

## CROSSES, HAMMERS, AND SICKLES SINO-VATICAN RELATIONS BETWEEN 1949 AND 1989

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In July 2011, Pope Benedict XVI publicly condemned the ordination of Father Paul Lei Shiyin as Bishop, an appointment the Vatican had not previously approved. The conflict between Beijing and the Holy See over the appointment of Chinese bishops dates back to 1951, when China and Vatican broke diplomatic relations. This paper questions why the Vatican and the People's Republic of China failed to establish normal relations between 1949 and 1989.

The literature on the diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Holy See is sparse. Beatrice Leung's monograph *Sino-Vatican Relations: Problems in Conflicting Authority 1976-1986* is the most authoritative account of Sino-Vatican relations after 1949. Leung analyzes the major developments of Beijing-Vatican relations in terms of a clash of authority between the Pope and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).<sup>1</sup>

Gerald Chan, a professor of International Relations at the University of Auckland, follows the same line of argument, pinpointing two specific issues of conflicting authorities: the Taiwan question and the problem of appointment of Chinese bishops.<sup>2</sup> Eric O. Hanson, a leading expert on Vatican diplomacy in Asia, among other authors, agrees with this position. However, he observes a gradual PRC-Vatican rapprochement in the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Chinese academics focus on the conflicts of authority between China and the Vatican, often with a marked Sino-centric perspective.<sup>4</sup> Although both Western and Chinese scholars have unearthed a wealth of factual information, their works devoted little attention to the Cold War context that the PRC grappled with after 1949.

Contrastingly, there is a wealth of literature on the history of both the Chinese Catholic Church and the missionary orders in China. Kim-Kwon Chan has written extensively on the peculiar theological

situation of the Chinese Catholic Church. Jean Paul Wiest provided a detailed account of the Maryknoll Society's activity in China during the first years of the PRC in *Maryknoll in China*.<sup>5</sup> The late Lazlo Ladany, a Hungarian-born Jesuit and Sinologist based in Hong Kong, wrote an especially scathing account of the Communist Party's harsh treatment of the Chinese Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup> However, most authors writing on the Chinese Catholic Church tend to create a narrative of martyrdom. This position distracts from serious reflections on issues pertaining to the links between Sino-Vatican relations, Chinese religious policies, and the beginning and end of the Cold War for the PRC.

This paper will employ a different approach. Rather than focusing on bilateral problems between China and the Holy See, I will attempt to situate Sino-Vatican relations within the major shifts of PRC ideology and strategy during the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras. This paper will argue that, although China's exit from the Cold War expanded its strategy from unambiguous confrontation to gradual rapprochement towards the Vatican between 1949 and 1989, Beijing deliberately blocked any possibility of normalized relations. During China's Cold War era (1949-1976), Mao's ideological considerations largely influenced the dynamics of Sino-Vatican relations and restricted the PRC to a position of uncompromising hostility toward the Holy See. However, with Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the normalization of Sino-American relations and 1979 and the trial of the Gang of Four in 1981, China was no longer trapped in the ideological conflicts of the Cold War. With the end of the Chinese involvement in the Cold War, the PRC adopted a variety of courses of action throughout the 1980s, alternating between friendly and hostile policies toward the Vatican to pursue its strategic goals of modernizing the economy and safeguarding its sovereignty.

This essay is centered on an analysis of both English and Chinese primary sources pertaining to PRC-Holy See relations. The English-language primary sources include newspapers from Western media as well as published Vatican official documents. The Chinese-language primary sources comprise newspapers from the *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), a major Party mouthpiece, as well as recently published collections of Party documents.<sup>i</sup> This analysis is complemented by valuable factual information drawn from secondary literature. Important milestones from China's Cold War history, such as the Korean War, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, will serve as the primary guides for analysis of primary and secondary sources. However, an exclusive focus on the Chinese Communist Party's decisions is insufficient in achieving a full understanding of the major developments in Sino-Vatican relations between 1949 and 1989. Such understanding will require crucial, contextual information regarding the Vatican's policies toward communist states in general and the history of the Chinese Catholic Church. Finally, the analysis of this paper relies heavily on public pronouncements of the Vatican, the CCP and the Chinese Catholic Church. Therefore, special attention is given to the language in these pronouncements. Following the tradition of "kremlinology," I perform a close reading of official pronouncements with the assumption that specific formulations, or the lack of thereof, reveal crucial information about the implicit intentions of both Chinese and Vatican policy-makers.

A preliminary clarification of terminology is in order. First, this paper does not define "ideology" as fabricated rhetoric that historical agents can espouse or discard at will to further and hide their "true" intentions. Recent Cold War scholarship by Chen Jian and Lorenz Lüthi have amply demonstrated that ideology played a crucial role in shaping the decisions of the Chinese leaders during the Maoist era. That is why this paper defines "ideology" as a worldview that allows historical agents to make sense of their world and shapes and constrains their decisions. Furthermore, by the terms "Chinese Catholic Church" or "Chinese National Church," this paper designates the Chinese Church as a whole. By "Chinese Patriotic

Church" this paper means the portion of the Chinese Catholic Church that is subservient to the CCP, and by "underground Church," this paper specifically refers to the part of the Chinese Church that resists the CCP by proclaiming their loyalty to the Pope. Little is known about this resistance underground Church, and any discussion on the topic exceeds the scope of this paper. Finally, this paper uses the term "Universal Church" to identify the worldwide organization of the Catholic Church as a whole. This term opposes the term "Chinese Catholic Church," which merely designates the National Church in China. It is important not to confuse the "Universal Church" with "Vatican" and "The Holy See," since the two latter terms are used to refer to the Vatican as a strictly political entity capable of entering diplomatic relations with other political entities.

#### VATICAN AND THE SOCIALIST BLOC (1945-1989)

Under Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), the Vatican's foreign policy was firmly entrenched in an anti-Communist orientation. As post-war Eastern Europe gradually became Sovietized, Pope Pius XII exhorted Catholic believers under Communist rule to stick to their faith and attacked those who chose collaboration. In 1946, Pius XII encouraged imprisoned Ukrainian bishops to "proclaim and preach Christ" despite "being in bonds."<sup>7</sup> The Pope forcefully asserted that "it was absolutely unlawful, even merely exteriorly or verbally, to abandon Christ and his Church."<sup>8</sup> He threatened Catholic collaborators with the punishment of excommunication.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Pius XII ordered several secret consecrations of bishops as a pre-emptive measure, in case existing bishops in Communist countries were put in jail. For example, the Pope had the American Bishop Gerald Patrick O'Hara secretly consecrate Joseph Schubert as Bishop for the Romanian Church in June 1950. Schubert was arrested shortly afterwards in February 1951. Pius XII's intransigence placed the Catholic clergy in Communist countries in a difficult position causing Communists to feel less restrained in carrying out their anti-religious campaigns. Due to his anti-Fascist credentials, Czech Communists did not dare touch Archbishop Joseph Beran for a long time. Suddenly, the Archbishop found himself placed under house arrest in 1949 and interned in village cloisters for fourteen years. Despite the problematic situations

<sup>i</sup> This essay cites the *Renmin Ribao* extensively for two reasons. First, the content of *Renmin Ribao* articles should not be dismissed as mere propaganda: as the official newspaper of the CCP, the *Renmin Ribao* directly revealed information about the policies and positions of the Party leadership. Second, *Renmin Ribao* was the only Chinese-language newspaper whose database the author could access using the resources of McGill University.

of the clergy in Communist countries, the Holy See failed to provide concrete assistance to the Churches under attack.<sup>10</sup>

Pope Pius XII died on October 9, 1958. His successor, John XXIII (1958-1963), took drastic steps in improving the Vatican's relations with Communist countries. In initiating the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Pope laid the groundwork for an eventual détente with the Communist powers, which brought substantial doctrinal revisions aimed at modernizing the Church. As tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union escalated during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, John XXIII promoted peace and offered to mediate the conflict.<sup>11</sup> The Pope engaged Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev directly. In March 7, 1963, the Pope received Khrushchev's daughter and son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubei, during a papal audience and in private.<sup>12</sup> Although the Pope evaded Adzhubei's question of whether the Holy See wanted diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, he concluded the meeting on a pleasant note by personally blessing the couple's children. John XXIII was able to secure the release of the Ukrainian Metropolitan Josef Slipyj and several other imprisoned bishops as well by directly improving relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

With the death of John XXIII, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) continued his predecessor's approach of engaging dialogue with Communist powers. Having inherited the "spirit of the Vatican II," Paul VI now pursued a consistent policy of *Ostpolitik* based on the following principles: 1) the goal of negotiations was not to increase prestige of the Holy See, but rather to create conditions that make pastoral life possible, and 2) partial temporary solutions are always better than Concordats by virtue of their flexibility. *Ostpolitik* under Paul VI's tenure yielded varying degrees of success for different countries. In the case of Yugoslavia, the Vatican was able to sign a "protocol" in 1966, which guaranteed the National Church's jurisdiction over religious and spiritual questions in exchange for a de-politicization of the Church itself.<sup>14</sup> Relations with Yugoslavia were later normalized in 1970. The Hungarian Church fared far worse. Both Vatican diplomats and the Hungarian Communist leaders were frustrated with Cardinal Mindszenty's stubborn and confrontational attitude. Negotiations did not yield an improvement of the pastoral life in Hungary.<sup>15</sup> Paul VI's *Ostpolitik* was not restricted to Europe. He also attempted, without much success,

to set himself up as a peace mediator in the conflict between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the United States. Though the Americans reacted favorably to his role of mediator, the Vietnamese rebuked his appeals.<sup>16</sup>

After the death of Paul VI in 1978, Vatican policy toward Communist States became more assertive and confrontational under Pope John Paul II (1978-2005). The new Pope publicly condemned the "state totalitarianism of this century" as a "threat to mankind" in March 1979.<sup>17</sup> When John Paul II visited his native Poland in June 1979, he exhorted the Polish Catholics to "not [be] afraid."<sup>18</sup> His message generated widespread euphoria among the Polish population and embarrassed the Communist rulers of the country.<sup>19</sup> The Pope actively lent his support to Lech Wałęsa's Solidarity Labor organization, which emerged from the 1980 strikes of the Gdansk shipyard. Nonetheless, John Paul II did not completely return to the confrontational policies of Pius XII. That he named Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the architect of Paul VI's *Ostpolitik*, his Secretary of State in 1979 indicated that he did not wish to rule out negotiation.<sup>20</sup> Although John Paul II was committed to his predecessor's *Ostpolitik*, he also encouraged resistance within the Eastern European Catholic Churches by adopting new, morally assertive rhetoric. John Paul II's policies of resistance encouragement would not have been possible without the negotiated settlements under Paul VI that ensured the Catholic Church's survival in Eastern European communist countries.

## ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The history of Sino-Vatican relations was full of complex interactions. China's first significant contacts with Catholic missionaries occurred in the sixteenth century, just as the Spanish and Portuguese sailed the seas and expanded their colonial empires. Jesuit Missionary Matteo Ricci, having been granted an audience with the Ming Emperor Wanli, traveled to Beijing in 1601. Ricci, like most Jesuit missionaries of his time, wanted to spread the Gospel in China through the conversion of ruling elites. Ricci soon established himself in a favorable position within the Beijing imperial court. His knowledge of the modern sciences and technologies and his successful conversion of powerful mandarins such as Xu Guangqi was valuable to the dynasty. Ricci studied the Confucian classics extensively, advocating that Christian teachings were

compatible and complementary to Confucius's ideas.<sup>21</sup>

Even when the Qing dynasty took over China in 1644, the Jesuit missionaries did not lose their influence among the ruling classes. Jesuit Adam Schall von Bell became director of the Astronomical Bureau at the imperial court of Emperor Shunzhi. Under the Emperor Kangxi, this post was given to Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest. However, the good fortunes of the Jesuits and the Catholic Church would soon come to an end with the controversy surrounding the Confucian Rites.<sup>22</sup>

When Charles Maigrot, the Vicar Apostolic in Fujian, issued a decree forbidding Chinese Christians to practice the Confucian rites of ancestral worships in March 1693, Emperor Kangxi called for missionaries to adhere to Ricci's policies of accommodation. The Jesuits advocated for conciliation, while the Dominicans, Franciscans, and other missionaries took a hardline against the Confucian rites. Pope Clement XI issued a Papal bull in 1715 ruling in favor of the Dominicans and Franciscans. Emperor Kangxi retaliated in 1721 by banning Christianity in China. Churches were closed under Emperor Yongzhong, and many Christians were arrested under Emperor Qianlong. The persecution that resulted from the Confucian Rites controversy curtailed much of the presence of foreign missionaries, thus severing the ties between Rome and the Chinese Catholic Church. This separation was further aggravated when Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Jesuits in 1773.<sup>23</sup>

The persecutions severely crippled the ecclesiastical leadership of the Chinese Catholic Church. The lay communities took active measures to ensure the survival of their faith. Catholic communities became tightly organized around clans, with clan leaders managing the affairs of the local churches.<sup>24</sup> Women known as "Virgins" dedicated their lives to the service of the Chinese Church by caring for chapels, leading prayers at mass, and charging themselves with the religious instruction of Catholic children.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese Catholics preserved a regular rhythm of pastoral life through the creation of a lay leadership.

With the Qing defeat at the hands of Western imperialist powers during the Opium Wars and the signature of "unequal treaties" by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century missionary work resumed in China. The new Catholic missionaries, having made their way into China by riding the tidal wave of Western imperialism, clashed with the indigenous lay leadership of the Catholic

communities. They quickly imposed their own authority. Wresting the leadership from the hands of Catholic clan leaders and "Virgins," the Chinese Catholic Church once more became a foreign church as the new missionaries established themselves as its leaders. Nonetheless, the presence of foreign missionaries guaranteed the safety and growth of the Chinese Church.

With the increasingly visible presence of the foreign missionaries, Christianity acquired the stigma of imperialist encroachment in the eyes of the Chinese population. The Confucian literati-gentry viewed the Christian doctrine as a threat against their traditions. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 targeted both foreign and Chinese Christians, and the superstitious rebels equated Christianity with evil. The overall negative picture of Christianity would remain in the hearts and minds of the Chinese long after the departure of Western imperialists.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Vatican pushed for indigenization of the clergy of the Chinese Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) and Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), in 1919 and 1926, respectively, called for foreign missionaries to cede their posts to Chinese priests. Their efforts yielded few results; the foreign missionaries seemed reluctant to relinquish their positions of leadership. The normalization of Sino-Vatican relations in 1939 did not improve the situation. Only in 1946 did the Chinese Catholic Church officially become a national church; even by then, foreigners still dominated its ecclesiastical leadership.<sup>26</sup>

## RELIGION AND THE UNITED FRONT

Anti-imperialist ideology guided the CCP's United Front tactics during the first decade of PRC history. In September 1949, as the Communist takeover of the country neared its completion, the People's Political Consultative Conference (PCC) adopted a statement containing a set of guidelines for the future of the PRC called the Common Program. Article 13 of the Common Program stipulated that the PCC was to be organized along the lines of a "Popular Democratic United Front." This included representatives from the working class, the intellectuals, the ethnic minorities, and other "patriotic elements."<sup>27</sup> Article 7 called for the suppression of "counterrevolutionary imperialist activities" in China.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of the CCP's United Front tactics was, in the words of United Front Work

Department Director Li Weihan, the simultaneous “creation of alliances and carrying out of struggles.”<sup>29</sup> It was necessary to ally with “patriotic elements” from all social strata in order to “isolate the lingering imperialist influences.”<sup>30</sup> The CCP’s United Front tactics harkened back to Mao’s “mass line.” The Party had to ally itself with the patriotic masses in order to purge the country of imperialist influence.

The nature of the United Front Work Department activities was contingent upon the major ideological developments in China. Both Li Weihan and Premier Zhou Enlai identified two dominant types of relationships that were important to the CCP’s United Front tactics: the relationship between classes and the one between Party and non-Party elements, which included religious groups, minority parties, and ethnic minorities.<sup>31</sup> United Front tactics amounted to a dual policy of “alliances and struggles” toward both the non-proletarian classes and the non-Party elements. Major ideological upheavals, such as the Resist-America-Aid-Korea Campaign of 1950-1951, the Hungarian Crisis in 1956, the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957, and the Great Leap Forward of 1958 exerted considerable strain on United Front activities. During those events, intellectuals and religious leaders critical to the Party were purged under the guise of anti-imperialist struggle. Pro-CC non-Party elements were exalted for their “patriotism.” In 1960, at the end of the Great Leap Forward, Li Weihan urged non-Party elements to “stick very close to the CCP as socialist transformations reached a new height.”<sup>32</sup>

Despite the ideological strains, class relationships and party-to-non-party dealings still formed two separate dimensions of United Front policies up to the mid-1960s. Anti-imperialism did not specifically entail struggle against non-proletarian and peasant classes. Cooperation with the CCP was the sole criterion for “patriotism.” However, when class struggle displaced the mass line as the central component of Mao’s ideological discourse, the United Front Work Department was shut down altogether. The Party’s dealings with non-Party elements no longer appeared necessary now that class struggle propelled to the ideological foreground.<sup>33</sup>

The United Front Work Department was reopened in 1975, yet it would only acquire a new orientation in the post-Mao era. Under Deng Xiaoping, class struggle gradually phased out from official rhetoric, with “economic modernization” replacing it as the

watchword of the day. Party to non-Party relations was now the only remaining dimension of the United Front policies.<sup>34</sup> The scope of the Party’s United Front work would expand considerably internationally as the Chinese leadership sought the cooperation of the Guomindang for a peaceful reunification with Taiwan.

The religious policies of the CCP were closely connected to United Front work, that is, to the management of Party to non-Party relations. The “alliance and struggle” tactic was a recurring theme in the relations between the CCP and the Chinese Catholic Church.<sup>35</sup> The concrete application of this tactic changed in accordance with the fluctuations of Mao’s ideology, which in turn impacted the dynamics of the CCP’s relations with both the Vatican and the Chinese Catholic Church. Therefore, Sino-Vatican relations should be analyzed in terms of relations between states and interactions between the Party and non-Party elements.

#### 1949-1952: IDEOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION

Between 1949 and 1952, the Chinese Communist Party’s policies toward Vatican and the Chinese Catholic Church showed an ideological commitment to the principle of anti-imperialism. Since foreigners dominated the ecclesiastical leadership of the Chinese National Church, the CCP perceived it was waging an actual battle against imperialist encroachments within the country. This perception heightened as the Korean War broke out, and the resulting tension fueled the domestic mobilization of both the Party and the Chinese Catholics against the foreign leadership of the Chinese Church. Consequently, the Korean War limited the strategic options of China toward Vatican to unequivocal confrontation.

As the Chinese Communist Party consolidated its foothold in mainland China, it deployed its United Front tactics against all religious groups within the country, including the Chinese Catholic Church. The CCP supported potential pro-Communist sympathizers and collaborators within the Chinese Catholic Church to attack its foreign, “imperialist” leadership. In May 1950, during a series of four meetings with Chinese Protestant leaders, Premier Zhou Enlai called for all religious groups to maintain their “anti-imperialist resolve” and to “cut off their ties with American imperialism.”<sup>36</sup> Upon concluding these meetings, Zhou, together with Protestant leaders, produced a Manifesto that called for all religious

groups to cleanse themselves of “imperialist influence by adhering to following principles of autonomy: “self-governance”, “self-financing” and “self-propagation.” The Manifesto outlined the core principles of what would be later known as the “Three-Self Movement.”<sup>37</sup>

On August 19, 1950, the Central Committee of the CCP issued a document that identified Chinese Catholic and Protestant Churches as potential loci of imperialist spying operations. The document explicitly endorsed the Three-Self Movement, citing the necessity to rally “patriotic” elements among Chinese Catholics and emphasized the need to implement “appropriate programs of political education” within education establishments under the Chinese Catholic Church’s control.<sup>38</sup> Beijing simultaneously launched sporadic propaganda attacks against the Vatican. Various newspaper articles that appeared in the *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily) referred to “Vatican-headed Catholic Church reactionary groups” as agents of the U.S.-lead imperialist camp.<sup>39</sup> However, the anti-imperialist rhetoric in the CCP’s articulation of its religious policies did not seem to elicit any immediate response from the Chinese Catholic Church.

Archbishop Antonio Riberi, the Vatican’s *nuncio*<sup>ii</sup> to China, showed no willingness to placate the sensibilities of the CCP. Closely adhering to Pope Pius XII’s anti-Communist stance, Riberi encouraged resistance within the Chinese Catholic Church. Appointed nuncio to China in 1946, Riberi decided to stay in Nanjing in 1949 and defiantly presented his credentials to the newly established Communist government. Prior to the CCP victory in 1949, Riberi already began to sponsor the growth of the Legion of Mary in China, an international Catholic organization engaged in spiritual work centered on devotion to the Holy Virgin founded in Ireland in the 1920’s.<sup>40</sup> The organization had a quasi-military structure. It was divided in small groups, each active in recruiting young Catholic women in parishes and high schools and universities. The Legion held weekly sessions of catechism study, during which they prayed, studied theology, and engaged in doctrinal refutation of Marxist theory.<sup>41</sup> Though the organization purported to be apolitical, Riberi no doubt saw its potential as a grassroots resistance movement against the CCP.

ii An *Apostolic nuncio*, or *papal nuncio*, is a diplomatic representative of the Holy See that is equivalent to the rank of an ambassador or plenipotentiary. The *nuncio* is appointed by the Holy See and acts as its envoy or permanent representative to a state or international organization. The *nuncio* is the head of the *Apostolic Nunciature*, a diplomatic mission of the Holy See equivalent to an embassy.

The Party was deeply wary of the Legion of Mary, especially as it became involved in the subsequent Shanghai resistance movement organized around Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei. Riberi’s patronage of the Legion would eventually provide ammunition for the CCP’s subsequent denunciations of his “imperialist” activities.

The advent of the Korean War drastically changed PRC-Holy See relations, as well as the relations between the CCP and the Chinese Catholic Church. The Xinhua News Agency, in a *Renmin Ribao* article of November 12, 1950, accused the Vatican and the United States of employing “Catholic reactionary groups” for joint espionage in China and Korea.<sup>42</sup> In the face of the intensifying political pressure from the CCP, certain Catholics priests and lay leaders of the Guangyuan County in Sichuan province issued a Manifesto toward the end of November 1950, proclaiming that the Catholic Church of Guangyuan would embark on a “Movement of Autonomy and Self-Renewal.” The Guangyuan Manifesto, while “resolutely stating that the Guangyuan Catholic Church would sever its ties with U.S.-Imperialists,” also exhorted Catholics to adhere to the “Three-Self Movement” and to “Resist America, aid Korea through concrete actions.”<sup>iii</sup> The Guangyuan Manifesto was the first public declaration in which leaders from the Catholic clergy and laity adopted the CCP’s anti-U.S. imperialism rhetoric. Nonetheless, for all their staunch defense of their “patriotic” credentials, the authors of the Manifesto did not explicitly voice their support of the Party, nor did they openly and unambiguously associate the Vatican with U.S. imperialism.<sup>43</sup>

In 1951, the intervention of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army drove the armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula to a military stalemate. The Chinese Catholic Church felt the intensifying pressures of the CCP’s efforts of domestic ideological mobilization. On January 23, 1951, a group of patriotic priests from the diocese of Nanchong in Sichuan Province issued a Manifesto that, for the first time, publically called for the “severance of economic and communicative ties with the Vatican.”<sup>44</sup> According to official press reports, Catholic and Protestant believers actively participated in the demonstrations of the “Resist America, Aid Korea” campaign, “enthusiastically shouting patriotic

iii The motives of the collaborators is difficult to assess: some probably sought to curry favor with the CCP to rise to a prominent positions within the Church, while others only cooperated out of fear. Some priests possibly even supported the anti-imperialist initiatives of the CCP.

slogans while marching under the same banner.”<sup>45</sup>

The Sichuan Catholics were not the only “patriotic” collaborators that rallied to the Communist United Front. On March 31, the Nanjing Vicar General Li Weiguang issued a public statement proclaiming the Nanjing Catholic community’s “severance of its political and economic ties with the Curia” and adherence to the “Three-Self Movement.”<sup>46</sup> The statement accused American imperialists of “using the [Catholic] Church to conduct activities detrimental to the people” and promised that Catholics will “show no less patriotic enthusiasm in participating in the Resist America Aid Korea enterprise.”<sup>47</sup> Shortly after the publication of this manifesto, Riberi denounced it in a pastoral letter and urged bishops to remain loyal to Rome.<sup>48</sup>

As the CCP rallied “patriotic” Chinese Catholic leaders to its United Front, it also moved against foreign missionaries within the Chinese Church. A document of the Central Committee, issued on March 5, recommended the active isolation of “foreign reactionary elements” within the Chinese Catholic Church to separate them from the “patriotic masses.”<sup>49</sup> The CCP resorted, among other tactics, to the staging of public accusations. “Patriotic” Catholic leaders would often publicly accuse foreign missionaries of maintaining espionage networks for American imperialists. Between March 24 and March 26, during an accusation meeting organized at the Catholic Huayang high school in Kaifeng, Li Maode, a sainarian, denounced Bishop Gaetano Pollio and Reverend Amelio Crotti for allegedly spreading “counterrevolutionary teachings” in order to sabotage the Three-Self Movement.<sup>50</sup> In a *Renmin Ribao* article, “Patriotic” Catholic priests from the Tianjin diocese leveled charges of embezzlement against Bishop Jean de Vienne de Hautefeuille (also known as Wen Guibin). The same priests also accused Vienne of heading an imperialist spy ring consisting of a “band of Dutch priests” and requested the prompt expulsion of bishop Vienne from China.<sup>51</sup>

As public denunciations revolving around alleged charges of espionage multiplied, the CCP began arresting foreign missionaries. According to a *Renmin Ribao* article published on April 6, the Tianjin police arrested Alfred Bonningue and several other Jesuits for supposedly “aiding the Americans in sabotaging the Chinese People’s liberation enterprise.”<sup>52</sup> The arrests of foreign missionaries were

conducted in a highly publicized fashion. The official press provided colorful and detailed presentations of “irrefutable evidence” that purported to confirm the guilt of foreign missionaries. On August 18, a *Renmin Ribao* article discussed at length the arrest of several “imperialist spies,” including Italian pilot Antonio Riva and bishop Tarcisio Martina, a regional apostolic prefect.<sup>53</sup> According to the article, Riva, an agent of the U.S. government, stockpiled weapons and ammunitions to carry out a plot to assassinate the top party leadership during the National Day celebrations. The article, in addition to presenting photographic “evidence” of stockpiled weapons and ammunitions, quoted at length written confessions in which Riva acknowledged his guilt. Bishop Martina was also found guilty of colluding with Riva by aiding the latter in stockpiling weapons and ammunitions. Similar arrests of “imperialist missionaries” also occurred in other dioceses and were reported at length in the official press.<sup>54</sup> Although the “evidence” presented against foreign missionaries was flimsy at best, it still reinforced the CCP’s efforts at ideologically mobilizing the masses through the depiction of tangible threats posed by imperialism.

The CCP cadres were determined to extract written confessions from the incarcerated foreign priests, asking the prisoners for only one thing: their signature on documents detailing “crimes.” The prisoners were often told that they only needed to sign said confessions in exchange for their freedom.<sup>55</sup> The CCP wanted to use the confessions in its propaganda campaigns against the “imperialist agents of the Catholic Church.”<sup>56</sup> Incarcerated priests who refused to sign confessions were subjected to psychological torture, consisting of verbal abuse during interrogations, Marxist discussion groups, and harassment by prison guards.<sup>57</sup>

Ultimately, most foreign missionaries, after a period of incarceration, were expelled from China. A few of them, like Bishop James Walsh, would remain behind bars until 1970. In 1948, there were 5500 missionaries in China; however, by 1952, two-thirds had been expelled.<sup>58</sup> As with the denunciations and the arrests, the CCP also conducted the expulsions of foreign missionaries with much publicity. For example, five months after the expulsion of Bishop Jean de Vienne on May 28, 1951, the *Renmin Ribao* published “additional incriminating evidence,” namely a written note to Father Alfred Bonningue containing

“counterrevolutionary instructions.”<sup>59</sup> By increasing the publicity of the expulsions of foreign missionaries, the CCP sought to heighten the perceived tangibility of the internal threats it professed to combat, thus reinforcing its campaign of domestic mobilization within the context of the Korean War.

The CCP handled the expulsion of *nuncio* Archbishop Riberi in an especially dramatic manner. Prior to Riberi’s expulsion, on May 24, 1951, the official press accused the Archbishop of encouraging “opposition the patriotic movement among the Chinese Catholics.”<sup>60</sup> Other inflammatory articles followed suit, publicly denouncing the activities of the Catholic Central Bureau (CCB), an agency under the direct control of the Archbishop and calling for his expulsion.<sup>61</sup> Through such media attacks, the CCP sought to convey that the demand to expel Riberi came from within the Catholic community. Beijing expelled Riberi in early September, fulfilling this “demand.”<sup>62</sup> The expulsion of Riberi was hailed as a major victory in the struggle against “imperialist efforts to use the Catholic Church to infiltrate China.”<sup>63</sup> According to the Xinhua News Agency, Riberi was guilty of “partaking in the counterrevolutionary activities of Jiang-bandit [Chiang Kai-shek], sponsoring the operations of American spies such as Antonio Riva and Tarcisio Martina” and “creating the counterrevolutionary Legion of Mary.”<sup>64</sup>

By conjuring a sustained storm of media attacks surrounding the expulsion of Riberi, the CCP sought to maximize the propaganda effect of the affair, which would fuel its Resist-America-Aid-Korea campaign of ideological mobilization. The Riberi affair was also the culmination of a direct diplomatic conflict between China and the Vatican. The CCP took active steps to escalate this conflict since the advent of the Korean War. The expulsion of the *nuncio* swept away all hopes and illusions for the establishment of normal relations between Vatican and the PRC.

### 1956-1958: IDEOLOGICAL RADICALIZATION AND QUASI-SCHISM

In the wake of Khrushchev’s Secret Speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, as well as the subsequent Hungarian Crisis of October-November 1956, the CCP began radicalizing its ideology. Internationally, Mao felt that the center of world revolution was shifting from Moscow to Beijing. Domestically, in order to avoid a Hungarian style

revolt, Mao launched the Hundred Flowers Campaign, hoping to relieve the oppositional pressure of the CCP. However, he only received a bloody nose as criticism of the CCP became more widespread. The Hundred Flower Campaign was then transformed into the Anti-Rightist Campaign; the CCP sought to silence its critics and crack down on opposition among the intellectuals. It was within this context that the CCP’s new campaign of ideological mobilization forced the Chinese Catholic Church into a quasi-schismatic position.<sup>65</sup>

As the Anti-Rightist Campaign gained momentum in 1957, anti-Vatican invectives, which had lessened by 1953, reappeared in the official press. Chinese Catholics who did not adhere to the “Patriotic” movement were dubbed “[r]ightists who sought to promote the reactionary agenda of the Vatican.”<sup>66</sup> The spotlight of the media attacks fell not only on the Vatican, but also on the Chinese Catholics who refused to cooperate with the CCP’s design to set up a rival Catholic Church with little economic or political ties with the Vatican. Newspaper articles often featured “outraged Patriotic Catholics” condemning the “counterrevolutionary Gong Pinmei group” for carrying out “seditious” schemes of the Vatican.<sup>67</sup> Even though Gong and other core leaders of the Shanghai Catholic resistance movement were already arrested in 1955, they remained perfect targets for the CCP’s anti-Vatican propaganda, not able to escape subsequent media scrutiny.

In the middle of the Anti-Rightist campaign, the CCP established the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA), an organization that would become the instrument through which the CCP consolidated its United Front with the Catholic Church by implementing policies of control and mobilization. The CPA comprised “Patriotic” pro-CCP leaders among the Catholic laity and clergy. Its explicit goal was to set up an “autonomous self-governed Church” that opposed the “undue interference of Vatican in China’s internal politics.”<sup>68</sup> In establishing the CPA, patriotic Catholics also proclaimed their “unwavering resolve to follow the socialist road.”<sup>69</sup> However, despite all their inflammatory utterances, the “Patriotic Catholics” refrained from proclaiming a spiritual break with the Vatican. Lin Ziding, the Vicar-General of Fujian, was quoted saying that under “acceptable circumstances that did not infringe on the interests of the Motherland, it was possible to maintain purely

religious ties with the Vatican.<sup>70</sup> “Patriotic” Catholics also vehemently protested against the charge that they were pushing for a schism. Rather, they insisted that the Pope erred in excommunicating patriotic priest Li Weiguang.<sup>71</sup>

In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward, a series of radical economic policies of socialist transformation. Ultimately, these radical changes brought intense famines that claimed millions of lives. Between 1958 and 1960, as ideological radicalization reached new heights, the CCP intensified its United Front tactics toward the Chinese Catholic Church. On February 5, 1958, the authorities arrested Bishop Dominic Deng Yiming, Apostolic administrator of the Guangdong (Canton) diocese.<sup>72</sup> Deng’s crimes were enumerated at length in the official press: accused of carrying out the counterrevolutionary instructions of the Vatican, sponsoring spying networks throughout China, and sabotaging the anti-imperialist patriotic movement of the Chinese Catholic Church. In March, the Chinese Catholic Church organized conferences across China during which patriotic leaders publicly endorsed socialism and the Chinese Communist Party, while condemning “rightists elements within the Church who did the bidding of American imperialists.”<sup>73</sup> The heightened zeal of the “patriotic” leadership, in conjunction with the arrest Bishop Deng, a highly respected leader within the Catholic clergy, were indications of the ideological radicalization underpinning the CCP’s United Front tactics toward the Chinese Catholic Church.

The most controversial development occurred in April 1958, when the Patriotic leadership, for the first time, consecrated bishops without the approval of Rome. On April 13, Bishop Li Daonan presided over the consecration ceremony of Dong Guangqing and Yuan Wenhua. The Xinhua News agency described the consecration as “a path breaking move for the Catholic Patriotic movement.”<sup>74</sup> Since bishops, according to Canon law, could not be consecrated without papal approval, the move of the CPA was blatantly schismatic. Nonetheless, Pope Pius XII spoke ambiguously about the consecrations in the Encyclical *Ad Apostolorum Principis*: the consecrations were “valid” because they were performed by legitimate bishops, but remained “illicit” without the prior consent of the Holy See.<sup>75</sup> On April 26, the Propaganda Fide issued a document in the *Osservatore Romano* threatening Father Dong and Father Yuan of excommunication were they to

proceed with their ordination.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, the Pope refrained from carrying out the excommunication because such a move would have amounted to an explicit recognition of a schism in the Chinese Catholic Church.

Thus, at the height of the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 and the Great Leap Forward of 1958, the CCP further heightened its tensions with the Vatican. As Pius XII continued uttering his anti-communist quips, China brought its national Catholic Church to a quasi-schismatic situation by creating the CPA and by consecrating its own bishops without the approval of Rome. Although pro-Communist associations of Catholics similar to the CPA existed in Eastern European communist regimes, the Chinese went further than the Eastern Europeans by appointing their own bishops. During the Great Leap Forward, the radical ideology environment was such that deliberate confrontation against the Holy See was the only logical choice for the Chinese leaders.

#### 1958-1976: IDEOLOGICAL DEAFNESS OF THE CCP

Between 1958 and 1976, the Vatican had continuously made appeals for dialogue. However, Beijing remained “ideologically deaf.” Since Mao viewed China’s grand strategy in terms of world revolution and class struggle, the choices of Vatican were also understood through those ideological lenses. First, the increasingly close interactions between Vatican and the Soviet Union reinforced the Chinese perception of Vatican as an enemy because Beijing’s ideological conflict with the Soviet Union escalated during the 1960s. Second, Paul VI’s attempts at mediation in the Second Indochina War also gave significant ammunition for the propaganda of Chinese newspapers, since Mao sought to use the international tensions surrounding the Vietnam conflict for the purpose of domestic mobilization. The ideological commitment of the Chinese leaders to anti-revisionism and the Vietnam conflict subsequently locked Beijing in a stance of hostility toward the Vatican. Even as China reoriented its strategy toward rapprochement with the United States in the 1970s, it still remained unwilling to improve relations with Vatican.

While John XXIII made significant strides in lowering tensions with the Soviet Union, he vacillated on the question of China. The ordinations of Bishop Dong and Bishop Yuan without Papal approval posed

not only a political problem but also a doctrinal difficulty. Pius XII died before taking a clear position on the issue. In a 1958 encyclical, John XXIII deplored the weakness and fear of illicit bishops for driving China toward a schism.<sup>77</sup> The Pope also accused the CCP for pursuing “a plan to force Our Children to obey false pastors.”<sup>78</sup> However, in November 1962, after consulting with his China experts, the Pope promised not to use the word “schism” to describe the Church in China. Furthermore, twenty bishops who had worked in China signed a declaration stipulating that the Chinese Church was not schismatic.<sup>79</sup> In banning the use of the word “schism” from Vatican’s subsequent discussion of China, the Pope avoided a *de jure* severance of spiritual ties with the Chinese National Church, hoping to open a window for further dialogue with the CCP and reconciliation with the Chinese Church.

The CCP, in the midst of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward, remained indifferent to the shift of Vatican’s attitude toward Communism. The ideologically charged invectives against Vatican persisted in official press throughout the whole duration the newly elected liberal Pope’s tenure. In 1959, at the Second National People’s Congress, Catholic delegates Li Weiguang and Hu Wenyaoyao accused the Vatican of “mixing politics with religion” for the purpose of serving reactionary imperialists.<sup>80</sup> The CCP did not neglect to portray the Vatican as a reactionary servant of the “imperialist United States”: the Xinhua News Agency identified the Vatican and the Peace Corps as President Kennedy’s “tools of invasion” that were meant to “support his projects of armed invasion.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the Xinhua News Agency never failed to stress that the Vatican was “resolutely opposed” to Marxist ideology.<sup>82</sup> The sustained ideologically charged media attacks against the Vatican throughout the tenure of John XXIII suggested that the CCP had no intention to either de-escalate the PRC’s tensions with the Holy See or mitigate its aggressive United Front tactics toward the Chinese Catholic Church.

Paul VI, unlike his predecessors, directly appealed to the CCP leaders for dialogue. Shortly after his election in 1963, Paul VI sent a message to CCP leaders stressing the compatibility of the Catholic faith and patriotism toward China.<sup>83</sup> In 1967, he renewed his direct appeals for peace to China.<sup>84</sup> Paul VI’s overtures were largely built on John XXIII’s

groundwork of purging the word “schism” from the Vatican’s discussions on China. During a speech at the United Nations in 1965, he called for universal membership at the UN, hinting that the PRC should be admitted in the organization.<sup>85</sup> In attempting rapprochement with the PRC, Paul VI distanced himself from Chiang Kai-shek’s regime in Taiwan. During a visit to Hong Kong in 1970, when meeting a Taiwanese delegation, Paul VI did not make any commitment toward anti-Communism that would have reassured the Taiwanese; he instead focused on general questions of spirituality.<sup>86</sup>

The 1960s saw the escalation of two major Cold War conflicts: the ideological split between China and the Soviet Union, and the military confrontation that pitted North Vietnamese (Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or DRV) Communist forces against the armies of South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam, or RVN) and the United States. The roots of the Sino-Soviet ideological split could be traced as far back as the CCP’s inner party conflicts between Mao and the Comintern-backed Chinese cadres in the 1930s. However, recent scholarship identified the following crucial turning points that heralded the ideological split: Khrushchev’s Secret Speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 and his unpleasant exchanges with Mao in 1958 regarding the creation of a Sino-Soviet joint fleet stationed in the PRC’s coastal area.<sup>87</sup> As for the Vietnam War, the United States provided limited military and financial aid to the South Vietnamese regime beginning in the 1950s. However, it was only after the Tonkin incident in August 1964 that the Johnson administration began escalating an undeclared war against Indochinese Communist forces. The PRC, on its part, pledged significant military and material assistance to the DRV. Strangely enough, the Holy See had an uncanny ability to involve itself in the PRC’s important ideological conflicts. Consequently, Beijing’s perception of Vatican drastically changed as its ideological rifts with the Soviet Union deepened.

Although the Chinese Communists were dismayed with Khrushchev’s criticism of Stalin, they did not immediately proclaim a public break with the Soviet Union. Prior to 1958, the Vatican was still considered an “anti-Soviet”, imperialist foe.<sup>88</sup> However, as the ideological disagreements between China and the Soviet Union came to the fore, the CCP gradually began to portray the Vatican as an ally of Soviet revisionism. The gradual Soviet-Vatican

rapprochement that resulted from the Holy See's *Ostpolitik* in the 1960s provided ample ammunition for the Party polemicists of the state-controlled media. On October 28, 1963, the *Renmin Ribao* released an Albanian editorial that denounced the "Khrushchevite clique" for "raising the banner of betrayal and split" and for seeking rapprochement with "the enemies of socialism and peace," which included the Vatican.<sup>89</sup>

During the Cultural Revolution, the ideological fulminations of the official press painted a colorful picture of the "Soviet-Vatican connivance."<sup>90</sup> A *Renmin Ribao* article in April 1967 denounced the "hypocrisy of Paul VI's criticisms of colonialism" and the "dishonesty of Soviet Revisionists for praising the Pope's so-called anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist credentials."<sup>91</sup> On May 8, 1967, the Xinhua News Agency released excerpts of an Albanian editorial, which argued that "the Vatican, the American Imperialists and the Soviet Revisionists advocated for 'European détente' in order to strategically position world counterrevolutionary forces against the center of world revolution – the People's Republic of China."<sup>92</sup> Toward the end of October 1967, official Chinese media released a rumor that Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin was nominated as a potential candidate for the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize, alongside UN Secretary General U Thant and Pope Paul VI.<sup>93</sup> This rumor was entirely unsubstantiated. Nobel Peace Prize candidates were nominated in secret, and no similar rumors appeared in Western newspapers. A series of editorials in 1969 attacked the "Soviet Revisionist Clique" for its sycophancy toward the Vatican, the "Soviet Revisionist traitors" were said to "overindulge in opiate" by seeking points of convergence between socialism and Christianity.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, Beijing's portrayal of the Vatican was highly influenced by its ideological split with the Soviet Union. Since Beijing always described the Vatican as "a bastion of reaction," it was logical for the PRC to associate the Holy See with the Soviet Union, which, in the eyes of the Chinese leaders, gradually replaced the United States as the primary reactionary force in the world.<sup>95</sup> Because of its radicalizing ideological assumptions, China became deaf to Vatican's appeals for dialogue and limited its strategic options to confrontation against the Holy See. The CCP's ideological perception of Vatican would fuel its inflammatory propaganda rhetoric against the Holy See. Because Paul VI was unaware of the domestic

political development in the PRC, he unwittingly entangled himself in the Sino-Soviet split through his *Ostpolitik*.

The PRC's involvement in the Second Indochina War also strengthened the CCP's perception of the Vatican as an ideological enemy, thus contributing to the deafness to its dialogue appeals. Recent scholarship by Chen Jian and Zhai Qiang have shown that the Vietnam conflict became a core ideological component of Mao's revolutionary vision.<sup>96</sup> Mao sought to exploit the conflict in order to increase international tensions and fuel his domestic revolutionary designs, especially within the context of the Cultural Revolution. My own research on PRC-Holy See relations and on CCP-Chinese Catholic Church interactions has allowed me to unearth evidence supporting the conclusions of Chen Jian and Zhai Qiang. The Chinese leaders attacked Pope Paul VI's involvement in the Vietnam conflict to escalate the tensions between China and Vatican, and subsequently prompt domestic ideological mobilization.

Paul VI's appeals for a negotiated peace in Vietnam, as well as his attempts at mediation between the U.S., the RVN and the DRV became subjects of CCP ideological diatribes as the PRC stepped up its military and financial supports of North Vietnam after 1965. The *Renmin Ribao* editorials attacked the Holy See for "aiding the peace swindle of the U.S. Imperialists."<sup>97</sup> In light of the continuous increase of the number of American combat forces in Indochina, the Xinhua News Agency concluded that Paul VI was an accomplice of the U.S. "peace scheme, which in fact masked actual American escalation of the war."<sup>98</sup> Since Mao needed to increase the international tensions arising from the Vietnam conflict to pursue his domestic revolutionary goals, he decided to dismiss Vatican's peace appeals as artifices intended to masquerade the American escalation of the war.

The Vietnam War further reinforced Paul VI's unwitting entanglement in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Having deposed Khrushchev the year before, the new Soviet leadership committed substantial military and material assistance to the DRV in 1965, thus reversing the earlier Soviet policy of non-interference in Indochina. Yet, unlike the PRC, the Soviet Union wanted the DRV to end the conflict through a negotiated settlement. Vietnam now became an arena of competition between Beijing and Moscow for leadership of world revolution. Beijing, in the official

press, insisted that Moscow and Washington were “aligned” in their views on Vietnam, and that they conspired together with the Vatican to put forward a “peace swindle.”<sup>99</sup> The Chinese saw the Pope’s meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko on April 27, 1966, and with U.S. Ambassador to RVN Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. on May 3, 1966 as signs that the Pope was “weaving threads between American Imperialists and Soviet Revisionists on the Vietnam Question.”<sup>100</sup> The purpose of the Pope’s meeting with Gromyko was to confer about pastoral questions within the Soviet Union, and there is no conclusive evidence indicating that the Pope discussed Vietnam at length with Gromyko as he had with Lodge a few days later.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, the Chinese still judged necessary to view the successive meetings of the Pope with Gromyko and Lodge as a sure sign of Soviet-American-Vatican conspiracy. Given the radicalizing ideological framework of the Cultural Revolution, this was, for the Chinese, the most plausible conclusion to be drawn. The CCP deemed necessary to zealously “expose” the Vatican-Soviet-American “peace swindle” to both publicly demonstrate their solidarity with the Vietnamese people and affirm their own central position in the world movement of communist revolution.<sup>102</sup>

In a similar vein, Beijing viewed the meeting between the Pope and the Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny as another instance of Soviet Revisionists “forming a joint-venture company,” with the Vatican and the American imperialists bringing forward the “peace swindle.”<sup>103</sup> Podgorny’s meeting with the Pope in January 1967 spurred a wave of angry *Renmin Ribao* editorials that did not subside until March 1968.<sup>104</sup> The Xinhua News Agency even threw in a few anti-Soviet-revisionism tirades of the loyal Albanian comrades.<sup>105</sup> However, the Chinese aid to the DRV began to wane from 1968 onwards, as China reoriented its foreign policy toward rapprochement with the United States. Domestically, Chinese society was on the verge of collapse as a result of the Cultural Revolution. Within this context, the anti-Vatican accusations related to the Vietnam situation began to disappear from the official press.

The Vietnam conflict also permeated the relations between the CCP and the Chinese Catholic Church toward the mid-1960s. In the only 1965 issue of the *Courier Pigeon* (信鸽), the official journal of the Patriotic Church, out of total number of eleven

articles, five were public declarations of solidarity to the struggle DRV from various Party and government organs.<sup>106</sup> None of the eleven articles discussed pastoral matters. In 1965, the United Front Work Department, the agency responsible for the Party’s relations with non-Party elements, including the Catholic Church, operated within an increasingly radicalized ideological environment. Beijing’s Vietnam policies thus became ideologically relevant to the CCP’s United Front tactics toward the Chinese Catholic Church. That the Vietnam question figured prominently within the CCP-Chinese Catholic Church relations supports Chen Jian’s conclusion that the tension related to the Vietnam conflict promoted Mao’s domestic revolutionary goals. In the late 1960s, Mao did not wish for a peace in Vietnam, since he needed the conflict to promote his domestic campaigns of ideological mobilization. It is thus not surprising that Mao’s Vietnam propaganda figured prominently in the CCP’s dealings with the Catholic Church.

In 1969, China was caught in a precarious situation. Abroad, Mao’s commitment to world revolution placed China in opposition against both the United States and the Soviet Union, in addition to alienating third world powers that were sympathetic to Beijing in the 1950s. At home, both the CCP and the Chinese society were in shambles. The United Front had collapsed under the weight of ideological radicalization, and the Red Guard youths that Mao unleashed upon the Party became intractable. The ideological conflict with the Soviet Union still raged on, and it could escalate into a full-blown war anytime. With this situation in mind, Mao and the Chinese leaders began reorienting China’s grand strategy by steering toward rapprochement with the United States. The strategic reorientation of Beijing toward Washington appeared to have reduced the tensions between China and Vatican, since the Chinese leaders sent signals that Vatican immediately took for indications of a willingness to engage dialogue.

Toward the end of 1969, the usual ideological invectives in Chinese media against Vatican faded into an ominous silence. Then, at the beginning of July 1970, the Chinese Communists suddenly decided to release Bishop James Edward Walsh, an American Maryknoll missionary imprisoned since 1954 for alleged charges of espionage. Paul VI received the news of Walsh’s release with much enthusiasm. The

Pope made explicit his expectations of “better days to come in Continental China” during a public address at the St. Peter’s Square on July 12, 1970.<sup>107</sup> Bishop Walsh, after a brief period of health recovery in Hong Kong, went to the Vatican to visit the Pope on August 25.<sup>108</sup> Paul VI probably interpreted Walsh’s release as a signal that the Chinese want to improve relations with the Vatican. This was probably why, in October 1971, Paul VI decided to leave vacant the post of apostolic *nuncio* to the Republic of China (ROC)/Taiwan after recalling Archbishop Cassidy, the last *nuncio* to the ROC.<sup>109</sup> Many others shared Paul VI’s optimism. Reportedly, the Father Louis Wei Tsing-sing, a Chinese priest living in Paris, came to Rome on his own accord in 1971 to talk to Secretary of State Jean Villot about the possibility of normalization with the PRC.<sup>110</sup> However, China rebuked Vatican’s gestures of good will: Father Wang Ki-ting, a priest from Beijing, told the Italian press that the Chinese Catholic Church was autonomous from Vatican and only in “spiritual communion with the Pope.”<sup>111</sup>

A second sign, which also seemed to announce a softening of the PRC’s attitude toward the Chinese Catholic Church, occurred in 1971. Churches were reopened in Beijing for the first time since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. In November 1971, a mass was celebrated for foreigners in a church.<sup>112</sup> In 1972, two churches began holding regular services in Beijing once more.<sup>113</sup> Once again, these positive developments boosted the Vatican’s optimism. Paul renewed his appeals for dialogue in April 1973, averring that the thoughts of Mao “reflected Christian values.”<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, Vatican hopes proved to be unwarranted. The opening of churches in Beijing was not followed by a general change of religious policy. Because of the PRC’s unchanging intransigence toward religions, the Vatican could not hope to re-establish its severed ties with the Chinese Catholic Church. Furthermore, the “Criticize Confucius Criticize Lin Campaign,” which Mao launched in the aftermath of Lin Biao’s fall from grace, brought a new wave of ideological criticism against all religions. Under such circumstances, the Vatican could not earn limited freedom for the Chinese Catholic Church, as it had done for the Eastern European National Churches through its *Ostpolitik*.

The release of Bishop Walsh and the opening of churches in Beijing did not signal China’s intention to pursue dialogue with the Vatican. Rather, they were

indicative of Beijing’s overall strategic shift toward rapprochement with the United States. Since Bishop Walsh was an American citizen, the Chinese leaders sought to use his release to signal their intention to improve relations. The churches in Beijing were only opened for the purpose of performing religious services for the foreign diplomats. This was also aimed at paving the way for an eventual rapprochement with the United States. Paul VI, eager to establish dialogue with the Chinese leaders, and having no knowledge of the strategic considerations of the Chinese leaders, misinterpreted the Chinese signals. His subsequent calls for improved relations only elicited cold reactions from the Chinese. Thus, though the reorientation of the Chinese foreign policy toward the United States led to an apparent thaw in Sino-Vatican relations, the domestic ideological environment constrained the Chinese into a position of mitigated hostility toward the Vatican.

#### 1976-1981: TRANSITIONAL TIMES

The sudden developments of 1976 completely took China by surprise. The death of the PRC’s two senior leaders, Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong, the devastating earthquake in Tangshan, and the dramatic downfall of the Gang of Four signaled a new period of political turmoil that would not end until 1981. After coming to power in 1978 and outmaneuvering his political rivals, Deng Xiaoping began to set China on the path of his Four Modernizations, which slowly displaced revolution and class struggle as the Party’s ideological focus. Nonetheless, the political turmoil would not calm down until the end of the trial of the Gang of Four in 1981, as the CCP grappled with the problem of the posthumous assessment of Mao. As China transitioned toward a post Cold-War era, Beijing’s grand strategy was no longer constrained to strict orientations of unmitigated hostility toward either the United States or the Soviet Union as was the case before Mao’s death. Beijing now freely shifted between conciliatory and hostile courses of action in order to accomplish its twin aims of promoting the Four Modernizations and of safeguarding its sovereignty over domestic religious activities.

Despite the waning of the Maoist ideological discourse, the improvement of the PRC-Holy See relations still appeared remote toward the end of the 1970s. In August 1979, during a press conference, a Vatican spokesperson said that the July 25 election of

the new Bishop of Beijing, Michael Fu Tieshan, was illegitimate because the Pope John Paul II had not approved of it.<sup>115</sup> However, mitigating his stance, the spokesperson added that the Holy See expressed “love toward our brothers in faith, particularly those who live in the Chinese continent.”<sup>116</sup> Later in 1979, on October 7, Premier Hua Guofeng told a group of European journalists that he would not visit the Pope during his impending visit to Italy, since the Vatican and Taiwan maintained normal diplomatic relations.<sup>117</sup> Hua did not pay visit to the John Paul II, even when the latter made known his eagerness to meet the former.<sup>118</sup> Even with John Paul II’s repeated overtures and with the new ideological climate in China, the question of the appointment of bishops remained serious areas of dispute between Beijing and Vatican, or more precisely, between the CCP and the Holy See.

Hopes for the improvement in Sino-Vatican relations appeared more tangible when the PRC received the visit from two high-ranking prelates of the Universal Catholic Church at the beginning of 1980. On February 27, 1980, the Archbishop of Marseilles, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, landed in Beijing for a two-week visit. He was the first high-ranking prelate to visit China since the expulsion of Archbishop Riberi in 1951.<sup>119</sup> The Archbishop of Marseilles met with both religious leaders and high-ranked Party cadres for informal talks. In a conference with prominent leaders from many religious groups, Cardinal Etchegaray was asked to discuss the theological innovations linked to the Second Vatican Council: his audience expressed puzzlement regarding “the lack of regard of European Catholics for religious rites.”<sup>120</sup> On March 1, Etchegaray met with Ulanfu, then vice-president of the People’s Consultative Conference and Director of the United Front Work Department.<sup>121</sup> Ulanfu remarked that, although there were diplomatic questions that divided Beijing and Vatican, a solution to those problems could be achieved through efforts from both parties.<sup>122</sup>

On the same day, Etchegaray met with Xiao Xianfa, the head of the Bureau of Religious Affairs. Xiao was considerably more blunt than Ulanfu, asserting that “Beijing would look over past mistakes of Rome.”<sup>123</sup> On more than one occasion, Cardinal Etchegaray inadvertently broached the unpleasant topic of the underground Catholic Church in China. Nonetheless, his Chinese hosts remained courteous

throughout his stay in China. Etchegaray’s account of his encounter with Chinese leaders was sketchy at best. He devoted far greater attention to touristic details of his trip in his memoirs.

Concomitant to Cardinal Etchegaray’s visit, the Chinese separately received another important prelate, Cardinal Franz König, Archbishop of Vienna. Like Etchegaray, König was invited privately via the intermediary of a Chinese Ambassador. König landed in Beijing on March 8, and met with Ulanfu and Xiao Xianfa just as Etchegaray did. In his article *My Journey to China*, he provides an especially detailed account of his encounters with Xiao. Although Xiao assured König that, ever since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the government had secured the freedom of religious belief, he insisted that the Catholic Patriotic Church strove for total independence and that union with Rome would be declined. In a tone reminiscent of Emperor Qianlong’s condescending treatment of the British delegate George Macartney in 1792, Xiao dismissed König’s suggestion of establishing unofficial contacts with the Vatican, seeing no need for such contacts.<sup>iv</sup> However, when König pointed out the de facto schismatic status of the Patriotic Church, Xiao gave a conciliatory response by assuring the prelate that China did not wish for schism, and that the Chinese Church would respect the religious tradition of the Universal Church. Xiao wanted to demonstrate that, with China’s new religious policies, the National Catholic Church could be rebuilt with or without the contribution of Vatican. Nevertheless, China would gracefully grant the Vatican the favor of refraining from pushing for schism between the Chinese National Church and the Universal Church.<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, König noticed that no one discussed with him the question of Taiwan, which tempered his hope for further progress in Sino-Vatican relations.<sup>125</sup> König seemed to have reached the conclusion that the Chinese were not ready to discuss the issue of establishing diplomatic relations. It is doubtful whether the Chinese viewed the Holy See as a potential partner of equal diplomatic relations in 1981 or if the Chinese ever held such views at all. After all, relations between China and Vatican could not be founded on a basis of equality, since the CCP

iv In 1792, George Macartney, led a British Mission to Emperor Qianlong’s court with the purpose of establishing full diplomatic relations with the Qing empire and negotiating the opening of trade of Chinese ports for British Merchants. Qianlong refused all the requests of the British: the Emperor contended that the Qing Empire had everything, therefore had no need for whatever merchandise the British had to offer.

could tolerate with difficulty competing sovereignties over domestic non-Party elements.

Finally, in his account of his encounters with CCP cadres, König left out his discussions with Ulanfu. Likely, he believed Ulanfu to be not as important as Xiao Xianfa in the implementation of religious policies.<sup>126</sup> König was mistaken. Although the Bureau of Religious Affairs dealt with the day-to-day implementation of religious policies, it always worked together with the United Front Work Department and never operated independently. As a result, Xiao, as head of the Bureau of Religious affairs, probably deferred to Ulanfu, the head of the United Front Work Department, when making important decisions.

The visits of Etchegaray and König have shown that, although China was willing to pursue contacts with the Vatican, relations between the two would occur on an unequal basis, with China expecting the Vatican to be the party making more concessions. China clearly did not see normalization of relations with the Vatican as a vital goal. Rather, the PRC, guarding jealously its sovereignty over the Chinese Catholic Church, was reluctant to engage the Holy See. The CCP would only accept an arrangement in which the Vatican renounced fully or partially to its claim over the right to appoint bishops and other prelates. For Beijing, bishops who were consecrated without its approval bore the stigma of foreign imperialist intrusion.

Shortly after the visits of Cardinals Etchegaray and König, on June 9 1980, the PRC authorities released Bishop Dominic Deng Yiming, the Apostolic Administrator of Guangdong who was jailed in 1958. Four months later, in October, the leadership of the Catholic Patriotic Association voted to appoint him as vice-chairman of the Guangzhou chapter of CPA and to restore Deng Yiming to the Bishopric of Guangzhou, of which he was deprived when he was arrested. Deng Yiming was also allowed to go to Hong Kong for medical treatment on November 5.<sup>127</sup>

PRC-Holy See relations appeared to improve slowly but surely in the eyes of the Vatican. During his trip to Manila in February 1981, Pope John Paul II made conciliatory remarks toward China, asserting that a good Catholic would “fully contribute to building China.”<sup>128</sup> John Paul II’s speech was received coolly in China. The “Patriotic” Bishop of Beijing, Michael Fu Tieshan, said he saw no prospects of reconciliation between the Vatican and the Chinese

Catholic Church.<sup>129</sup> Undeterred, John Paul II, ordered his Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli to meet Deng Yiming in Hong Kong as his own trip to Asia came to a close.<sup>130</sup> When Casaroli arrived in Hong Kong on February 28, he held a joint press conference with Deng Yiming, in which he stated that there were many ways to solve the Taiwan question, and that the CPA, despite being illegal, could become a legal organization; for that purpose, Bishop Deng had to act as a “bridge” between Rome and the Chinese Church.<sup>131</sup> Before leaving Hong Kong, Casaroli told Deng that the Pope wanted to see him.<sup>132</sup> Two months after Casaroli’s departure, Bishop Deng travelled to Rome and met the Pope on April 30.<sup>133</sup> Deng stayed in Rome for over a month; he learned that the Pope appointed him Archbishop of Guangdong on June 4, 1980. The appointment was announced on Vatican Radio on June 5, and the Pope performed the ceremony on June 6.<sup>134</sup>

The Chinese angrily protested against Deng’s appointment. On June 11, Bishop Yang Gaojian, the chairman of the CPA, issued a statement “staunchly opposing the Roman Curia’s decision to appoint Deng Yiming as Archbishop of Guangzhou.”<sup>135</sup> Four days later, on June 15, the Bureau of Religious Affairs released a public statement endorsing Yang Gaojian’s opposition to the appointment.<sup>136</sup> On June 24, the local Guangzhou chapter of the CPA removed his functions of vice-chairman of the Guangzhou CPA and of Bishop of the Guangzhou diocese.<sup>137</sup> The CPA organized more accusation meetings against both Deng and the Vatican for the rest of 1981.<sup>138</sup>

The sudden setback in the Deng Yiming affair in 1981 has puzzled scholars of Sino-Vatican relations. The Chinese vitriolic reaction was not unexpected; however, it is difficult to assess the motives behind Vatican’s decision of appointing Deng as Archbishop of Guangzhou. Many scholars who study the Chinese Catholic Church agree that the appointment was Vatican’s blunder. Beatrice Leung wrote that the Vatican diplomats misread prior Chinese conciliatory gestures as signs of real rapprochement, while Kim-Kwong Chan contends that the Vatican mistakenly believed they had obtained Chinese consent of Deng’s appointment.<sup>139</sup> However, the “Vatican misunderstanding” explanation probably rests on the flimsy assumption that Pope John Paul II, in 1981, saw Chinese consent as an important precondition to Deng’s appointment. Unlike his predecessors Paul VI and John

XXIII, John Paul II was not shy about confrontation; his policies of propping up a resistance Church in Poland more than convincingly demonstrated his occasionally confrontational verve. Furthermore, by 1980 the Vatican had accumulated a considerably rich experience in dealing with Communist states through its *Ostpolitik*. The nomination of new Bishops in Eastern European States often required a complex negotiation process. In light of this experience, it would be simply ridiculous for a conciliatory Holy See to nominate a new Chinese Archbishop on the basis of unconfirmed Chinese acquiescence. The argument that John Paul II's move was confrontational would be more plausible. The Pope probably wanted to test Beijing's intentions toward Vatican. Thus, through the nomination of Deng as Archbishop, John Paul II broke with his earlier conciliatory approach toward China.

Bishop Deng certainly expected immediate improvements of relations between Beijing and the Vatican: he expected to successfully fulfill his role as a "bridge" between the Holy See and the Patriotic Church. Many indications from the behavior of the Chinese led him to entertain such illusions. Prior to his departure for Hong Kong, a CCP cadre asked Bishop Deng whether he was going to visit the Pope. Upon finding out Deng's resolve to go to Rome if the Pope asked him to do so, the cadre expressed no further opposition.<sup>140</sup> When Bishop Deng asked whether he could establish relations with the Vatican, the cadre did not express explicit disapproval, saying that "it is up to our higher leaders to decide this, we cannot answer this question."<sup>141</sup> However, further evidence indicates that the Chinese probably did not wish for immediate substantive improvement in the relations with the Vatican in the years between 1980 and 1981. The Chinese media stressed the unofficial character of Cardinal Roger Etchegaray's trip, labeling it as "a visit from a friend of France." There was no mention of his ties with the Vatican.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, König's visit was not cited in the press at all, likely because the Chinese wished to avoid the kind of media storm that would falsely convey the impression that China sought closer relations with Vatican. Furthermore, two months after the visits by Etchegaray and König, Xiao Xianfa, in a speech at the Third Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) Conference of Representatives of May 1980, dismissed the Vatican's calls for dialogue as a means to reassert their control over the Chinese Church. He urged Catholic believers to be wary of Vatican

activities.<sup>143</sup>

Deng, who was still behind bars at the time of Xiao's speech, was unaware of the full extent of China's reticence at improving relations with Vatican. Deng's release and his subsequent promotions were probably part of the CCP's attempt to bolster the legitimacy of the CPA, as Deng was a widely respected priest within the Catholic community. This was consistent with the Chinese general post-1976 tactic of enlisting non-CPA priests to rally the Catholic community to the CPA. The bold move of the Pope likely took the Chinese by surprise. The Chinese did not oppose Deng's desire to travel to Rome. Therefore, they did not expect any sudden developments once Deng met the Pope. Deng's appointment as Archbishop was announced on the June 5, 1981, yet the CPA only released a public statement voicing its opposition on June 11.<sup>144</sup>

It is unclear whether the Chinese had contingencies for dealing with any unilateral moves from the Pope. The delay with which the Chinese issued their response suggests that Beijing spent much time either coming up with new contingencies or simply drafting the response. While there is no evidence supporting this hypothesis, it is possible to observe, through a close reading, that Yang Gaojian's statement of opposition was very carefully worded. The first half of the statement attacks the "Roman Curia's" lack of regard for the "sovereignty of the [Chinese] Catholic Church", while the second half accuses Deng Yiming for "harming the self-respect of the Chinese Clergy and People" in accepting the appointment at the Roman Curia.<sup>145</sup> The diatribe against Deng Yiming indirectly challenged the "bridge" role the Vatican conferred upon the Bishop. Since Vatican presented Deng Yiming as a bridge, it was logical for China to "burn this bridge."<sup>146</sup>

However, the statement avoided direct attacks on the person of the Pope. The Vatican was always referred to as "Roman Curia" instead of "Holy See" to emphasize the political character of the statement and gloss over its implications concerning spiritual questions. The Bureau of Religious Affairs, a few days later, endorsed the CPA's statement, directly condemning, with the same careful wording, the Vatican's "interference in China's internal matters."<sup>147</sup> In December 1981, at a tea conference for religious leaders organized by the United Front Work Department, Zhang Zhi, the vice-chairman of the UFWD, congratulated the CPA leaders for their anti-Vatican stance in the Deng Yiming

Affair.<sup>148</sup> Beijing, taken off guard by John Paul's bold move, seemed to lose the control over the dynamics of Sino-Vatican relations. It also saw Deng Yiming's appointment as a direct challenge to the integrity of its United Front with the Chinese Catholic Church. To correct this situation, the CCP carefully took the time to plan and coordinate responses between the CPA and the State and Party bureaucracies in order to raise the level of tension in its relations with the Vatican.

Thus, between 1976 and 1981, as China moved away from the Cold War conflicts that plagued the world, its possibilities toward the Holy See were no longer bound to its ideologically-determined grand strategy of opposition against either superpower. As a result, Beijing pursued contradictory policies toward the Vatican. The visits by Cardinals Etchegaray and König to China indicated China's willingness to improve relations in the post-Mao era. However, the botched appointment of Bishop Deng Yiming demonstrated that China was unwilling to compromise on matters of sovereignty over religious life within the Chinese Church. Moreover, it showed that the shadows of foreign encroachment still haunted it. Pope John Paul II's confrontational approach clearly did not work for China as it had for Eastern Europe. China alternated between hostility and conciliation toward the Vatican because it needed to make friends abroad to improve its international standing and to carry out its Four Modernizations, but it also felt compelled to jealously guard its sovereignty.

#### 1981-1989: STAGNATION OF PRC-VATICAN RELATIONS

The end of the trial of the Gang of Four in 1981 gave way to a new era of political stability in which reform and opening displaced revolution and class struggle as the watchwords of the day. The establishment of Sino-American diplomatic relations in 1978 heralded a friendlier international environment in which China could pursue its Four Modernizations with the help of foreign capital. Nevertheless, though China had mostly shed its Cold Warrior skin in the 1980s, Sino-Vatican relations still seemed to stagnate. China continued to pursue its contradictory policy of conciliation and confrontation, for its twin aims of economic modernization and defense of sovereignty did not change. China's post-Cold War diplomacy greatly resembled its United Front policy of "alliance and struggle."<sup>149</sup> This is no coincidence, as the scope

of CCP United Front activities expanded to an international horizon in the Deng era.

After the death of Mao, the Communist Chinese leadership readily acknowledged that religions would have a long-term presence in China despite the prophecies of Communist ideologues regarding its imminent disappearance. In March 1982, the Central Committee issued a Party document calling for the co-optation of religious groups.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, the Constitution explicitly guaranteed religious freedom.<sup>151</sup> However, the Party made a distinction between legitimate religious beliefs and subversive ideas, which it deemed as "spiritual pollution." It also warned against "infiltration" on the part of foreign religious organizations.<sup>152</sup>

This double standard led to contradictory measures regarding the Party's relationship with the Chinese Catholic Church. The Party sought to co-opt the Catholic community by placing formerly incarcerated respected priests, such as Alyosius Jin Luxian and Dominic Deng Yiming, in prominent positions within the Catholic Patriotic Association.<sup>153</sup> Yet the CCP also briefly incarcerated a few Jesuits in 1983 for allegedly subversive activities.<sup>154</sup> This, however, does not change the fact that in the 1980s, the Party considered religion to be a permanent feature in China's social and cultural landscape. Moreover, Bishop Gong Pinmei was released in 1986; with world revolution no longer the primary ideological watchword of the day, the dissident Bishop was no longer useful for China's propaganda campaigns.

Sino-Vatican relations reached their low point at the beginning of 1982. On January 6, Pope John Paul II, in an open "Letter to the Bishops of the World," invited bishops to "pray for the Church of China."<sup>155</sup> In March 21, the Pope celebrated a mass for the Church of China, during which he "renewed his expression of his affection and esteem for the people."<sup>156</sup> Prior to the celebration of the Mass, on March 19, Bishop Yang Gaojian of the CPA released a public statement apparently preemptively condemning the Pope for "slanderingly claiming that the Chinese Catholics were suffering."<sup>157</sup> The wording of Yang's statement was certainly curious, for it anticipated precise formulations on "the suffering of Chinese Catholics," which were not present in the Pope's statement at the mass on March 21. Yang's statement was probably meant to rebuke the Pope's January "Letter to the Bishops of the World," in which John Paul II made

explicit reference to “difficult and prolonged trials in the span of these years.”<sup>158</sup> Although the Pope made this claim in describing the state of affairs of the Chinese Church over a span of 30 years, the Chinese misconstrued this claim as a description of present affairs, which the Chinese then vehemently refuted. When discussing present state of affairs, the Pope actually praised the new religious freedoms that were granted in China. Thus, the Chinese deliberately misconstrued the Pope’s statement on the “difficult trials” of Chinese Catholics and refuted a claim the Pope did not even make.

At first sight, this maneuver seems absurd. However, a closer examination of the Pope’s “Letter to Bishops of the World” reveals another problematic statement: “How consoling it is to receive the news of the constant and courageous *loyalty of Catholics in China to the faith of their fathers and their filial attachment to Peter’s See.*”<sup>159</sup> Although this passage made no mention of the divide between the Patriotic and the Underground Churches, it still appeals to traditional Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety in a forcefully subversive fashion. John Paul II, glossing over the schismatic questions that plagued the Chinese Church, bluntly averred that all Catholics in China remained loyal to the Holy See. It is difficult to conclude beyond doubt that the Pope intended to engage in subtle polemics, but the CCP certainly interpreted the passage as a direct challenge to their authority over the Chinese Catholic Church. To affirm that Chinese Catholics were loyal to the “Peter’s See” out of filial piety was tantamount to challenging the integrity of the CCP’s United Front with the Chinese Catholic Church. The CPA did not issue a direct rebuttal the Pope’s subversive passage; to do so would have amounted to schism, which neither the CPA nor the CCP wanted. Nonetheless, Yang Gaojian’s statement was the first instance, since the Cultural Revolution, of CPA churchmen explicitly attacking the person of the Pope in the official press. If the CPA could not challenge the Pope’s subversive passage, then at least it could directly accuse the Pope in order to make explicit the widening distance between the Chinese Catholic Church and the Holy See.<sup>160</sup>

Undaunted by the setback in PRC-Holy See relations, the Vatican continued exploring new ways to improve its relations with the PRC. In 1982, Casaroli toyed with the idea of a “Chinese Rite,” which is the creation of a new rite in China that would allow the

Chinese Catholic Church to remain in communion with the Universal Catholic Church while retaining a relative administrative autonomy.<sup>161</sup> A “Chinese Rite” church would have been modeled on the Uniate Catholic Churches in Greece and Ukraine. Casaroli’s proposition possibly entailed radical theological innovations, such as terminating the existing Latin Rite liturgies (pre-Vatican II), which was in use by the Chinese Catholic Church at that time. Casaroli probably believed this was the best solution to the schismatic situation in China. The National Catholic Church officially committed its schismatic act when, in 1958, it ordained its first Bishop without prior papal approval. Since then, the Patriotic Church had ordained new bishops on its own. Although the Holy See had not been in contact with the Chinese Church from the late 1950s until the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese Church miraculously survived. However, the lack of communion with the Holy See effectively meant that the Chinese Church bore a schismatic character, even if the Vatican refrained from declaring that a schism had occurred. Casaroli thus hoped that a “Chinese Rite” would allow the Holy See to reconcile with an estranged Chinese Church without disrupting its current administrative autonomy, which would placate the CCP. Nonetheless, the “Chinese Rite” proposition had to be abandoned. As Beatrice Leung points out, there was no specialist in China who would be suited for this task; all experts in theology and liturgy belonged to the Latin Rite Church.<sup>162</sup>

John Paul II, seeing that direct diplomacy, whether conciliatory or confrontational, yielded no positive results, shifted his policies toward indirect reconciliation by encouraging ties between the mainland church and the local churches of Hong Kong and Taiwan. In February 1984, during a meeting with Taiwanese bishops, the Pope invited the Taiwanese Catholic Church and all other overseas Chinese Catholics to act as a bridge between the Chinese Catholic Church and the Universal Church.<sup>163</sup> In doing so, the Pope hoped that, by encouraging closer interactions between the Chinese Church and the Hong Kong and Taiwan Churches, he could open the path for an improvement of the relations between China and the Holy See. John Paul II’s approach yielded mixed results. The two visits of Bishop John Baptist Wu of Hong Kong in 1984 and 1986, despite their lack of substantial progress, still contributed to

the gradual defusing of the tensions between China and Vatican from 1982.<sup>164</sup>

Paralleling John Paul II's policy of indirect inter-Church engagement, the CCP, after 1983, also encouraged the "patriotic" priests of the CPA to cultivate contacts abroad. In March 1984, a delegation from the Canadian Catholic Church was invited to China for a friendly visit.<sup>165</sup> In October 1987, the CPA sent a delegation to Austria, where the delegates met with Cardinal König in an informal setting.<sup>166</sup> The CCP encouraged interactions between the Chinese Catholic Church and foreign Churches because they were consistent with Deng's general policy of opening up the country and modernizing its economy. Such interactions could also be beneficial for his Four Modernizations. Enlisting the aid of foreign friends was also part of the United Front tactics of the CCP.

Though the Chinese leaders allowed informal contacts of the Chinese Catholic Church to proliferate, their resistance to the idea of normalization of relations with the Vatican remained strong. In 1984, United Front Work Department Director Yang Jingren warned against the subversive activities of the Vatican.<sup>167</sup> The Foreign Ministry reiterated in 1987 and 1988 that, in order to have normal relations with China, the Vatican must break off relations with Taiwan and refrain from interfering with China's internal affairs, including the appointment of bishops.<sup>168</sup> Nonetheless, relations between China and the Vatican were significantly less tense than they were in 1982. The meetings of the Cardinal of Manila, Jaime Sin, with former diplomat Huang Hua in 1984 and Premier Zhao Ziyang in 1987, indicated a friendlier relationship between the China and the Holy See despite their largely symbolic nature.<sup>169</sup>

Between 1981 and 1989, China's Vatican diplomacy stabilized into a contradictory pattern of conciliation and confrontation. Through its vitriolic reaction toward the controversial sections of John Paul II's "Letter to the bishops of the world," Beijing sought to assert its sovereignty over religious life in China, especially over the appointment of bishops. However, in encouraging the friendly visits at the level of national churches, China sought to make friends abroad to improve its international image and to indirectly attract foreign investment and talents to China for the Four Modernizations.

## CONCLUSION

Between 1949 and 1989, China deliberately impeded any prospects of normalization of Sino-Vatican relations by increasing tensions with the Holy See. The PRC's Cold War entanglements under Mao Zedong restricted China to an unambiguous stance of hostility toward the Vatican. Only with the death of Mao and the China's gradual exit from the Cold War under Deng Xiaoping did courses of action other than uncompromising opposition toward the Holy See become available to China.

The outbreak of the Korean War spurred ideological domestic mobilization for the campaign of Resist America Aid Korea. Given the ideological considerations of the Chinese leaders, escalating tensions with the Vatican through an anti-imperialist struggle was China's only logical option. The Hungarian Crisis of 1956, the Anti-Rightist Campaigns of 1957, and the Great Leap forward of 1958-1961, plunged the Sino-Vatican relations to a low point by bringing forth a new wave of ideological radicalization. Though Popes John XXIII and Paul VI attempted to establish dialogue with China, the CCP remained ideologically deaf to their appeals. Since John XXIII and Paul VI initiated an overall conciliatory policy toward all communist powers at the time when China was engaged in an ideological spat with the Soviet Union, they inevitably became the enemies in the eyes of the Chinese leaders. Paul VI's attempts at mediating peace between the United States and the DRV only confirmed the Chinese leaders' perceptions that the Vatican was working with American imperialists and Soviet revisionists, especially at a time when Mao sought to exploit the Vietnam conflict for the purpose of domestic mobilization. The PRC's general shift toward rapprochement with the United States yielded positive development in Sino-Vatican relations. However, the ideologically radical environment of the Cultural Revolution kept contributing to the Chinese leaders' deafness to Vatican's pleas until Mao's death.

As China transitioned into the post-Cold War era between 1976 and 1981, minor dialogues with the Vatican became possible. Yet, the relaxed ideological environment of the post-Cold War era by no means indicated the inevitability of improved relations between China and the Holy See. China still escalated tensions on purpose if relations with Vatican grew too close. The Chinese leaders were still reluctant to discuss the issue of appointment of bishops, and they

would not compromise their position that no foreign powers should interfere in the domestic religious affairs of China. Rapprochement with Vatican could only be pursued on China's terms. Thus, China's post-Cold War environment of 1989 still presented more possibilities in its dealings with the Vatican, yet its commitment to its sovereignty over domestic religious matters presented other limitations to its strategy toward the Vatican.

In 1991, it was revealed that Pope John Paul II had secretly elevated Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei to the rank of cardinal in 1979. The Chinese leaders were furious. The incidents surrounding the Falun Gong in the 1990s further hardened the CCP's attitude toward organized religions. Nonetheless, contacts between the PRC and the Holy See were maintained; United Front representatives engage in either formal or informal talks with Vatican diplomats. In December 2014, Pope Francis I made the shocking choice to not receive the Dalai Lama when the latter was in Rome for a Nobel laureate conference. The Chinese Foreign Ministry praised Francis I's conciliatory gesture, while reiterating China's interest in further dialogues. This sudden development appears to herald a possible breakthrough in Sino-Vatican relations. However, the problems and legacies of the Cold War confrontations between China and the Vatican have not disappeared, and they can be only overcome through sustained efforts of negotiation from both parties.

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