



THE CARDINAL KUNG FOUNDATION



Very recently a series of policy changes have occurred within the China mainland. On August 17, 1999, within high-level Chinese Communist cadres, a sixteen-page document was circulated with special reference to the work of the Roman Catholic Church in the mainland, whose contents (in excerpts) are printed below:



A Document from the Inner Center of the Chinese Communist Government

A Proposal to Reinforce the Work on the Roman Catholic Church Under the New Currents of Change

(Secretariat of the Central Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party)



(I) To emphasize the importance, urgent nature, and complexity of the work at hand:

Mention has been made of the principles governing the resumption of diplomatic ties between China and the Vatican: the Vatican should not interfere with the inner government of our country, including the fact that they should not interfere in our internal affairs under the pretext of religious interests. (The Vatican will take advantage of the normalization of relations between China and the Vatican to deny us the rights of independence, sovereignty, and autonomy within the Church, and will seek to regain power over the Roman Catholic Church in China.)

Our immediate and most important task at hand is: To consolidate the Patriotic Church; to exert total control over education so as to obviate the influence of the Roman Catholic underground movement; to preserve the peace and security of society; to confirm and strengthen the sovereign powers of our country's Roman Catholic church; and to ensure that the Patriotic Church is in firm grasp and control of the situation.

(II) To boost and confirm the structure of the Patriotic Church:

Regardless of the future development of Sino-Vatican relations, our firm and unshakable resolve is to maintain independence and self-autonomy at all costs.

A. To confirm the construction of a Catholic patriotic association which will lead the Roman Catholic church, govern it in a spirit of democracy, under different levels and with different points of emphasis:

The final goal of all our work is to rely on a minority of church leaders and faithful, and through their total dependence on the Patriotic Church and related organizations, to ensure that a wholesome and democratic concentration of power is made, so as to counteract and thwart the Vatican from using her special privileged position to grasp and control our country's church.

To administer the church through democratic means might arouse certain doubts in the minds of some of the clergy or some of the bishops, or even the obstruction and interference of international Roman Catholic extreme conservatives.

Democratic procedure and democratic administration should be combined with the general administration of religious affairs, and there should neither be too much haste in doing so, which might affect the unity and stability of the Roman Catholic church in China, nor should inaction take place because of constraints imposed by traditional and conservative rules and regulations.

B. To adapt and adjust the powers of the Patriotic Church with the work functions of the Chinese Bishops' conference.

The basic work function of the Patriotic Church is to assist the government in carrying out her policy of freedom of religion, and to realize her goal of independence and self-autonomy in religion. The Patriotic Church and the bishops' conference should join together in a combined control of church affairs under the premises of democratic governance, self-sufficient social services, and external activities. Unity is emphasized, and also participation in socialist modernization and reconstruction.

The duties of the bishops' conference is to manage church affairs under the principles of independence and democracy.

"Faith in Action" is the motto for the church, and to represent the Chinese Church's activities to the outside world.

The conference of representatives of the Chinese Roman Catholic Church constitutes the highest forum of power for all the country's Catholics. And it is through elections made by them that the leaders are selected under the principle of "One Association and One Conference" (One Patriotic Association and One Bishops' Conference) and they deliberate over work reports and draw up and revise rules.

The Central United Front and the Bureau for Religious Affairs wish to direct and guide all the regulations governing "One Association and One Conference". And at the present moment, they will draw up strictly the work conditions of the Patriotic Church, as well as rules governing the administration of each diocese. They wish to adapt and reinforce the leading elite of "One Association and One Conference", to pick out and select Catholic intellectuals to reinforce the Chinese Patriotic Church, and to pick out priests for on-the-spot work with the bishops' conference.

The automatic self-governing units of each city and province should also be adapted in accordance with the functioning powers of "two societies" and the organizational system of work. They should register supervisory articles under the heading of each social group. Related rules should gradually be set up in each diocese to ensure that a democratic institutional system takes

place. Cities and counties with a comparatively heavier load of church duties should establish their own Patriotic Church unit, or other comparable democratic organizations. The governing elite should take over and exercise their rights and powers.

C. To carry out effectively the United Front tactics, they should assist patriotic organizations to solve practical difficulties and problems.

Effective measures should be taken to resolve different problems, the political status and salaries of responsible functionaries within each Patriotic Church should be dealt with on a national or provincial basis.

To open up and develop veteran members of patriotic organizations, help to choose a group of politically dependable members to fill the positions of the governing elite.

The appointment of bishops and the realignment of diocese boundaries -- All bishops over seventy-five years of age should be aided in their daily work by the appointment of an auxiliary bishop. To prevent work mishaps, a sense of urgency is needed, and strict observation of functions.

Bishops should be elected on a systematic basis, and a class should be arranged for fostering future candidates for bishoprics. Young or middle-aged priests, or classes for teaching core members of the Patriotic Church. Solutions should be found for problems in connection with thought-indoctrination. Their political awareness should be raised and enhanced.

(III) Education should be fully exploited to guard against the influence of the Underground Church.

The normalization of relations between China and the Vatican should help to solve the problems raised by the power and influence of the Underground Church. This favorable opportunity could even be used to win over the majority of the underground church members, for it is an important element in the central government's battle strategy. If we do not take advantage of this opportunity, we will find ourselves being used by the Vatican in a passive way, and so we should adopt special tactics, and take a more positive and active part.

A. Educational movement

. . . (While) the majority of them, because of strict religious observation, disapprove of the idea of autonomy and independence within the church, only the tiniest minority use religious problems to create riots or disturbances, or to oppose the government.

The government's aim is to convert the majority and isolate the minority, to see that real power within the Roman Catholic church should be vested in the hands of the Patriotic Church.

To differentiate between the bishops and priests of the Underground Church, to distinguish each separate case.

Suitable disposition should be made for those who have come over, in order to guard against future agitations. It is necessary to overcome those who have negative reactions and who fear

continued battle and difficulties. Political standards should be lowered, and mass acceptance simplified. One should guard against the core of the Underground Church emerging from hiding to take over power in the Patriotic Church, and employing open and legal positions to continue their battle with us. Illegal criminal activities should be strictly punished according to law.

B. Conversion work to be undertaken under different circumstances.

The guiding principles of conversion should be “To observe the country’s constitutional law and other laws, obey management by the government, promise not to carry out any further illegal activities, and accept the government of the Patriotic Church.”

Prior to the normalization of relations between China and the Vatican, if underground bishops from the “One Association and One Conference” organization make the necessary arrangements and acknowledge their bishop’s status, then everything should go smoothly. But those who agree to accept government instructions, but who refuse to obey the Patriotic Church should be the focal center of our conversion tactics.

Underground priests who meet the requirements of conversion should be dealt with on a provincial basis. Those underground bishops who do not meet these conditions should be educated for conversion, but at the same time strict measures should be taken to prevent them from consecrating underground priests.

After the normalization of relations between China and the Vatican, measures should be taken to deal with those bishops and priests of the Underground Church who have not been converted. From the motto of “One Association and One Conference”, a public proclamation should be made requesting them to sign and register within a specified period of time under the principle of “One Person, One Case”, and their cases will be examined, and each person will be dealt with separately according to outer circumstances:

1. Each bishop or priest will be required to change his place of residence in order to prevent him or them from building on the influence which they have already gained in the past in that district.
2. For the aged and weak priests who are unable to carry out their pastoral duties, they should be dealt with by their residential and local leaders for retirement in an old folks’ home.
3. To those who have carried on long-term opposition to the government, and who have refused to cooperate, regardless of whether the Vatican acknowledges his bishop’s status, we, on our side, refuse to recognize them. Those underground priests who have not converted will be treated to collective re-education. They will be taught at seminaries allocated by the “One Association, One Conference” people, and which should not be for less than one year. For those who have met the official requirements, then their status as a priest will be recognized, and they will be allocated to their appointed church, to carry out their priestly duties. For those who do not meet the official requirements, then their priestly status will not be recognized, nor will they be allowed to carry out any ecclesiastical duty or function.
4. Within the time limit, those underground bishops who refuse to register with the provincial “One Association, One Conference” people, and those underground priests

who refuse to undergo re-education at government-stipulated seminaries will be denied the right to participate in any activity as a priest.

5. Those underground bishops and priests who have been denied by the government their spiritual status will be forcibly re-educated under the system of separate work for separate individuals, with individual responsibility for the person you are assigned to. Those responsible for inciting a riot or for any illegal action will be dealt with severely by the police authorities. Those churches or locations under the control of the Underground Church will be reorganized, and those which comply with our conditions will be registered legally and assigned to regular supervision. As for illegal housing which meets the needs of the congregation, renewed transactions will be made, and all other such housing will be settled through routine procedures. All seminaries and convents which are funded by the Underground Church will be publicly dismantled. All members of the novitiate, whether men or women, who behave well will be allowed to continue their studies at regular seminaries; those who do not behave well will be sent back to their home province.

(IV) We adopt strong measures in order to protect the safety and security of society.

Great emphasis is placed on public safety and security during the period of the normalization of relations between China and the Vatican. Early preventive measures have been taken against all factors which contribute to social unrest. After the normalization of relations between China and the Vatican, every care must be taken to guard against the interference and control of the Roman See when based on their legal status and position. In regions where the Underground Church is most powerful, we must take every care to guide, direct, and re-educate the faithful. We must try and prevent religious fever. On the contrary, religious fever should control and prevent the Underground Church from taking advantage of the opportunity to organize large-scale meetings, demonstrations and parades. Matters have been settled since the Chinese Communist government came into being, and in recent years the composite legal settlements of individual cases in accordance with the law should not be overturned. During the period of normalization of relations, we should prevent the zeal for building churches to come uppermost. Those churches built illegally under the auspices of the Underground Church and already destroyed will not be allowed to be reconstructed.

(V) We should increase the guidance and direction by party and government over Roman Catholic church work.

A. Superiors and heads of departments should penetrate to the very foundations, to the man in the street; they should carry out their ecclesiastical duties with great circumspection, and should carry out their functions on behalf of the faithful on a face-to-face basis:

1. Increase and enhance the establishment of party units at the basic level of farm and village.
2. Proclaim party policy and legal enactments with regard to religion.
3. In accordance with the State Council's legislation on the control of locations for religious activities, and where problems most arise, control should be imposed on trouble spots, more especially those under the supervision of the underground Roman Catholic Church.
4. To set up democratic organizations under the control of village units.

5. Help the Church to establish wholesome democratic supervisory organizations and their legal enactments. To select carefully those in charge of overseeing churches. From a long-range perspective, the disposition of Roman Catholic problems will gradually go under legal channels, and will be legally supervised by the Bureau for Religious Affairs of the government. All diocese will be registered by the provincial headquarters. All Catholic organizations and Catholic churches will be registered locally and also governed locally. Central and national bureaus with their related departments wish to establish a directive center for the Roman Catholic Combined Work Conference system, and so to enhance work arrangements.

The above words are a summary of a document issued on August 16, 1999. This document represents the guiding policy of the Chinese Communist government towards future Catholic work during the immediate period prior to and following the normalization of relations between China and the Vatican. Her policy has not changed, for she does not intend to give up independence and sovereignty in Church matters. From this, we can deduce that if China and the Vatican establish diplomatic relations, it would be impossible for the Chinese Communists to make any concessions. Even with continued discussions, the Holy See would still not be in a position to solve factual problems. If Communist China should resume diplomatic relations with the Holy See, then tragedy would befall the Church in China, and it would leave a terrible impression on fellow Catholics in Taiwan, and even the power and authority of the Pope would be cast in jeopardy.

What is more horrible is the strict policy adopted towards members of the Underground Church. Regarding the loyal Church, the real Roman Catholic Church in China, the Chinese Communists refuse to recognize it as legal, and it continues to suffer persecution in silence. For over half a century, so many bishops, priests, and laymen and laywomen have chosen the bloody path of martyrdom in order to remain true to their faith. Nowadays, the Chinese Communists call it the underground force, and very recently quite a few districts have been placed by the Chinese Communists under "conversion tactics", even harder to bear than open persecution.

It is our hope that the Holy See, as well as other western specialists on the Church in China, can scrutinize it carefully, and publicize it amongst all the other church authorities, so that the Underground Church in China will be spared any further calamity, and so that the Church can flourish as the one, the most holy, and the most Catholic Church, transmitted by the earliest apostles, and under the leadership of the Roman pontiff. I happened to come upon this document by accident, but it is most important, and should be treated with the utmost care, and corresponding measures to deal with it should be transmitted into the hands of our loyal Church. May God's Church in China continue to flourish! Let us pray to God for His protection of the Chinese Church, and for His loving guidance of China's pastors and all the faithful!