



November, 2008

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INTERNATIONAL & TAIWAN

Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou shook hands with Chen Yunlin, chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, and Beijing's most senior envoy to the island. This was the first time that a Taiwanese President had met with such a senior Communist figure since 1949. Chen's five day visit to negotiate further transport links has courted much controversy in Taiwan, with sit-in protests by some students and public protests accusing Ma of 'selling out'. Chen's deputy, Zhang Mingqing, was shoved and jostled in the street when he visited Taiwan last month. (Originally reported by SCMP, 4 Nov; AsiaNews, 4, 6 Nov)

Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou said both sides of the Taiwan Straits are striving for peace. '... Both sides have expressed goodwill and built more consensus and mutual trust.' Ma acknowledged that the consensus was still fragile, but said he was optimistic for the future. 'My objective is to turn Taiwan into a peacemaker', he told a delegation from the Carnegie Institute. Beijing has also allowed a former Taiwanese vice-president, Lien Chan, to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Lima from November 20-23. (Originally reported by DPA, 14 Nov)

Former Taiwanese President, Chen Shui-bian has begun a hunger strike in protest at his arrest. Chen is under investigation for corruption during his eight years as president, and was arrested on 12 November after a court found he could be held for up to four months to prevent his collusion with co-accused. He has yet to be formally charged. He admitted in August that he had broken the law by not disclosing campaign donations. Nine other people are being held in connection with the same allegations of corruption. (Originally reported by AP, 13 Nov.)

Pope Benedict XVI has welcomed growing ties between Taipei and Beijing. He told the Taiwanese ambassador to the Vatican, Larry Wang Yu-yuan, that the Vatican is 'eager to promote peaceful solutions to disputes of whatever kind' and praised the ROC government for maintaining freedom of religion. Ambassador Wang noted that 'The reconciliation of relations with mainland China will bring a more stable and peaceful environment not only for Asia, but for the world as a whole. ... [Taiwan] will restore its role as a peace-maker and responsible stakeholder in the international community.' (Originally reported by UCAN, 11 Nov; Zenit 10 Nov)

During a week-long visit to Japan, the Dalai Lama said that Tibetans were being handed 'a death sentence' under Beijing's current approach. He said the situation was like living under martial law'. He also said that he was 'semi-retiring' or taking more of a back seat in negotiations with China because of the stalled state of the talks. His faith in the Chinese government was becoming 'thinner, thinner, thinner'. A forthcoming conference in Dharamsala would settle the future approach, he said. (Originally reported by AP, 2 Nov; AFP, 3 Nov)



China Desk e-Bulletin



The Dalai Lama has said that he may appoint a regent to lead the Tibetan exiled movement after his death, until his reincarnation is old enough to assume power. The idea was mooted at a six-day conference of 600 representatives of the exile community (17-22 Nov). The conference was called to discuss the future of the Dalai Lama's "middle-way" strategy of seeking Tibetan autonomy rather than independence. Conference delegates continued to approve of this approach, but cautioned that progress would have to be made soon. The 23 year-old Karmapa Lama is the most likely candidate for the regency. Tenzin Takhla, a spokesman for the Dalai, said that the regent's authority would be spiritual rather than political. The Dalai scotched any talk of his imminent retirement. Other debates at the conference centred on whether traditional selection methods should be used to find the next Dalai, or whether the current Dalai Lama could identify a successor while he was still alive. Beijing issued guidelines last year which required all Lamas planning reincarnation to seek prior approval. (Originally reported by The Times, 24 Nov, Times of India, 23 Nov; BBC, 22 Nov, AsiaNews, 18 Nov, Guardian, 17 Nov)

China angrily cancelled this year's China-EU summit due to be held in Lyon on 1 December. Beijing opposes French President Nicolas Sarkozy's decision to meet with the Dalai Lama in Poland on 6 December. M. Sarkozy, who also holds the rotating presidency of the EU, had previously postponed a meeting with the Dalai after Sino-French ties deteriorated following the Tibetan protests in March and the approaching Olympics. Beijing has repeatedly warned foreign leaders who meet with the Dalai that such meetings damage bilateral ties. (Originally reported by The Times, 27 Nov)

Helga Trupel, an MEP, was blocked from visiting human rights activist Zeng Jinyan during a visit to Beijing. Zeng is the wife of the recent Sakharov-prize receiving activist Hu Jia, who was jailed for sedition ahead of the Olympics. Zeng and her infant daughter have been under house arrest, and communications with them are heavily monitored and restricted. (Originally reported by AP, 25 Nov)

The Chinese ambassador to the UN, Zhang Yesui, has spoken of the importance of promoting equality among different religions and cultures in the world. 'All religions and cultures are the crystallization of human wisdom and have contributed to the progress and development of human society and as such, they deserve equal respect.' He was speaking at the UN conference on a Culture of Peace, held in New York and sponsored by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Zhang added that the 'Chinese government has always opposed extremism and all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance based on religion, race and any other grounds, as well as an attempt to link terrorism to a specific nation, ethnic[ity] or religion.' China also firmly promoted interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation. (Originally reported by Chinaview, 14 Nov)

The UN committee against torture has asked that China launch a full investigation into the events in Tiananmen Square of June 4, 1989, provide information on those still detained and apologise to the relatives of those who died. Li Baodong, the Chinese ambassador to the UN in Geneva, said that the Chinese government opposes all forms of torture and has made good progress on rooting out the practice. (Originally reported by AsiaNews, 22 Nov)

Xinhua news agency launched its new Tibet channel on its website, which features material in Chinese, Tibetan and English. Other foreign language editions will be rolled out in due course. The channel offers a news service, background material on culture and religion and service information. See www.news.cn or www.xinhuonet.com (Originally reported by Chinaview, 25 Nov)

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There are now 81,277 Chinese students studying in the United States, making them second only to Indian students in numbers. The number has increased 5% since last year. Around 11,000 US students are studying in China, with the number increasing 25% from a year ago. (Originally reported by CBN, 18 Nov)

NATIONAL NEWS

In a bid to widen the campaign against corruption, the Supreme Peoples Court issued a judicial ruling stating that doctors and teachers who accept cash or gifts could also face bribery charges. Committees which organise cultural and sports events will also fall under this new ruling. (Originally reported by SCMP, 25 Nov)

Yang Jia, convicted of killing six police officers at a Shanghai police station, has been executed. Mr Yang, 28, had suggested that he had previously been tortured in police custody. He tried to sue the police but his case was rejected, which provoked his attack, his lawyers claimed. Yang has received messages of support on bulletin boards and websites from other Chinese complaining about police treatment of people in custody. Ai Weiwei, the designer of the Olympic Stadium, also lent his support after Yang's death sentence was referred to the Supreme People's Court. However state media later reported Yang's execution on 26 November. (Originally reported by BBC, 26 Nov; AsiaNews, 26 Nov)

A Chinese scientist and medical researcher has been executed for espionage. Wo Weihuan ran his own business in Beijing, but was convicted of passing military secrets to Taiwan. He was arrested in 2005, and later confessed to treason. However his family say these confessions were extracted under torture and his secret trial was not conducted fairly as his lawyers were not allowed to discuss the case with him. After five months' review the Supreme Peoples Court confirmed the death sentence. An international campaign to delay his execution was led by the USA and the EU, and is perhaps the first time that China has faced significant opposition to an execution prior to its implementation. Mr Wo's family were only given access to him in the days just prior to his execution. (Originally reported by BBC, 24 Nov; Washington Post, 26 Nov).

Fifteen lawyers representing dozens of families affected by the contaminated baby milk scandal have agreed that they will combine the cases into a class-action suit against the dairy Sanlu Group Co. The suit at Hebei High People's Court will seek repayment of medical and other expenses, as well as compensation. Sanlu has so far promised unspecified compensation, and it may be that the case is settled out of court. A dozen individual lawsuits filed by lawyers on behalf of families have neither been accepted or not accepted by local courts, indicating their sensitivity should they progress. The lawsuits could threaten to expose the official mishandling of the crisis, which left 54,000 infants sick and killed three. (Originally reported by AP, 13 Nov)

Local protests continue in a number of localities across China. 2000 workers at a Jiangyan engineering works in Jiangsu province blocked main roads for three straight days in protest against their former boss, Ge Weiqing, who is accused of embezzling pension funds worth ¥100m. Taxi drivers in Yongdeng county, Gansu province, have launched strikes over monopolistic practices by taxi companies. Government offices in Tangshan, Hebei provinces, have been besieged after local thugs beat to death a farmer and intimidated others into selling their land cheaply. (Originally reported by SCMP, 11 Nov)



China Desk e-Bulletin



Taxi drivers have struck in a number of cities across China, angry about the prevalence of unlicensed cabs. The most recent strikes were in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province, reported on 28 November. This followed the stoning of unlicensed taxis in the capital of the province, Guangzhou earlier in the week. Taxi drivers in Chongqing were also reported to have damaged 20 vehicles including three police cars during protests earlier this month. Unusually, the mayor of Chongqing was televised negotiating with the drivers, and it appears that the protestors in Guangdong are seeking similar guarantees. (Originally reported by BBC, 28 November)

Zhou Yongkang, the former minister for public safety and now member of the Politburo, has said that the government must do all it can to 'help rural residents solve their problems and improve their livelihoods' so as to prevent continued protests. He also said that security had to be tightened in certain rural areas, and punishment meted out to those who endanger public security. Xu Shousheng, the governor of Gansu province, has met with representatives from Wudu following protests there last month. The protestors were demonstrating against not being given new homes after they were expelled from their previous homes in 2006 to make way for development. Protests in Wudu and Longnan lasted two weeks, destroying public buildings and cars, injuring 71 police officers and causing RMB5m (c. £480,000) worth of damage. (Originally reported by AP, 18 Nov; AsiaNews, 22 Nov)

The *China Daily* has urged tighter restrictions of officials' behaviour and more rigorous education. The article highlights the case of a Zhejiang official who travelled to France and overstayed his visa by forty days and is now refusing to return home. Better education and closer supervision were essential parts of the Scientific Outlook on Development, the article suggests. (Originally reported by People's Daily, 17 November)

The Xinhua news agency has reported that the Chinese government is working on an action plan for human rights, aiming to improve its human rights record in the coming two years. The Information Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are said to be the key departments working on this document, but more than fifty others, Chinese NGOs and universities will also input. Few other details were forthcoming. (Originally reported by Reuters, 4 Nov; AsiaNews, 10 Nov)

The ninth round of negotiations between envoys from the Dalai Lama and Beijing United Front Work department officials has ended in frustration. Zhu Weiqin, vice-minister of the department, said the Tibetans 'must change their [tactics]. If they do not change, we will continue [on] our way.' He quoted the 'Memorandum for all Tibetans to enjoy genuine autonomy' as evidence that the Dalai Lama's "Third Way" was in fact a mask for independence. The Dalai was insincere, Zhu said, as shown by his refusal to recognise Chinese historical sovereignty over Tibet, and that his demands for Han immigrants to leave Tibet show that he would implement policies of 'ethnic discrimination' and 'ethnic cleansing' if he came to power. (Originally reported by SCMP, 11 Nov)

An article in an official magazine, *Global Times*, has condemned the new Guns N' Roses Album as a "venomous attack" on China. The album, entitled *Chinese Democracy*, features references to Falungong and artwork by artist Shi Lifeng. The album's website has been blocked in China. (Originally reported by BBC, 25 Nov)



CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

A conference on the theme 'Religions in the Contemporary World' was held in Beijing, ahead of the 400th anniversary of Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci's death in 2009. Thirty scholars from China and around the world gathered between October 15-17 to discuss papers presented by Zhuo Xinping (CASS) and Agostino Giovagnali (Catholic University of Milan) and many others. A co-organiser of the conference, Fr Angelo Lazzaroto, hopes that the 400th anniversary will be a good opportunity to begin the process of Ricci's beatification. (Originally reported by UCAN, 14 Nov).

Elder Fu Xianwei, of the TSPM, has said that China's registered Protestant church would like to do more to help the unregistered churches. Speaking in Hong Kong as part of a 12-member delegation from the new leadership of the CCC/TSPM, Fu said that there were not enough pastors and preachers in China, and would work together with the house churches to build up the Protestant church. According to Yu Jianrong of the CASS, participants at a conference on religion at Beijing University last month discussed the possibility of officially recognising house churches and registering them outside the CCC/TSPM. (Originally reported by Christian Post, 9 Nov)

Bishop Jin Peixian (b. 1924), retired bishop of Liaoning, died on 4 November. Bishop Jin was also vice president of the Chinese Catholic Bishop's Conference, and was widely respected as a senior church leader. His funeral mass was attended by 4000 people and was conducted by his successor, Bishop Pei Junmin. He pioneered new methods of priestly and lay formation, encouraging priests and nuns to study abroad from the early 1980s. He established the cathedral as a major landmark in the city. Liaoning has around 110,000 Catholics. (Originally reported by UCAN, 4 Nov)

Pastor 'Bike' Zhang Mingxuan, a prominent Protestant house church leader, has been accused of illegal business activities for distributing silicon prayer wrist bands during the Olympic period. Held between October 16 and October 27, and his family beaten and forced to leave their homes, pastor Zhang has been told that the prayer bands were a 'nationally politically sensitive item'. He has also been denounced on blogs as a cultist or member of banned group Eastern Lightning. It is as though his arrest was timed to prevent his attendance at the third anniversary conference of the House Church Alliance. Although back in Beijing after being freed, he and his wife have been forbidden from renting a home and he says that other leaders of the House Church Alliance are also being intimidated. (Originally reported by China Aid Association, 6, 25 Nov)

Pastor Zhu Baoguo, detained in Nanyang City, Henan Province, on October 12, has been sentenced to one year of re-education through labour for being a leader of an 'evil cult'. His family and church members have not been told where he has been sent. China Aid Association has evidence that 29 house church leaders in the province have been sentenced to re-education through labour or prison since 9 July. Of these, seven belong to the 'Born Again' movement, accused of belonging to an 'evil cult'. (Originally reported by China Aid Association, 18 Nov, 29 Oct)



China Desk Bulletin



Christian lawyer Li Subin and four others have been fired from their jobs with Yitong Law Firm in Beijing after calling for the leaders of the Beijing Lawyers Association to be directly elected. Li and the others were five of eighty-two attorneys who support the measure and sent an open letter to the Association in August to this effect. The Association denounced the calls as 'illegal' and a 'total repudiation of China's current lawyers administrative system, judicial system and even political system.'

(Originally reported by China Aid Association, 5 Nov)

There are fewer priestly vocations in Hong Kong as smaller families means greater family opposition to sons training for the priesthood. Of the current diocesan clergy, only 18 have been ordained within the last twenty years. (Originally reported by UCAN, 21 Nov)

The Catholic bishops of Hong Kong have urged their religious and diocesan priests to work more closely with the Neocatechumenal Way following their *ad limina* visits with the Pope this autumn. The Way was given the Papal seal of approval in June, but its plans to establish a seminary in Hong Kong has drawn local conflict. The bishops urged cooperation, and cited a number of new movements which are cooperating peacefully in Hong Kong, such as Focolare, the Community of St Egidio and The Beatitudes.

(Originally reported by UCAN, 17 Nov)

The Catholic diocese of Tianjin has issued adverts in local newspapers since August this year. The adverts ask whether the reader would like to know more about Catholicism and invites them to the city's Xi Kai cathedral to take catechetical classes. Since then the cathedral's office has taken over 20 phone calls a day to inquire. This year there have been 706 baptisms. The cathedral, built in Gothic style in 1914 can hold up to 2000 people, while Tianjin parish contains 30,000 Catholic adherents.

(Originally reported by AF, 19 Nov)

The Catholic parish of Nanle is in disarray, after the former director of the local Catholic Patriotic Association was accused of having a piece of parish property transferred into her name and then sold it off to secure the substantial proceeds. Since the accusations were made, Wang Shuqin has prevented Mass from being said in the parish church, and a priest who tried to celebrate a Mass there was threatened and beaten.

(Originally reported by AsiaNews, 19 Nov)

Nine Chinese Catholic nuns are participating in a pioneering Christian arts course at the Beijing major seminary. The nuns are learning techniques in making Christmas cards, silk screen prints, stained glass, wooden candleholders and other religious arts. The nine-month course aims to provide skills which the nuns can then take back to their dioceses to establish training classes of their own. The Society of the Divine Word have sent brother Friedbert Everts, 63, to help train the nuns in bookbinding, stained glass and silk screen prints, and a Swiss brother will be sent next year to teach carpentry skills.

(Originally reported by UCAN, 19 Nov)

Senior representatives of Daoist groups from all over China gathered in Nanjing for a conference on the environment. They approved a seven year action plan. This includes installing solar panels on roofs of all Daoist sacred sites, establishing guidance on environmental conservation, stewardship of land and water resources, educational materials, moral teaching and outreach through media outlets.

(Originally reported by UN Dispatch, 3 Nov)

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SOURCES

AF	Agenzia Fides	www.fides.org
AFP	Agence France Presse	www.afp.com
AP	Associated Press	www.ap.org
BBC	British Broadcasting Association	www.bbc.co.uk
CAA	China Aid Association	www.chinaaid.org
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	
CBNN	Christian Broadcast Network News	
CCC	China Christian Council [Protestant]	
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	
(C)CPA	(Chinese) Catholic Patriotic Association	
CD	China Daily	www.chinadaily.net/news/
CHCA	Chinese House Church Association [Protestant]	
CRI	China Radio International	
CWN	Catholic World News	
	Chinaview	www.chinaview.cn
	China.org.cn	www.China.org.cn
DPA	Deutsche Presse-Agentur	
EDA	Églises D'Asie	http://eglisie.mepasie.org
FT	Financial Times	www.ft.com
	Guardian	www.guardian.co.uk
HK	Hong Kong	
	Independent	www.independent.co.uk
IHT	International Herald Tribune	www.iht.com
IPS	Inter Press Service	www.ipsnews.net
PBOC	People's Bank of China [China's Central Bank]	
PBS	Public Broadcast Radio	
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau	www.pbs.org
	Religious Intelligence	www.religiousintelligence.co.uk
	Reuters	www.reuters.co.uk
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs	
SCMP	South China Morning Post	www.scmp.com
SOE	State Owned Enterprise	
	Telegraph	www.telegraph.co.uk
	The Times	www.timesonline.co.uk/
UCAN	Union of Catholic Asia News	www.ucanews.com
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization	
WP	Washington Post	
	Xinhua	http://www.xinhua.org/

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