

RELIGIOUS REPRESSION IN CHINA PERSISTS

A new list of religious prisoners from Hebei indicates that the crackdown on religious freedom in that northeastern province is continuing. As noted in an earlier Asia Watch report,¹ not only do a considerable percentage of China's Catholics live in Hebei, but many of those who do maintain their loyalty to the Pope, eschewing ties with the "official" Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Beginning in 1989² and intensifying over the past two years, officials from the highest levels of Party and government have directed a determined effort to root out these "underground" bishops, priests and laypersons, maintaining that their responsibility for "hostile infiltration from abroad" threatens the motherland. At the same time, Chinese officials have gone to considerable lengths to publicize the releases of those who they say have broken the law, but have truly repented.³

The newest information severely undermines Chinese assertions of leniency. The pattern of arrests and trials established in Hebei in 1989 continues, and alleged releases are not releases at all. Asia Watch has been informed, for example, that two bishops, **Paul Liu Shuhé** and **Peter Chen Jianzhang** are being held against their will. The Chinese authorities insist that the bishops were never accused of wrongdoing and that they have been freed and are now being cared for in "old-age homes." However,

¹ *Freedom of Religion in China*, January 1992.

² See Central Office Document No.3, *Circular on Stepping Up Control Over the Catholic Church to Meet the New Situation*, February 17, 1989.

³ An Asia Watch source confirmed that **Bishop James Xie Shiguang**, 74, and Fathers **Zhu Rutan** and **Zheng Xinzong** (previously identified only as Fathers Zhu and Zheng) from Xiapu, Fujian were released on January 28, 1992. Premier Li Peng reportedly told President George Bush the three had breached Chinese law but were repentant. The releases are widely reported to have been an "offering" in exchange for President Bush's agreement to a bilateral meeting at the United Nations on January 31, 1991.

Fathers Zhu and Zheng were previously reported only by their surnames. The three were arrested, along with seven others, in Fu'an City on July 27, 1990 while conducting a meeting on church affairs at Loujiang Church. Four of the ten may still be in custody. Three who were previously released are confined to house arrest in their respective villages. The conditions attaching to the latest releases are unknown.

neither their friends nor families have succeeded in establishing contact.

A report said to have originated with Chinese authorities, that Bishop Liu had been transferred from a "re-education through labor facility" to a "home," implying that he is now free, misstates his status, according to new information obtained by Asia Watch. In October 1988, Bishop Liu, the 69-year-old second bishop of Yixian, was sentenced administratively to three years "re-education through labor." The charges reportedly stemmed from his meeting a visiting cleric from the Philippines. A year later, ill with severe cirrhosis of the liver. Bishop Liu was permitted to return home for medical treatment, but was kept under house arrest. In mid-December 1990, with his term of "re-education" still incomplete, he was again detained. The security officers who came to his home said they wanted to take him to Baoding for a discussion and promised to bring him back once matters were settled. He never returned home.

A year later, in mid-December 1991, when Bishop Liu's original term had been completed, family members repeatedly asked the Public Security Bureau for his release. Finally they were told, "He is kept and provided for by the country. Do not ask any more where he is now." Requests to visit were denied.

Bishop Chen's case is similar. The bishop "disappeared" from his residence in Xiefangying, Xushui County in mid-December 1990 and reportedly was held in a "study camp" until his removal to the "old-age home," probably in December 1991. Bishop Chen, a severe diabetic, is completely paralyzed on his right side as a result of a cerebral hemorrhage and is unable to care for himself. Family and friends have been unable to contact him.

The death in police custody of Bishop Paul Shi Chunle, the auxiliary bishop of Baoding, in November 1991 reinforces concerns about Bishops Liu and Chen. Although reliable sources attribute Bishop Shi's death to a heart attack caused by maltreatment, the exact cause is still not known. The bishop, who was almost blind, had a history of serious illnesses including heart disease and possibly diabetes. A lack of medication may have contributed to his death. According to one report, Bishop Chen was with Bishop Shi in the same "old-age home" when he died. According to the Chinese, no charges were pending against Bishop Shi.

According to Asia Watch source, the whereabouts of Bishop Shi were unknown from the time he was secretly led away by Public Security Bureau personnel in mid-December 1990 until his death almost a year later. On November 3, 1991, government personnel escorted members of Bishop Shi's family out of their village. They reappeared the next day with his body and orders to bury him within two days and to refrain from spreading news of his death. The attempt to avoid a large turnout backfired; some 1,500

people attended his funeral.

Bishop Shi, who lived in Xinli Village Church in Qingyuan County, Hebei, and was in charge of young seminarians and novice sisters in Baoding and Yixian dioceses, was arrested December 15, 1990. Born in January 1920, he was ordained a priest on June 1, 1947 and an auxiliary bishop on April 29, 1989. The official church did not recognize his consecration.

The treatment of Bishops Liu and Chen is consistent with other news of alleged releases. In almost every case, the releases are conditional. Religious leaders freed from imprisonment are under strict surveillance, sometimes coupled with intense interrogation. Many of those "released" are confined to their villages, if not to their homes. Some bishops are forced by Chinese to go on "journeys" which effectively removes them from their spheres of influence. Others who are allegedly free have simply "disappeared."

Two such disappearances were reported to Asia Watch in March. Bishop Jullus Jia Zhiguo from Zhending diocese was "nowhere to be found" until word of his December 11, 1991 arrest was received on April 18. According to an Asia Watch source, Bishop Jia was one of the clergymen forced to tour the country; the last news from him was on November 26, 1991. The 57-year old bishop was first arrested on April 7, 1989 and released to the village of Wuqiu, reportedly without any charges having been made against him, on September 11. He was served with an order restricting his movements for three years.

Bishop Joseph Fan Xueyan, the most influential of the underground bishops, who had disappeared once again in December 1990, died on April 16, 1992 while in detention. It is not known where he was being held at the time of his death. In spite of official assertions that he was living and working in Hebei, no one had seen him or heard from him since December 1990. Paroled in 1987 after being sentenced to a ten-year term in 1983, Bishop Fan was still under the jurisdiction of the Public Security Bureau and the charges against him had not been dropped. Chinese authorities insisted all along that he had been released without charge.

According to an Asia Watch source, Bishop Fan was kept in a "re-education camp" in the Shijiazhuang area of Hebei until November 1991 instead of in the church compound in Baoding where he was normally held under a kind of house arrest. He reportedly was then moved to the Baoding countryside.

Bishop Fan, bishop of Baoding Diocese, Hebei Province until his reported resignation from office because of his age, was born on December 29, 1907, ordained a priest on December 22, 1934 and consecrated a bishop on June 24, 1951. At the founding of the clandestine Chinese Bishops' Conference on November 21, 1989, he was elected, in absentia, President of the conference. Throughout his career as a bishop, Bishop Fan was under almost uninterrupted detention or surveillance, always preventing from meeting people freely.

Routine surveillance of those released, even if they have never been charged, continues. A case in point, similar to the many cited in *Freedom of Religion in China*, is that of a Jesuit, Auxiliary Bishop Fan Zhongliang, 73, of Shanghai. Detained on or about June 11, 1991 and released August 19, he is restricted to his residence on the outskirts of Shanghai. Bishop Fan is under constant surveillance and subject to

frequent and intense interrogation, as he was prior to his arrest.⁴

Arrests and Sentences

Among the nineteen arrests newly reported, fifteen of them in Hebei,⁵ that of 72-year old **Bishop Li Zhongrong** of Xianxian in December 1991, has provoked the most controversy. He was the last of the bishops wanted in connection with a November 1989 conference of underground bishops. The meeting had been called to unify the leadership of those loyal to the Pope. All the bishops who attended the conference, with the exception of Bishop Li, who managed to hide for two years, were arrested. The conference was later declared an "illegal organization" by Chinese authorities.

Despite government assurances that Bishop Li was not arrested but left Tianjin No.2 Hospital of his own free will and against doctor's orders,⁶ several sources have reported he was forcibly removed on December 11, 1991. Ill with stomach cancer, the bishop, using the name Li Mu, had two-thirds of his stomach removed on November 28. Authorities discovered his presence on December 8. He was removed to an undisclosed location three days later by plainclothes Public Security officers from Cangzhou County, Hebei. Father John Wang and a seminarian, Wang Gengsheng, as well as several others, may have been arrested in connection with the case. Father Wang, from Tianshui diocese, and Wang Gengsheng, from Xianxian diocese, had helped care for Bishop Li.

Little is known about the alleged offenses of the others arrested, a reflection not only of the

⁴From Jinjiajiang in Henan Province comes a similar report. Two priests, Father **Zhang Shentang**, sentenced to 17-year prison term in the early 1980s, and Father **Zhu Baoyu**, sentenced in 1982 to ten years' imprisonment, are restricted to their village of residence.

Another case from Chenggu Shaanxi Province provides a good example of how reports of the circumstances of "release" are purposely muddled. According to new information, **Bishop Bartholemew Yu Chengdi**, 72, (previously reported as Yu Chengdi) and his brother, Father **Yu Chengxin** have not been heard from since their November 1991 releases. Although, according to Chinese officials, no accusations against them have ever been made, attempts to confirm their status have been fruitless. Bishop Yu "disappeared" from his residence in early August 1991. All those who normally work for him also "disappeared," as did his brother. There is speculation that all were confined in a "re-education" camp. Bishop Yu was first arrested in December 1989 in conjunction with the clandestine Bishops' Conference; he was released from a Xi'an Prison in July 1990 and ordered not to leave Chenggu. Father Yu's fortunes have followed those of his brother. He was arrested and released at about the same time and under the same conditions.

The only new case in which release appears to be unconditional is that of Father **Huo Bingzhang**, sentenced in 1983 to a ten-year sentence. He is staying at a shrine in Donglu village, Hebei, a site frequented by Catholics on pilgrimage.

⁵Two new arrests have been reported from Fuzhou, Fujian Province, those of Fathers **Liu Jiale** and **Liu Shizhong**. There is no additional information available and Asia Watch has not been able to confirm the report.

⁶*Xinhua*, December 31, 1991.

difficulty encountered in obtaining information and the danger in returning to sources for clarification, but of the secrecy surrounding detentions and the lack of information available to friends and family. Some of those arrested have been held as long as 15 months without trial.

Four arrests in December 1990 only recently came to light. **Bishop Liu Difen**, the 75-year-old bishop of Anguo, was arrested for failure to affiliate with the official Catholic Patriotic Association. Three priests arrested on December 14 include **Father Joseph Chen Rongkui**, 28, arrested at the Dingxian railroad station; **Father Paul Liu Shimin**, 32, arrested in Xiefangying, Xushui County; and **Father Peter Hu Duoer**, 32, who was arrested in Liangzhuang Village, Xushui County. According to reports, Father Hu was handcuffed by Public Security officials and treated very roughly before being locked up in a facility in Xushui County. Father Hu Duoer may be the same person as Father Hu Duo who was previously arrested on December 24, 1989 while visiting in Shandong Province. The charges against the four are not known.

The new arrest information extends the pattern into 1991. **Father Gao Fangzhan**, 27, from Yixian diocese was arrested in May 1991 by plainclothes police just outside Shizhu Village in Dingxing County. Another priest from Yixian, **Father Xiao Shixiang**, was arrested in a village in Dingxian on December 12, 1991 after he guided a retreat. He apparently is the same priest who disappeared on his way to Shandong Province on October 20, 1989 and had not been heard of until his recent detention. **Father Liu Heping**, 28, was arrested on December 13 at his home in Shizhu Village, Dingxing County. He had previously been arrested in a police raid in Zhaozhuang Village, Hebei, on June 4, 1990. Although it was known that Father Liu had been subsequently released, no date had been given. Five others, **Father Ma Zhiyuan** and four seminarians were arrested that same day in Houzhuang, Xushui County. There is no information about the reasons for any of the arrests.

On July 28 at midnight, **Father Peter Cui Xingang**, the 30-year-old parish priest in Donglu Village, Qingyuan County was arrested. He has not been heard from since nor is there news of his whereabouts. Donglu is the site of a shrine frequented by Catholics on pilgrimage. And on November 6, **Ma Shunbao**, a deacon, was arrested. No additional information about him is available.

With one exception, all recent sentences of religious figures have been three-year "re-education through labor" (*lao jiao*) terms. These are administrative sentences on advice of Public Security Bureau officials and permit neither defense nor appeal. When such sentences are imposed, the Chinese can technically claim that the person sentenced was "not found legally responsible." The maximum term is three years, but the sentence may be extended another year if authorities judge the detainee to be insufficiently re-educated, and a second term of "re-education" also may be administratively imposed.

Father Wang Jiansheng, 40, arrested on May 19, 1991, as of March 1992 was at Xuanhua Re-education Center in Hebei. **Wang Tongsheng (Tongshang)**, a 56-year old Catholic layman, was being held at the Re-education Center in Chengde, Hebei. Wang's latest arrest came on December 23, 1990. He is probably the deacon and community leader identified as Wang Tongshan who was previously arrested in December 1989, subsequently released, then picked up again and sent to a "study camp." **Father Li Zhongpei**, arrested on December 3, 1990, is now being held at the Re-education Center in Tangshan, Hebei. Asia Watch has no details about the charges against the men, but given the pattern of the crackdown against religious figures in Hebei, their arrests might have to do with their visibility in their communities and their refusals to join the official church.

New information about Zhang Youshen, a 65-year-old retired editor from the Huadong Bu Di Yi Jiaopian Chang (Chemical Industry Department No.1 Film Factory) Baoding, Hebei Province sheds light on the process leading to a sentence of "re-education through labor." Sentenced without trial on July 2, 1991 to a three-year term for writing an unpublished article "Criticism of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association," Zhang is now in Hengshui Labor Camp in Hebei. The official charge against him was counterrevolutionary activity; the trial document charged that he had attacked the Communist Party and the Chinese government in his article. According to an Asia Watch source, Zhang, a graduate of Beijing University's philosophy department, wrote the article out of his "deep interest in religion and philosophy" and not because he was prompted to do so by another party. The article came to light after Zhang lent it to someone and that person was unexpectedly arrested one night. A search of the latter's home turned up the article.

In March, the police came to Zhang's home and ordered him to accompany them to the Public Security Bureau. Later that same day, the family was informed that he was being detained for "shelter for investigation" (*shourong shenchā*). In April, the police searched Zhang's house, looking for any reference material he might have used while writing his article. They confiscated prayer books and hymnals. Because these religious materials were printed by the underground church, they were labeled "illegal printed matter."

Although the family was never officially notified of Zhang's place of detention, they knew he was held in Baoding Detention Station with five young criminals who had already been charged. No family visits were permitted until Zhang was moved in July 1991. Food in detention was poor and insufficient and Zhang's health deteriorated. On orders from the guards, other prisoners would not talk with him. He was not permitted to write letters home as were other prisoners.

Zhang's family has claimed that his treatment violated legal codes. His name was not registered; he was detained in shelter for investigation longer than the permitted three months; investigation was minimal; and he was held with those in other stages of the legal process, including some who had already been convicted. However, shelter for investigation is an administrative procedure, regulated by unpublished internal regulations. The violations claimed by the family are based on a reading of the Criminal Procedure Law, which shelter-for-investigation procedures bypass.

At the labor camp, Zhang works in the fields. He is housed in a small room with three young prisoners and is permitted family visits twice a month in the presence of a police officer. Other prisoners are permitted unsupervised visits.

There is also new information about Zhang Weiming, a Catholic intellectual arrested in December 1990. According to an Asia Watch source, his wife reported on February 29, 1992 that she was finally able to visit him after a lapse of 14 months; she is now permitted monthly visits. She expects Zhang's release on December 15, 1992, which may indicate he has received a two-year sentence.

Although the new cases reported here come almost exclusively from Hebei, there have been arrests of elsewhere including Fujian Province. The preponderance of information about arrests in Hebei may reflect the better network of information-gathering in that province.

INDEX

Chen Jianzhang
Chen Rongkui
Cui Xingang
Fan Xueyan
Fan Zhongliang
Gao Fangzhan
Hu Duoer
Huo Bingzhang
Jia Zhiguo
Li Zhenrong
Li Zhongpei
Lin Jiale
Liu Difen
Liu Heping
Liu Shimin
Liu Shizhong
Liu Shuhe

Ma Shunbao
Ma Zhiyuan
Shi Chunjie
Wang Gengsheng
Wang Jiansheng
John Wang
Wang Tongsheng (Tongshang)
Xiao Shixiang
Xie Shiguang
Yu Chengti (Yu Chengdi)
Yu Chengxin
Zhang Shentang
Zhang Youshen
Zheng Xinzong
Zhu Baoyu
Zhu Rutan

For More Information

Sidney Jones (212) 972-8400
Mickey Spiegel (212) 972-8400

Asia Watch was founded in 1985 to monitor and promote internationally recognized human rights in Asia. The Chair is Jack Greenberg and the Vice Chairs are Harriet Rabb and Orville Schell. The Executive Director is Sidney Jones and the Washington Director is Mike Jendrzeczyk.

Asia Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, which also includes Africa Watch, Americas Watch, Helsinki Watch, Middle East Watch and the Fund for Free Expression. The Chair of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice Chair is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director and Kenneth Roth is Deputy Director. Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director.