, when the authorities decided that the cathedral should be repaired and reopened; in fact, he himself was busy working there. He added that the whole mission house, taken over by the government, was presently used as a special school of young artists, who were noisily moving around. Bernardinus was interested in the circumstances of my visit to China, in connection with Senator Colombo’s ICI at the invitation of Wang Pingnan. He mentioned some Italian Franciscan missionaries who had worked in Hunan and whom I also knew, and was glad to accept the religious articles and liturgy books I could offer. In Wuhan, he added, 40 to 50 sisters were kept working in the hospitals taken over by the government; though not dressed as sisters, everybody knew and appreciated their dedication. There are now some ten priests in the diocese, but there is no contact with the catholic community yet. The cathedral church, now under repair, could be opened in a few months time. He hopes that future groups visiting China with the ICI may include his city in their itinerary and ask to visit the cathedral. Before leaving, I also visited the huge Guiyuan Buddhist monastery and temple in the Hanyang district, where the merciful Guanyin is particularly honoured.

The following day a flight brought me to Nanjing, where I had some Italian contacts: a young man studying Chinese literature, and three engineers with family, working at a petrochemical plant. With the local guide (Miss Yang) I visited some historical spots, and while climbing to the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum we had a long open conversation. She recalled the years lost during the Cultural Revolution, mentioning with scorn the slogan “Better red than expert.” She was glad to hear of Sun Yat-sen political vision and was surprised to discover that he was a Christian believer. She knew that his widow, very old now, was elected Vice President of the China Congress, and that her younger sister was married to Chiang Kaishek. She did not know of any active Christian presence in Nanjing. I

then went for short visits to Wuxi and Suzhou, where the guide, a French speaking middle aged man, while showing some of the famous gardens and ancient pagodas of this “Venice in the Orient,” could not hide his frustration for having been unable to complete his studies (in 1966, he had been sent to do manual work for four years). Later, while accompanying a medical mission in Cameroun, he could appreciate the service of Catholic sisters working in a poor village there. He had no information of Catholic activity in Suzhou, where the Bureau of Religious Affairs was being organized and the Buddhist association had already reconvened. He kept a good memory of his mother, a fervent Buddhist, but he added that her reaction to adversity was perhaps too passive, as she was ready to accept anything from Buddha ... Religion in China, he commented, is easily tarnished by superstition; besides, foreign capitalist powers in the past often exploited religion, stirring the reaction of Chinese intellectuals and patriots.

From Nanjing, a forty-five minutes journey by train brought me to Shanghai. Having booked at the classic Heping Hotel on the Bund, it was easy to move around the old city. The following day, a Sunday, I reached a Protestant church whose address I had been given in Beijing. When I asked an old passerby, he whispered in English that all churches were closed, and pointed to a brick building, at the junction of Xizang – Hankou Road, with a damaged tower and the stained-glass windows broken. In fact it appeared locked up, but following the many people entering a side gate I reached the main hall that was already crowded. An attendant took me to an upper side wing, where also a few other foreigners were sitting. The service was simple; from a reading-desk on the stage an elderly pastor in civilian cloth commented on a page of the New Testament; people were invited to join the choir in singing; but no communion service was held. As I learned later, the building was under repair, but Sunday services had started already two months earlier. In Shanghai two other churches were functioning, all belonging to the Three-Self Movement.

I then reached Xujiahui district, hoping to see Bishop Zhang Jiashu; the well-positioned church appeared locked and not accessible. After several enquiries I was shown an old house of the sisters on the opposite side of the big square, where some 40 priests were also kept doing manual work. The old lady at the entrance said that Bishop Zhang was too busy, too tired ... Finally, as I insisted, she suggested that I return early the next morning. When arriving, before 7 a.m., I was met by Berchmans Shen Baozhi, who spoke some French; at first rather reserved, he gradually opened up and we had a long conversation. He accepted the photos and some books I had taken for the bishop; but as I touched on Bishop Gong Pinmei and expressed my hope of a mercy gesture in his favour, Berchmans repeated that Gong had caused great harm to country and religion ... When I mentioned the three Protestant churches already functioning, he said that the Catholic church, dedicated to Mary Mother of God, was still used as a fruit market warehouse, but would be soon restored. Since the previous month, Mass was celebrated daily in a chapel behind the church; he accepted to take me there, and as we walked by the impressive red brick cathedral our comments went to the huge damages it suffered, from the broken bell towers to the rose windows hit by

slink. It was expected, Berchmans added, that also the old clergy residence may be returned soon to Church use.

During a brief visit to Hangzhou, I was told that no Christian church was available. Miss Liu, who took me to the nine-centuries old Lingyin Buddhist temple on the hills outside the city, was well-informed on its history and devotions. Many people were burning incense in front of the huge Sakyamuni statue, and I was told that some 40 monks could remain there even during the Cultural Revolution, as the temple was protected by a wall. Impressive also the ancient religious images sculpted on the hill rock.

Then, reaching Guangzhou by night train, I did not miss the opportunity to visit Seksat cathedral, where I knew that some priests had returned. Asking in Cantonese a worker nearby, I was told that I could enter from the back of the church. In fact, pushing a gate I found myself in a simple residence where, called by a lady, a priest named Aloysius Ye (Yip in Cantonese) came to meet me. He mentioned that six priests (some quite old) had been freed from labour camps, where he himself had spent eleven years. He gladly accepted some religious books, showing them to a “lady guardian” watching us. I was then taken inside the Gothic cathedral, where all the altars, statues, liturgical vestments and other religious signs had been destroyed.

Two Mass services – I was told – were held on Sundays on a wooden altar recently arranged; I noticed that the cross was still without crucifix; a wooden banister and a confessional had also been added. Father Ye mentioned that they were looking for art models to give to the craftsmen so that they could reconstruct the religious statues and paintings. The lady offered to let us exit from the main gate, and as she went to get the key I handed Father Ye an envelope with some pictures of the Holy Father, the Special Faculties and Eucharistic prayers in Chinese, which he put into his pocket. “Any news about Bishop Dominic Deng?” I asked later; they knew that he was alive, but were ignorant about whether he would be freed. In front of the cathedral, after a photo, mentioning that in my hotel room I had some artistic religious pictures, I suggested that Father Ye could go with me to get them. Before answering, he turned to his “guardian,” who stressed that there was too much work to do, and I had to leave alone.<sup>21</sup> Before my extended visa (seven weeks) expired, on 15 November a comfortable Hovercraft took me back to Hong Kong.

## 8. China’s Religious Structures and Policies Renewed

Settling back there, I was heartened to perceive a growing attention to the Chinese religious situation, with shared information also on the Protestant side. I was especially glad to discover how deeply committed to the Church in Mainland

---

<sup>21</sup> I was not surprised to read some time later (12 September 1980) a *UCANews* note entitled “Cathedral Amazon,” recalling a letter sent to the *Hong Kong Standard* on August 27 by an “enraged woman” who had visited the Canton Cathedral: “I wanted to talk to one of the priests,” wrote Mrs. Reikhaupt, when “a fierce woman demanded of me who I was, where I came from and what I wanted to see the priest about.”

China Bishop John Baptist Wu was:<sup>22</sup> he encouraged the diocesan clergy and the religious congregations present in Hong Kong to reflect on their common responsibility and on ways to help overcome the exceptional difficulties of their brothers and sisters living beyond the boundary. To this effect, he appointed diocesan priest John Tong Hon<sup>23</sup> as a coordinator of possible initiatives regarding Christianity in contemporary China. By late November, interested representatives of religious and missionary groups started gathering to share and compare experiences after visiting China. This became known as the “Ricci Study Team” sponsored by the diocese.<sup>24</sup> In the following months, besides this rather loose frame, the diocese established in Aberdeen, next to the Holy Spirit Seminary, a Study Centre on Chinese Christianity, directed by John Tong and concerned with planning and executing specific research projects.

Soon after, “private visits” by French cardinal Roger Etchegaray, Archbishop of Marseille (27 February – 14 March 1980), and by the Austrian Cardinal Franz König, Archbishop of Vienna (10–20 March), were seen by the international press as signs of possible initiatives to open a dialogue between Beijing and Rome. Would future developments confirm such hope? About the same time, the Chinese Religious Affairs Bureau was taking steps to reconvene the “patriotic” structures of the five recognized religions: an important step to revive the CCP’s United Front policies in a sensitive sector of society, but also a public recognition for all religious believers. The Islamic Association held its conference in April 1980, followed closely by the Taoist one, while the Protestant Three-Self Movement and the Buddhist Association convened their leadership in the last quarter of the year. The members of the CCPA were called to Beijing on 22 May for a week of discussion; to the 198 representatives (including 30 bishops) nine other people were added, possibly government officials; Xiao Xianfa, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau addressed the delegates. It was commonly agreed that the Association is “not a church, ... but simply a social grouping of Catholics for dealing with the wide society and with the government.”<sup>25</sup> Right after the works of the Association were concluded, a “Conference of Chinese Catholic Represen-

---

<sup>22</sup> John Baptist Wu Cheng Chung (1925–2002) was born in a village of Guangdong province; after joining the seminary in his diocese of Kaying (Meizhou), he studied and was ordained a priest in Hong Kong and then worked as a parish priest in the county of Miaoli (Diocese of Hsinchu since 1961), Taiwan. He was made Bishop of Hong Kong in 1974 and Cardinal in 1988. Invited twice to mainland China, in 1986, he was able to visit his family and embrace his old mother.

<sup>23</sup> John Tong Hon, born in Hong Kong in 1939, was ordained priest in 1966. He received episcopal ordination in 1996 and became Bishop of Hong Kong in 2009; in 2012, he was elevated to Cardinal.

<sup>24</sup> Right from the first encounter (21 November 1979), John Tong was supported by a few volunteers, namely Peter Barry and Elmer Wurth of the Maryknoll Society and by myself. Naturally, to formulate goals and objectives, people with particular experience (like László Ladány [1914–1990], S.J., and Norberto Pieraccini, O.F.M.) were also consulted.

<sup>25</sup> Such was a statement given by Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan in an interview to the *UCANews* on 8 October 1980.

tatives” (for the third time in two decades) was also formally convened from 31 May to 2 June. Its main task was to establish a “Chinese Catholic Bishops College” and a “Chinese Catholic Church Affairs Committee.” Sadly, this Conference of Catholic Representatives was practically composed of the same persons as the Patriotic Association, giving a political overtone to most speeches and setting the “love for the country” as prerequisite for all religious decisions. The Holy See was easily made the target of criticism for many mistakes of the colonial times, and a letter addressed to all Catholics in the country rejected any “interference” of the Vatican: China was determined to safeguard its independence in religious affairs no less than in other areas.<sup>26</sup> A positive news emerging from such double Beijing meeting was a call to prepare for the opening of a Catholic Philosophy and Theology School.

During Summer 1980, I could join a Hong Kong ecumenical group on a visit to some cities, thus gaining a closer look especially at the situation of re-emerging Protestant communities. In Hangzhou we had a long evening conversation in the hotel with a pastor and his wife: in the Christian Church, two thousand members enrolled since it opened nine months earlier, and 3,000 worshippers participated in the Sundays services. On the Catholic side, he said, the local church built in the 17th century is still occupied by families and the old bishop Wu was forced to return to his village. In Ningbo some Protestant churches were already functioning, while the Catholic bishop was sick and no church was open yet. In Shanghai we could establish more contacts with both Catholics and Protestants. On Sunday 29 June, some of us attended one of the Masses celebrated (in Latin, ancient style) in chapels next to the Xujiahui church, which was still under repair. Returning there in the evening, we were told by the parish priest Etienne Li and the bishop’s secretary Berchmans Shen that some 3,000 faithful participated in the Easter and Pentecost celebrations, and that new people were asking for instruction. Some new churches were to be opened soon, and possibly also the Sheshan Marian Shrine.

Visiting the headquarters of the Three-Self Movement, we discussed several topics with the Acting Chairman, Pastor Shen Deyong, and some of his colleagues. Present was also Dr. Jiang Wenhan, happy to meet with Bishop Gilbert Baker<sup>27</sup> (a member of our group) who had been his fellow student from 1946 to 1949 in New York. Dr. Jiang, recalling a booklet he had written against Marxist ideology upon returning to China and his double experience of hard labour, explained his present attitude: rather than discussing philosophical and theological principles, it is important to be identified as Christians while working concretely

---

<sup>26</sup> Addresses by bishops Zong Huaide of Jinan (Shandong), Zhang Jiashu of Shanghai, Yang Gaojian of Changde (Hunan) and Tu Shihua of Hanyang (Hubei) appeared particularly critical. The voice of Bishop Duan Yinming of Wanxian (Sichuan), defending the role assigned by Jesus to Peter (and to the Bishop of Rome), remained a solitary one in the conference contest.

<sup>27</sup> John H. Gilbert Baker (1910–1986) was Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau from 1966 to 1980.

for the modernization of the country. He added that the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences had invited him to be a fellow researcher and continue a work he had recently undertaken on the history of Christianity in China.

From Shanghai by train we reached Nanjing where we spent three days. After visiting the Sun Yat-sen Memorial, we were received by an officer of the Nanjing University, who explained the origin of the institution (from a Protestant initiative) and its present problems and prospects. Then we had a long meeting in our hotel with bishop Ding Guangxun<sup>28</sup> and some colleagues who teach at the Institute for World Religions of Nanjing University. Bishop Ding said that thirty years experience taught him that fighting religion is not a priority for Communists. Since the 1950s the Three-Self Movement, helping Christians to love their country and gain a common identity, was well accepted by intellectuals. Though many contradictory measures along the years have betrayed Mao's United Front policy, the active presence of Christians at Nanjing University proved encouraging. Later, I went looking for the Nanjing Catholic church, which – I knew – had been turned into a workshop; reaching the location with a friend, we were allowed to have a look inside: it was full with machinery, but we were told that it would soon be vacated. Then we could meet with Father Wang Hao, responsible for the re-emerging Catholic community, who had been given a desk space in the compound of a nearby mosque, presently under repair. From Nanjing we flew to Beijing, and a meeting was arranged at Nantang with Bishop Michael Fu, who answered questions previously prepared and gave an ample account of the recent double meetings held in the capital. In a private meeting afterwards, I offered him a four volume edition of the *Missale Romanum* and suggested to send him, once a month, wrapped up in an envelope, the Hong Kong Catholic weekly newspapers.

On the way back it was possible to spend two more days in Guangzhou. Having learned from the local newspapers that Bishop Dominic Deng had been released from prison, a few of us went to the temporary priests residence, behind the "Stone house" cathedral. Two priests received us and helped us to meet the bishop. His health appeared not so good, but he was glad to see us; he showed us his Rosary and the Cross that were given back to him after 22 years; he did not say Mass yet, while getting acquainted with the new liturgy; he was happy to hear of the Jesuit General Father Arrupe and of his new assistant Father Michael Chu. Early the next morning I went to see, at his side lane room, Bishop Joseph Ye Yinyun, who gladly received greetings and the gift of a fountain pen from "his" Bishop Lawrence Bianchi. He had been invited to meet Cardinal Etchegaray, who gave him a rosary as a souvenir. Bishop Ye had also been in Beijing (representing Huiyang Church), with Father Ye Shang who was the Guangzhou delegate. According to Bishop Ye, to make it possible for the Chinese Church to

---

<sup>28</sup> Better known abroad as K.H. Ting, Bishop Ding Guangxun (1915–2012) was born in Shanghai; in 1946, he went with his wife to study in Canada and USA; returning to China in 1951, he was made an Anglican bishop in 1955. After the Cultural Revolution, he became the principal of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.

dialogue directly with the Pope, the political (and diplomatic) problem between Beijing and the “Vatican” needs to be addressed wisely. Chinese public opinion should be helped to perceive the official attitude of the “Vatican” as one of sincere respect for the Chinese people, its traditions and its institutions, rejecting any neo-colonialist attitude.<sup>29</sup>

### 9. Contributions of Missionaries from the Past

Back in Hong Kong, a few months later I was invited to join a delegation from the city and university of Trento passing through Hong Kong. We entered China by train and flew from Guangzhou to Shanghai where, besides the usual visit to monuments, communes and factories, an agreement to exchange scholarships was signed at the Foreign Languages Institute. There, I was able to visit again father Vincent Zhu, leaving some books with him and learning more about his Jesuit confrères still partially limited in their freedom. More important was our visit to Hangzhou, the city where Martino Martini, S.J. (great missionary scholar from Trento) had lived and worked four centuries before: a friendship agreement was signed between the cities of Hangzhou and Trento. Then in Nanjing the delegation visited the local university and the Academia Sinica, where a photostat copy of Martini’s *Novus Atlas Sinensis* was offered to the Urban Land Institute. I was able to spend some time also with a Lasalle Brother from Peru who was there teaching Spanish, and to visit the local church again: the renovation work was progressing and five elderly Sisters were busy repairing religious articles and vestments dispersed by the Red Guards.

When we reached Beijing, the CAFFC organized an important joint conference of Academia Sinica with the Academies of Natural Sciences and of Social Sciences on Martino Martini. Stressing mutual cooperation, a formal invitation was extended to Chinese researchers to contribute preparing an international Conference on that great scholar that would be held in Trento. I had a separate meeting with Professor Zhao Fusan of the CASS, glad to receive the three volumes of Pasquale d’Elia’s *Fonti Ricciane*, plus a copy of the Bible translated by the Franciscans and some journals from Rome. He was grateful for some volumes of *Monumenta Serica* received from Germany, and inquired about an English translation of the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas and other Scholastic literature. Zhao explained that, among 30 young men preparing to enter the Academy, seven were studying Christianity, adding that to one of them, Ren Yanli, he had suggested to make a research on the Vatican Council II. When I met Ren Yanli, he had just passed the exam to enter the Beijing Academy’s World Religions section, and I got a good impression of him. So, back in Milan, I presented his case to the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, where in 1982 he was ac-

---

<sup>29</sup> As an example, he mentioned the “democratic” election of Fu Tieshan to become Bishop of Beijing. When a Vatican spokesman simply rejected the choice as contrary to the Canon Law, the Chinese press interpreted it as a sign that the Pope does not appreciate China, recalling the old story of a petition sent to Rome and rejected in 1958.

cepted as a post-graduate researcher in the department of Religious Sciences, while the ICI offered to help him cover the living expenses. But he had to overcome bureaucratic difficulties before he could reach Milan, where he was able to study from 1985 to 1987 and prepare a dissertation on the Vatican Council II.<sup>30</sup>

From Beijing the group headed back to Italy, while I returned to Hong Kong, where plenty of information was also available, thanks to the sharing opportunities of the “Ricci Study Team” and a collection of press reports being initiated there. I learned that during that summer Australian University Economics Professor Audry Donnithorne, born in Sichuan, had made an extended visit to China. On 19 June, she had an interview in Beijing with Xiao Xianfa, head of the Religious Affairs Bureau, to whom she suggested that the legitimate Catholic bishops in China should be allowed to go to Rome for discussions. Mr. Xiao replied that they would be permitted to go if they wished, and that the Chinese government would not stop them, “but they do not wish to go.”<sup>31</sup> International press offered wide attention also to a short address given by Pope John Paul II (7 September 1980) in Castelgandolfo in which, congratulating Bishop Dominic Deng on his 50th anniversary of religious life, he expressed “deep joy, emotion, gratitude and due appreciation” at the news of his release.<sup>32</sup> Later, on 6 November it was reported that Bishop Deng was allowed to go to Hong Kong for medical treatment.

In the same month of November 1980, upon the request to accompany another team of Italians, I spent 20 more days visiting the usual northeastern tourist attractions. In Beijing, at the Nantang church we had a friendly conversation with some priests; but not without criticism of past “imperialistic” policies and of

---

<sup>30</sup> Ren Yanli was born in 1944 in Yan’an (Shaanxi), into a family appreciated for its revolutionary spirit. After secondary school, Ren Yanli was sent to the countryside; in 1963 he started to study Italian and in 1968 graduated at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute. He had then to work for two years in a rural commune and spent 8 more years teaching mathematics in a middle school in the Shandong province, before he could apply for the Academy of Social Sciences. In recent years, as a Chinese expert on the Catholic Church in China he was often invited to academic events. Among others: on 24 October 2001 he gave a talk at the Gregorian University in Rome (“Dalla controversia dei riti cinesi alla *via cinese moderna* attraverso il Vaticano II”), printed in the monthly *Asia News* (May 2002), pp. 23-28. A talk he gave in Milan at the Accademia Ambrosiana (Classe di Studi sull’Estremo Oriente) on “La questione della Chiesa cattolica in Cina,” was printed by Bulzoni in *Asiatica Ambrosiana* No. 1 (March 2009), pp. 65-73. See also his contribution “The innovations of the Second Vatican Council,” in *Catholic Church and China in the 20th century*, ed. Elisa Giunipero (Macerata: Edizioni Università Macerata 2010), pp. 169-180.

<sup>31</sup> Professor Donnithorne later wrote to Mr. Xiao stating that she had been able to ascertain, from good sources, that the bishops concerned would in fact like to go to Rome. She then published an open letter, with an appeal to the Chinese Government to give these bishops exit visas and any other facilities necessary to leave China for Rome.

<sup>32</sup> The Pope then added: “The Lord ... is surely close, in a particular way, to those sons and daughters of the Church in China; while keeping the Catholic faith in the Gospel, they show at the same time love to their country and they work with greater good will to its prosperity”: *Papal Documents Related to China, 1937-2005*, researched by Elmer Wurth, M.M., ed. Betty Ann Maheu, M.M. (Hong Kong 2006), p. 323.

“negative attitudes” of the Vatican. At the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, during a long conversation with Vice President Gao Wangzhi, I could present him with some books requested for the library. In Hangzhou the Catholic church was not yet open, but we had a joyful surprise: the Protestant pastor, who had been told of our visit, kindly invited the Catholic priest Joannes Zhu (just returned to the city two months earlier) to meet us in his own place. On my way back to Hong Kong, passing by the Seksat church in Guangzhou, I learned that Bishop Ye Yinyun had joined the community of local priests.<sup>33</sup>

### 10. The Party Reconsiders Its Role in Leading the Country

Preparing to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Communist Party’s foundation, members of the Central Committee held protracted discussions on the need to reconsider Mao Zedong’s leadership. At the end of June 1981, when the Sixth Plenum of the Party’s Central Committee convened, a statement was issued in which the Cultural Revolution was drastically described as “the most severe setback and the fiercest losses suffered by the Party, the State and the people since the founding of the PRC.” Without nuances it was also stated that such disaster “was initiated and guided by comrade Mao Zedong.” This was, no doubt, a victory for the pragmatic leadership of Deng Xiaoping and his modernization drive. He was then promoted to preside over the powerful commission of military affairs, while Hua Guofeng was replaced as Party chairman by Hu Yaobang. But an overall positive assessment of Mao’s role was confirmed: Mao Zedong’s Thought is still to be considered the “great and valuable spiritual asset of our Party.” And Hu Yaobang in his official speech specified: “Our Party has reiterated that it is necessary to uphold the four fundamental principles of the socialist road, the people’s democratic leadership (i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat), the Communist Party leadership; and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong’s Thought” (*Beijing Review*, 13 June 1981). While a new constitution of the CCP was prepared along these lines, a “socialist spiritual civilization” was promoted to rekindle the revolutionary enthusiasm, and intellectuals were offered new “guided freedom,” following Deng’s principle of searching truth from facts.<sup>34</sup>

It was in such context that, at the beginning of March 1981, the CCP official magazine *Hongqi* (Red Flag) published an article entitled: “Why must China practise freedom of religious belief?” The author, Lei Zhenchang, started off by confirming that the ideology guiding the Party and the country is Marxism, which “is thorough going materialism. Not only is it in disagreement with the religious idealist world outlook, but it also attempts to gradually emancipate those who believe in religion from the fetters of religion.” He consequently found nothing

<sup>33</sup> Spending a Sunday in Guangzhou, I was happy to be invited to celebrate Mass in the cathedral, at a side altar dedicated to Our Lady. Obviously, the missal available was the Latin one with the old liturgy. I was impressed by the several people attending in devout prayer.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Angelo S. Lazzarotto, *The Catholic Church in Post-Mao China* (Hong Kong 1982), pp. 94-96. I am taking the liberty to use the documentation and comments collected for that book extensively in this chapter, published by the Hong Kong Holy Spirit Study Centre.

amiss with article 46 of the current Constitution: "A clergyman enjoys freedom to preach theism in a house of worship, and an atheist enjoys freedom to propagate atheism." The same interpretation of the "freedom of religious belief" was proposed to the general public (*Guangming Ribao, China Reconstructs*, etc.), while feudal superstitious activities were condemned, along with witchcraft and sorcery. The nature of superstition, however, was not explained, simply repeating that "religion is a kind of superstition, but feudal superstitious activity is not religious activity."

For the Church in China, the year 1981 developed along somehow contradictory lines, alternating hope and disappointment. Pope John Paul II's visit to the Philippines in February proved a major event also for the Christians of Overseas Chinese Communities. On 18 February, the Pope, meeting with their representatives at the Manila Apostolic Nunciature, extended a specific rich message also to "the dear brothers and sisters in China," expressing his "esteem for the great country." He mentioned how the Jesuit Matteo Ricci "understood and appreciated Chinese culture fully from the beginning," regretting that his example was not always followed. He recalled that "a genuine and faithful Christian is also a genuine and good citizen," and stressed that "a good Chinese Catholic works loyally for the progress of the nation, observes the obligations of filial piety towards parents, family and country." Hinting at his desire to open a constructive dialogue with the Chinese authorities, Pope John Paul II repeated that "the Church has no other aim than to be faithful to the mission entrusted to her ... She desires no privileges, but only that all those who follow Christ may be able to express their faith freely and publicly and to live according to their consciences." News of the papal visit was practically ignored by the Chinese press, and comments of the official Catholic structures were along the usual lines: Rome, besides repeating conciliatory words, should prove its respect for the Church in China by acting on the two main bones of contention, the Taiwan issue and the Chinese Church's right to manage its affairs.

As Pope John Paul II continued his pilgrimage in Japan, he asked Cardinal Agostino Casaroli to go and meet Bishop Dominic Deng, then aged 72, who was recovering in Hong Kong from an operation for intestinal cancer. The content of their talks was not revealed, but obviously Deng was seen as a sign of hope by the Vatican. Observers mentioned that the Chinese Church officials surely had sufficient confidence in him as they "reappointed" him Bishop of Guangzhou, and the government was apparently also sure enough of his loyalty to allow him to go to Hong Kong. (In any case, the Cantonese Jesuit was officially reported to have repented his crimes before being released.) Meanwhile the international magazine *Newsweek* (9 March 1981) quoted Bishop Michael Fu recalling that "before liberation in 1949 the Chinese Catholic Church was a 'colonial' religion. And now, after 30 years, we see the need for the church to be independent and autonomous." He then went on mentioning underground activities ("acts of sabotage") against China by people from abroad, hinting that the Vatican might be behind them. Bishop Fu was echoing an alarming message just published as the opening statement in the second issue of the new magazine jointly signed by the

Catholic Patriotic Association and the Church Affairs Commission, entirely written in Chinese but carrying also an English title “The Catholic Church in China.”

### 11. An Unfortunate Blunder

Bishop Dominic Deng, once his health improved to allow him to travel, left Hong Kong for Manila and Italy on 28 April, accompanied by Franco Belfiori, S.J., and two days later he was received privately by Pope John Paul II. His arrival had probably passed unnoticed. A week later in fact, Vatican observer Desmond O’Grady, mentioning Casaroli’s invitation to Bishop Deng to go on a visit to the Pope, commented that “Deng would probably need a tacit approval by the Beijing authorities for such trip,” and concluded: “It will therefore be important to know when Deng will reach Rome” (cf. *Il Mondo*, 8 May 1981). It was later revealed that in early May Bishop Deng made a courtesy visit to the Chinese embassy in Rome, where he was politely received by the officer in charge, in the absence of the ambassador, but there had been no discussion of specific issues. Deng met John Paul II again a few days before the assassination attempt on the Pope (on 13 May) that polarized world attention. In the weeks that followed, the bishop visited some old friends and schoolmates, besides going as a pilgrim to Lourdes and Fatima. At the beginning of June he was back in Rome, attending the centenary celebrations of the Councils of Constantinople and Ephesus at Pentecost.

Things changed dramatically on Saturday 6 June, the eve of Pentecost, when *L’Osservatore Romano* carried among routine Vatican news the following statement: “The Holy Father has promoted Mons. Dominic Tang (Deng), S.J., to the metropolitan See of Canton, of which he had till then been the apostolic administrator as titular bishop of Elathea” (translation taken from the weekly English edition of 15 June). Technically speaking, Deng’s “promotion” was but the recognition of a title due to him already in 1950, when Pope Pius XII made him responsible of the Canton archdiocese; at that time, to succeed the old French archbishop Fourquet, Dominic Tang (Deng) had in fact been appointed only as apostolic administrator.

But how to judge the sudden decision taken by the Vatican authorities? The way Bishop Deng, being present in Rome, let things develop shows that perhaps, after two decades in prison and in isolation, “his political awareness was insufficient,” as somebody wrote afterwards. But the way the Roman Curia bureaucrats have handled the case betrays a total lack of consideration for the delicate situation of the Church and for national feelings in New China. The decision taken with the so-called “promotion” should have been explained first to the Chinese side and a satisfactory account offered to the press and to public opinion.

Over the weekend, the *Osservatore’s* casual news item was generally picked up by the international press as a sign of improved relations between Vatican and Beijing, while no word was coming from China. The situation exploded on 11 June with a violent statement of, Bishop Yang Gaojian on behalf of the official Chinese Church. His accusation was repeated the same day by the official Xinhua agency and widely echoed throughout the whole country. Within days, Deng’s

elevation was bitterly denounced by various officials of the CCPA and by individual bishops, accusing the Vatican of “rudely interfering in the sovereign affairs of the Chinese Church.” On 22 June, the Guangzhou Catholic Patriotic Association declared Deng a “running dog of the Roman Curia” and a traitor of the Chinese people, and voted to dismiss him as bishop. A month later (18 July), a long “Letter to all the clergy and faithful throughout China” signed by the three Church executive committees was circulated among the Catholic communities in the country. Besides accusing the Vatican of spreading rumours and secretly distributing booklets of a reactionary nature, the letter tried to prove the right of the local clergy and faithful to choose their bishops (“this is the apostolic tradition”). Soon after, the Xinhua agency reported the solemn consecration in Beijing of five new bishops, “democratically” elected by their respective congregations (for the diocese of Shenyang, Tianshui, Dali, Nanjing and Suzhou); the entire ceremony was filmed by the State television, as “a counter-blow to the Vatican.”

The incident had shattered hopes of rapprochement between Holy See and China with Archbishop Deng playing a leading role. It was aptly described as a “blunder on both sides.”<sup>35</sup> The failure was bitterly felt in Hong Kong, where Deng was well appreciated. The Director of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, Father John Tong, wrote an accurate account of the event for the Chinese diocesan weekly and for the magazine *Tripod/Ding*.<sup>36</sup> He offered also some useful suggestions to help break the impasse caused by lack of communication and understanding between China and the Vatican. The first issue of *Tripod/Ding*, the new bilingual publication of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, had come out rather timidly in January 1981. Today, over three decades later, it is rightly appreciated as a major link and support of the Hong Kong Church to the sister Churches in the Mainland. Counting on a committed research and editorial staff, *Tripod* is happily reaching out to its 35th volume.

At the beginning of October 1981, the China-Canada Programme organized in Montréal an international conference on “China and the Churches: A New Beginning.” Among the 150 delegates personally invited (in majority Protestants), eleven were from China, with four Catholics. I found the gathering quite informative. In the concrete context, the position of the official Chinese Catholic leadership was proposed as could be expected; but bishops Michael Fu Tieshan and Anthony Tu Shihua did not try to impose their presence at the Eucharist celebrated by the participating Catholic priests.

---

<sup>35</sup> R. Pascoe (Reuter), “Bishop Tang (Deng) affair was blunder on both sides,” *H.K. Standard* (3 July 1981).

<sup>36</sup> *Kung Kao Po* (17 July 1981); *Tripod/Ding* No. 4 (1981), pp. 29-31: “The Vatican approach and the feeling of the Chinese.”

## 12. The Priority of Promoting Friendship

In the same month of October 1981, an international gathering to celebrate the Jesuit Martino Martini (1614–1661) was held in Trento (Italy).<sup>37</sup> The participation of some scholars from the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences and Academia Sinica, which had been negotiated during previous ICI's visits, highlighted the importance of Martino Martini as a missionary and a recognized scientist.

A new official delegation of the ICI went to China in December 1981, at the invitation of Mr. Wang Pingnan's CAFFC. As I was asked by Senator Vittorino Colombo to join in, it was for me a fresh chance to meet with State officials and get acquainted with new expressions of Chinese society and its modernization efforts. Besides Beijing, the programme included Hangzhou, Shanghai and Guangzhou. In the capital, of particular interest proved the meeting we had at the People's Assembly Hall with Vice Premier Bo Yibo, who spoke of the Chinese priorities to reform the economy and bureaucratic structure. Also interesting was a visit to the Beijing University, where the rector Professor Zhang Longxiang told us that he had recently signed a cooperation protocol with Rome University. Senator Colombo was then invited to give a talk to a selection of students and answer their questions. At a dinner offered at the Italian embassy for the Chinese officers, Wang Pingnan recalled the meeting Senator Colombo had just the previous day with Deng Xiaoping. With reference to the Vatican question, the Chinese leader was quoted as saying that, if the Holy See breaks diplomatic relation with Taiwan, Beijing is ready to discuss positively the various standing problems. But on the same day (13 December 1981) Xinhua published a denunciation by Zhang Zhiyi, deputy head of the CCP's United Front, of "increasing infiltration by reactionary foreign religious forces," following the wishes of the *Curia Romana* ... While in the capital, we paid a short visit also to the restored tomb of Matteo Ricci, which stands out in the ancient small cemetery between those of Adam Schall and Ferdinand Verbiest. An archaeologist of the ministry of Cultural Treasures explained that the bilingual main stone of Ricci's tomb had been knocked down by the Red Guards but not broken, nor the body been touched.

On a Sunday afternoon I had an unexpected encounter. That morning, while standing at the gate of the (still closed) Dongtang church along Wangfujing road, I was approached by a man who, speaking French, expressed the wish to talk about Church problems, and we agreed to meet again that afternoon. As he saw me arriving, he just started walking casually at my side for a while; then he mentioned that his name was Jacques and that he would be glad if I could visit his home. Wouldn't that be dangerous for him, I asked. No, he assured, as he lives outside the urban area; besides, he had taken precautions. We boarded a couple of buses and then walked five minutes towards a railway yard, to a building where he lived with other co-workers. On the way he told me that his family had

---

<sup>37</sup> The Acts of such Symposium were published (in Italian and English) under the title: *Martino Martini. Geografo – Cartografo – Storico – Teologo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale* (Trento 1983).

converted to Christianity some 300 years before and had known martyrdom. He, after studying theology with the Lazarist Fathers, had taken the vows in 1957, but the religious communities were soon disbanded and he asked and obtained dispensation and married; yet, soon he and his wife were sent to labour camps. He knows all the priests at Nantang church, but he feels that they do not like to see him. Now he works on the trains and his wife is a nurse at a railway clinic: today, being Sunday, she is having rest. At a certain point he asks whether I am a priest. I answer vaguely: "What do you think?" and he looks at me smiling ... As we entered his home, he did not hesitate to introduce me: "He is a priest!" With his wife and a ten year old boy (a teenage girl, they mentioned, was out), there was also an elderly lady. They all knelt down asking to be blessed. Mentioning Rome, they then asked if I had seen the Pope: they knew he had been wounded. The old lady, Aloysia by name, explained that she had been in the same labour camp as Jacques's wife; she was a religious sister of the Servants of the Holy Spirit and still remembers German and speaks some French. She had prepared a letter for her congregation, and when I assured that I could take it to Europe, she happily gave it to me, simply wrapped with packing paper. They asked me to bless some water and to sprinkle the house and some holy pictures with it. As they wanted to send their greetings to Pope John Paul II, Jacques sat down to write a short message in Latin, which they all signed. They were happy to receive some rosaries and medals, with a prayer book, that I had with me.

The year ended with the sad news that several Jesuits and some diocesan priests, who had already spent years in labour camps, had been arrested again, including the well-known Zhu Hongshen, in Shanghai and other provinces. This decision was connected perhaps with a general crackdown on Chinese dissidents having contacts with foreigners.

### **13. New Chinese Constitutional Law and Religious Policy**

During 1982, numerous accounts coming from China confirmed the growing presence and vitality of Catholic communities, and at the same time political overtones and accusations often hitting the Vatican. An occasion of fresh misunderstanding was a Letter sent by Pope John Paul II on Lunar New Year to the world bishops asking them to pray for the Church in China; even more provoking appeared his special celebration held for the same purpose on 21 March in Saint Peter Basilica. Though the Pope made no explicit mention of persecution, Bishop Yang Gaojian declared it a "vicious slander" simply implying that Chinese Catholics were being persecuted.

In the first half of April 1982, I was invited to accompany a new group of Italian friends, who had chosen to come first to Hong Kong, entering China via Canton, to Hangzhou, Shanghai, Chengdu, Xi'an and Beijing. I only mention here a few details from my travel notes. In Hangzhou it was possible to meet with a local history professor, Xu Mingde, who helped the local authorities to appreciate the contribution to dialogue and cultural exchange with the West offered in the 17th century by Father Martino Martini; as a consequence, both Mar-

tini's tomb and the church erected by him were now being restored. In Shanghai, visiting the history faculty at Fudan University, I had the opportunity to explain the Macerata project to celebrate the 4th centenary of Matteo Ricci's entering China. In Chengdu, visiting the restored cathedral church, though it was not possible to meet Bishop Li Xiting, I could present some sets of church vestments (also for Bishop Duan of Wanxian) offered by Professor Demarchi. We reached Xi'an on Easter Sunday, and could admire the cathedral crowded by devout faithful. Returning there in the evening, I noticed how the church property occupied by the authorities had been used for industrial projects, with a candy factory erected just in front of the cathedral. After the solemn Mass, I had a friendly conversation with Bishop Johannes Ji Huairang. The following day, visiting the ancient Mosque, we had the opportunity to meet and talk also with the local Imam.

The new Constitution of the Country adopted by the People's National Assembly on 4 December, in which article 36 guarantees freedom of religious belief, proved a positive page in China's political life. While a draft of this new Constitution was publicly discussed,<sup>38</sup> the CCP was preparing for its 12th Congress, due in September. In such context, reconsidering the Party's policy on religion was of crucial importance. In June 1982, *Hongqi*, the ideological organ of the Party's Central Committee, came out with a lengthy editorial entitled: "The fundamental policy of our Party on religious questions during the Socialist period." On reading it, I became convinced of its enduring importance, and studied it carefully; commentaries I wrote about such comprehensive view of religion were published in Chicago and Rome.<sup>39</sup> As a matter of fact, more than 30 years later, religious questions are treated in China still according to that "fundamental policy."

A welcoming good news for Catholics was the opening in Shanghai, on 11 October 1982, of the first seminary, with 36 students coming also from neighbouring dioceses. The simple ceremony held at Sheshan hill was presided over by the Jesuit father Aloysius Jin Luxian, the rector, at the presence of Shanghai bishop Zhang Jiashu and other bishops from Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui. In the same month, an International Study Conference on the fourth centenary of the coming of Matteo Ricci to China was held in Macerata and Rome. Pope John Paul II chose to attend the concluding session at the Gregoriana University on 25

---

<sup>38</sup> Published in *Renmin ribao* on 28 April, the following day an official "Explanation" also appeared, suggesting that comments to the draft would be welcome. An Editorial in *Tripod/Ding* No. 9 (June 1982), pp. 71-72, praised the progress made, when compared with the previous Constitutions of the Country. It offered also a double comment: the meaning of "normal" religious activities entitled to receive state protection should be clarified. As for the question of excluding "any foreign domination" in religious affairs: "It is not clear whether the article also includes the unity between the local (Catholic) Church and the universal Church."

<sup>39</sup> "The Chinese Communist Party and Religion," *Missiology. An International Review* XI (July 1983) 3, pp. 267-290; "La politica della Cina Comunista nei confronti della Religione," *Nuova Umanità* No. 34/35 (July/October 1984), pp. 59-99.

October '82. The address he delivered was a significant recognition of Ricci's contribution to mediate between East and West and an authoritative declaration of openness towards New China's realities.<sup>40</sup>

#### 14. Rediscovering Giulio Aleni, the "Scholar from the West"

Just about that time, I was struck by a study on "Giulio Aleni, conveyor of medieval Western learning," which appeared in the bilingual magazine of the Hong Kong Holy Spirit Study Centre.<sup>41</sup> The research by Bernard Hung-kay Luk of the local Chinese University had been inspired by a happy coincidence: The Jesuit Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) was born just as Matteo Ricci was beginning his outstanding experience in China. Having followed Ricci in China, Aleni (Ai Rulüe in Chinese) became one of the most outstanding exemplar of Ricci's methods. After residing in Hangzhou, he spent several years as a trusted and privileged friend of many Chinese scholars in Fuzhou, where he was buried with honour.<sup>42</sup>

Such portrait induced me to learn more about Aleni, in the hope that his memory might open new ways of cooperation and intercultural exchange. In Spring 1983, I was able to spend a week in Fujian province. In the capital Fuzhou, travelling alone I was particularly impressed by the popular support enjoyed by a couple of Protestant churches. Then, on reaching the Cangshan district, south of the river Min, I had a taste of Catholic life right in the compound of the Cathedral of the Holy Rosary. Besides greeting the parish priest, I was introduced to father Joseph Huang Ziyu, who was happy to tell me that he had studied theology in Rome. He explained that his diocese was Xiamen (Amoy), whose former Spanish bishop, J.B. Velasco, O.P., appointed him as vicar capitular in 1948, upon leaving the country. According to him, the great majority of believers, priests and bishops in China (even those officially bound to the patriotic structures), are loyal to our common faith, though they cannot express their heart. In our long conversation he said and insisted that the Holy See should pay more attention to the real needs of the Chinese Church and to the sensitive social situation. Huang considered unacceptable, for instance, that the exiled foreign bishops, almost three decades after their forced departure, still retained the former canonical titles (and authority). He was coming often from Xiamen to Fuzhou to teach some local young people wishing to enter the seminary; he ap-

---

<sup>40</sup> Father Matteo Ricci, the Pope said, "succeeded in establishing between the Church and Chinese culture a bridge, which still appears solid and safe, despite the misunderstandings, which have taken place in the past and are still renewed." He also stressed that "what the Chinese people particularly admire in Father Ricci's scientific work in China is his humble, honest and disinterested attitude, not inspired by ulterior motives and free from links with any foreign economic or military power." See *Papal Documents Related to China, 1937–2005*, p. 310.

<sup>41</sup> *Tripod/Ding* No. 11 (1982), pp. 45-50.

<sup>42</sup> His tomb, on a hill outside the city, had become with time the cemetery of the Catholic community. It was destroyed, unfortunately, during the Cultural Revolution, and the site was taken over by the military.