

Document No. 19

The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period

TO: All provincial and municipal Party committees; all Party committees of autonomous regions, greater military regions, provincial military regions, field armies, ministries, and commissions within State organs and the general headquarters of the Military Commission of the Central Committee; all Party committees within the armed forces and within all people's organizations:

The Secretariat of the Central Committee has recently studied the religious question and has drawn up a document entitled *The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period*. This document sums up in a more systematic way the historical experience of our Party, positive and negative, with regard to the religious question since the founding of the People's Republic, and clarifies the basic viewpoint and policy the Party has taken. Upon receipt of this document, Party committees of all provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, as well as those of the ministries and commissions of the Central Committee and State organs concerned, should undertake conscientious investigation and discussion of the religious question, and should increase supervision and prompt inspection of the implementation of each item related to this policy.

It is the belief of the Central Committee that following from this summation of the religious question, our Party needs to make further progress in summarizing its experience in all other aspects of its work, as well as of its work in each region and department. It should be affirmed that since the smashing of the "gang of four" and especially since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, our Party has achieved significant results from the summing up of its own historical experience. The "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic" passed by the Sixth Session of the Eleventh Central Committee is a distillation of this kind of result, marking the completion, in terms of ideological leadership, of the Party's task of restoring order. Viewed from another aspect, however, that is, taking our Party's work on all fronts, all regions and departments, the work of summing up our historical experiences is quite insufficient.

It is the hope of the Central Committee, therefore, that Party committees at all levels, most importantly at the provincial, municipal, and autonomous region levels, will, together with the first-level Party committees and organizations of the Central Committee and ministries and commissions of State organs, concentrate their main efforts within the coming two or three years on doing well the task at hand. They should undertake conscientious investigation of the work in those regions and departments for which they are responsible, systematically summing up their historical experience, positive and negative, shaping this into a set of viewpoints and methods in which theory and practice are intimately combined and which are suitable to the conditions in their regions and departments.

It is the belief of the Central Committee that we need only earnestly grasp this key link and expand painstaking efforts in order to achieve new results and effectively raise the ideological

and theoretical level of all Party members, who will then adopt correct and effective methods of work and open up a brand new era as our country goes about the great task of rebuilding socialism in the remaining twenty years of this century.

Central Committee
Of the Communist Party of China
31 March 1982

I. Religion as a Historical Phenomenon

Religion is a historical phenomenon pertaining to a definite period in the development of human society. It has its own cycle of emergence, development, and demise. Religious faith and religious sentiment, along with religious ceremonies and organizations consonant with this faith and sentiment, are all products of the history of society. The earliest emergence of the religious mentality reflected the low level of production and the sense of awe toward natural phenomena of primitive peoples. With the evolution of class society, the most profound social roots of the existence and development of religion lay in the following factors: the helplessness of the people in the face of the blind forces alienating and controlling them in this kind of society; the fear and despair of the workers in the face of the enormous misery generated by the oppressive social system; and in the need of the oppressor classes to use religion as an opiate and as an important and vital means in its control of the masses. In Socialist society, the class root or the existence of religion was virtually lost following the elimination of the oppressive system and its oppressor class. However, because the people's consciousness lags behind social realities, old thinking and habits cannot be thoroughly wiped out in a short period. A long process of struggle is required to achieve great increases in production strength, great abundance in material wealth, and a high level of Socialist democracy, along with high levels of development in education, culture, science, and technology. Since we cannot free ourselves from various hardships brought on by serious natural and man-made disasters within a short period of time; since class struggle continues to exist within certain limits; and given the complex international environment, the long-term influence of religion among a part of the people in a Socialist society cannot be avoided. Religion will eventually disappear from human history. But it will disappear naturally only through the long-term development of Socialism and Communism, when all objective requirements are met. All Party members must have a sober-minded recognition of the protracted nature of the religious question under Socialist conditions. Those who think that with the establishment of the Socialist system and with a certain degree of economic and cultural progress, religion will die out within a short period, are not being realistic. Those who expect to rely on administrative decrees or other coercive measures to wipe out religious thinking and practices with one blow are even further from the basic viewpoint Marxism takes toward the religious question. They are entirely wrong and will do no small harm.

II. The Religions of China

There are many religions in China. Buddhism has a history of nearly 2,000 years in China, Daoism one of over 1,700 years, and Islam over 1,300 years, while Roman Catholicism and Protestantism achieved most of their development following the Opium Wars. As for the numbers of religious adherents, at Liberation there were about 8,000,000 Muslims, while today

there are about 10,000,000 (the chief reason for this is growth in population among the ten Islamic minorities). At Liberation there were 2,700,000 Catholics; today there are over 3,000,000. Protestants numbered 700,000 in 1949 and are now at 3,000,000. Buddhism (including Lamaism) numbers almost the entire populations of the ethnic minorities of Tibet, Mongolia, and Liao Ning among its adherents. Among the Han race, Buddhism and Daoism still exercise considerable influence at present. Naturally, out of the total population of our country, and especially among the Han race, which accounts for the largest number of people, there are a considerable number who believe in spirits, but the number of those who actually adhere to a religion is not great. If we compare the number of religious believers at the time of Liberation with the present number overall, we will see that overall there has been somewhat of an increase in absolute numbers, but when compared with the growth of the population there has been a decline.

But in our appraisal of the religious question, we must reckon fully with its definite complex nature. To sum up, we may say that in old China, during the long feudal period and the more than one hundred years of semicolonial, semifeudal society, all religions were manipulated and controlled by the ruling classes, with extremely negative results. Within China, the Buddhist, Daoist, and Islamic leaderships were mainly controlled by the feudal landowners, feudal lords, and reactionary warlords, as well as the bureaucratic capitalist class. The later foreign colonialist and imperialist forces mainly controlled the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

After Liberation there was a thorough transformation of the socioeconomic system and a major reform of the religious system, and so the status of religion in China has already undergone a fundamental change. The contradictions of the religious question now belong primarily to the category of contradictions among the people. The religious question, however, will continue to exist over a long period within certain limits, will continue to have a definite mass nature, to be entangled in many areas with the ethnic question, and to be affected by some class-struggle and complex international factors. This question, therefore, continues to be one of great significance which we cannot ignore. The question is this: can we handle this religious question properly as we work toward national stability and ethnic unity, as we develop our international relations while resisting the infiltration of hostile forces from abroad, and as we go on constructing a Socialist civilization with both material and spiritual values? This, then, demands that the Party committees on each level must adopt toward the religious question an attitude in accord with what Lenin said, "Be especially alert," "Be very strict," "Think things through thoroughly." To overestimate the seriousness or complexity of the question and so to panic, or to ignore the existence and complexity of the actual question and so let matters drift, would be equally wrong.

III. The Party's Handling of the Religious Question since Liberation

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, there have been many twists and turns in the Party's work with regard to the religious question. In general, although there were some major errors, after the founding of New China, and for the seventeen years up to the "cultural revolution," the Party's religious work achieved great results under the direction of the correct guiding principles and policies of the Party Central Committee. We did away with imperialist forces within the churches and promoted the correct policy of independent, self-governed, and autonomous churches, as well as the "Three-Self Movement" (self-propagation, self-administration and self-support). The Catholic and Protestant churches ceased to be tools of the imperialist aggressors and became independent and autonomous religious enterprises of Chinese

believers. We abolished the special privileges and oppressive exploitative system of feudal religion, attacked and exposed those reactionaries and bad elements who hid behind the cloak of religion, and made Buddhists, Daoists, and Muslims break away from the control and manipulation of the reactionary classes. We proclaimed and carried out a policy of freedom of religious belief, enabling the broad masses of religious believers not only to achieve a complete political and economic emancipation alongside each ethnic minority but also enabling them to begin to enjoy the right of freedom of religious belief. We carried out a policy of winning over, uniting with, and educating religious personages, and thus united the broad masses of the patriotic religious personages. We also assisted and supported religious people to seek international friendship and this has had good, positive effects.

Since 1937, however, leftist errors gradually grew up in our religious work and progressed even further in the midsixties. During the "cultural revolution" especially, the antirevolutionary Lin Biao-Jiang Qing clique had ulterior motives in making use of these leftist errors, and wantonly trampled upon the scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought concerning the religious question. They totally repudiated the Party's correct policy toward religion in effect since the founding of the People's Republic. They basically did away with the work the Party had done on the religious question. They forcibly forbade normal religious activities by the mass of religious believers, as "targets for dictatorship," and fabricated a host of wrongs and injustices which they pinned upon these religious personages. They even misinterpreted some customs and practices of the ethnic minorities as religious superstition, which they then forcibly prohibited. In some places, they even repressed the mass of religious believers, and destroyed ethnic unity. They used violent measures against religion which forced religious movements underground, with the result that they made some headway because of the disorganized state of affairs. A minority of antirevolutionaries and bad elements made use of this situation and, under cover of religious activities, boldly carried out illegal criminal activities, as well as destructive antirevolutionary movements.

After the smashing of Jiang Qing's antirevolutionary clique, and especially since the third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee, the correct guiding principle and policy toward the religious question of our Party was restored step by step. In implementing and carrying out our religious policy, we have opened both Buddhist and Daoist temples, as well as churches and religious sites. We have restored the activities of the patriotic religious associations. We have won over, unified, and educated religious personages. We have strengthened the unity between believers and nonbelievers in each ethnic group. We have righted wrongs and have launched a movement for friendly relations internationally among religious believers as well as resisting infiltration and like doings from hostile religious forces from abroad. In all this, we have undertaken a large number of tasks and have obtained remarkable results.

In this new historical period, the Party's and government's basic task in its religious work will be to firmly implement and carry out its policy of freedom of religious belief; to consolidate and expand the patriotic political alliance in each ethnic religious group; to strengthen education in patriotism and Socialism among them, and to bring into play positive elements among them in order to build a modern and powerful Socialist state and complete the great task of unifying the country; and to oppose the hegemonism and strive together to protect and preserve world peace.

In order to implement and carry out the Party's religious policy correctly and comprehensively, the main task now at hand is to oppose "leftist" erroneous tendencies. At the same time, we must be on our guard to forestall and overcome the erroneous tendency to just let things slide along. All party members, Party committees on all levels, especially those responsible for religious work, must conscientiously sum up and assimilate the historical experience, positive and negative, of the Party in religious work since the founding of the People's Republic. They must make further progress in their understanding and mastery of the objective law governing the emergence, development, and demise of religion. They should overcome every obstacle and difficulty and resolutely keep the religious policy of the Party on the scientific course laid out for it by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

IV. The Party's Present Policy toward Religion

The basic policy the Party has adopted toward the religious question is that of respect for and protection of the freedom of religious belief. This is a long-term policy, one which must be continually carried out until that future time when religion will itself disappear. What do we mean by freedom of religious belief? We mean that every citizen has the freedom to believe in religion and also the freedom not to believe in religion. S/he has also the freedom to believe in this religion or that religion. Within a particular religion, s/he has the freedom to believe in this sect or that sect. A person who was previously a nonbeliever has the freedom to become a religious believer, and one who has been a religious believer has the freedom to become a nonbeliever. We Communists are atheists and must unremittingly propagate atheism. Yet at the same time we must understand that it will be fruitless and extremely harmful to use simple coercion in dealing with the people's ideological and spiritual questions--and this includes religious questions. We must further understand that at the present historical stage the difference that exists between the mass of believers and nonbelievers in matters of ideology and belief is relatively secondary. If we then one-sidedly emphasize this difference, even to the point of giving it primary importance--for example, by discriminating against and attacking the mass of religious believers, while neglecting and denying that the basic political and economic welfare of the mass of both religious believers and nonbelievers is the same--then we forget that the Party's basic task is to unite all the people (and this includes the broad mass of believers and nonbelievers alike) in order that all may strive to construct a modern, powerful Socialist state. To behave otherwise would only exacerbate the estrangement between the mass of believers and nonbelievers as well as incite and aggravate religious fanaticism, resulting in serious consequences for our Socialist enterprise. Our Party, therefore, bases its policy of freedom of religious belief on the theory formulated by Marxism-Leninism, and it is the only correct policy genuinely consonant with the people's welfare.

Naturally, in the process of implementing and carrying out this policy which emphasizes and guarantees the people's freedom to believe in religion, we must, at the same time, emphasize and guarantee the people's freedom not to believe in religion. These are two indispensable aspects of the same question. Any action which forces a nonbeliever to believe in religion is an infringement of freedom of religious belief, just as is any action which forces a believer not to believe. Both are grave errors and not to be tolerated. The guarantee of freedom of religious belief, far from being a hindrance, is a means of strengthening the Party's efforts to disseminate scientific education as well as to strengthen its propaganda against superstition. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the crux of the policy of freedom of religious belief is to make the

question of religious belief a private matter, one of individual free choice for citizens.

The political power in a socialist state can in no way be used to promote any one religion, nor can it be used to forbid any one religion, as long as it is only a question of normal religious beliefs and practices. At the same time, religion will not be permitted to meddle in the administrative or juridical affairs of state, nor to intervene in the schools or public education. It will be absolutely forbidden to force anyone, particularly people under eighteen years of age, to become a member of a church, to become a Buddhist monk or nun, or to go to temples or monasteries to study Buddhist scripture. Religion will not be permitted to recover in any way those special feudal privileges which have been abolished or to return to an exploitative and oppressive religious system. Nor will religion be permitted to make use in any way of religious pretexts to oppose the party's leadership or the socialist system, or to destroy national or ethnic unity.

To sum up, the basic starting point and firm foundation for our handling of the religious question and for the implementation of our policy and freedom of religious belief lies in our desire to unite the mass of believers and nonbelievers and enable them to center all their will and strength on the common goal of building a modernized, powerful socialist state. Any action or speech that deviates in the least from this basic line is completely erroneous, and must be firmly resisted and opposed by both Party and people.

V. The Party's Work with Religious Professionals

To win over, unite and educate persons in religious circles is primarily the task of religious professionals. It is also the essence of the Party's religious work and most important condition and prerequisite for the implementation of the Party's religious policy. Throughout the country at present, there are about 59,000 professional religious, with affiliation as follows:

Buddhist monks and nuns, including lamas about 27,000

Daoist priests and nuns over 2,600

Muslims about 20,000

Catholics about 3,400

Protestants about 5,900

Due to many years of natural attrition, the present number of professional religious has greatly decreased when compared to the number at Liberation. Their class origin, experience, beliefs, and political ideology are quite diverse, but, in brief, we can say that by far the great majority of them are patriotic, law-abiding, and support the socialist system. Only a very small minority oppose the constitution and Socialism to the extent of colluding with foreign antirevolutionaries and other bad elements. Many of these professional religious not only maintain intimate spiritual ties with the mass of religious believers, but have an important influence over the spiritual life of the masses which should not be ignored. Moreover, as they carry out their more formal religious duties, they also perform work which serves the people in many ways and which benefits society. For example, they safeguard Buddhist and Daoist temples and churches and protect historical religious relics, engage in agriculture and afforestation, and carry on the academic study of religion, and so on. Therefore, we must definitely give sufficient attention to all persons in religious circles, but primarily professional religious, uniting them, caring for them, and helping them to make progress. We must unrelentingly yet patiently forward their education in patriotism, upholding the law, supporting socialism, and upholding national and ethnic unity. In the case of

Catholics and Protestants, we must strengthen their education in independence and self-government of their churches.

We must make appropriate arrangements for the livelihood of these professional religious and conscientiously carry out the pertinent policies. This is especially true regarding the well-known public figures and intellectuals among them, for whom we should speedily implement our policy to supply them with appropriate remuneration. We must pay very close attention to and reexamine those injustices perpetrated against persons in religious circles and among the mass of religious believers which have not yet been redressed. These must be redressed in accordance with the facts, especially those more serious ones which may have grave consequences. These must be firmly grasped and speedily resolved.

We must foster a large number of fervent patriots in every religion who accept the leadership of the Party and government, firmly support the Socialist path, and safeguard national and ethnic unity. They should be learned in religious matters and capable of keeping close links with the representatives of the religious masses. Furthermore, we must organize religious persons according to their differing situations and capabilities, respectively, to take part in productive labor, serving society, and in the scholarly study of religion. They should also take part in patriotic political movements and friendly international exchanges. All this is done in order to mobilize the positive elements among religious circles to serve the Socialist modernization enterprise.

With regard to those older religious professionals whose term of imprisonment has been completed or whose term at labor reform has ended, as well as those who have not yet been approved to engage in professional religious activities by the religious organizations, each case must be dealt with on its own merits, according to the principle of differentiation. Those who prove to be politically reliable, patriotic, and law-abiding, and who are well-versed in religious matters, can, upon examination and approval by the patriotic religious organizations, be allowed to perform religious duties. As for the rest, they should be provided with alternative means to earn a living.

Marxism is incompatible with any theistic world view. But in terms of political action, Marxists and patriotic believers can, indeed must, form a united front in the common effort for Socialist modernization. This united front should become an important constitutive element of the broad patriotic front led by the Party during the Socialist period.

VI. Restoration and Administration of Churches, Temples and Other Religious Buildings

To make equitable arrangements for places of worship is a means of implementing the Party's religious policy, and is also an important material condition for the normalization of religious activity. At the time of Liberation, there were about 100,000 places of worship, while at the present time there are about 30,000. This figure includes Buddhist and Daoist temples, churches, and meeting places of simple construction as well as places of worship built by religious believers themselves. The present problem is that we must adopt effective measures, based on each situation, to make equitable arrangements for places of worship. We must systematically and methodically restore a number of temples and churches in large and mid-size cities, at famous historical sites, and in areas in which there is a concentration of religious believers,

especially ethnic minority areas. Famous temples and churches of cultural and historical value which enjoy national and international prestige must be progressively restored as far as is possible, according to conditions in each place. But in those places where believers are few and have little influence or where churches and temples have already been demolished, we must work out measures which suit the conditions and do things simply and thriftily according to the principle of what will benefit production and the people's livelihood. After consultation with the mass of religious believers and important persons in religious circles, and with the voluntary support of the believers, we should set aside rather simply constructed places of worship. In the process of restoring places of worship, we must not use the financial resources of either country or collective, outside of government appropriations. And we must particularly guard against the indiscriminate building and repairing of temples in rural villages.

We should also direct the voluntary contributions of the mass of religious believers for construction work, so as to build as little as possible. Much less should we go in for large-scale construction lest we consume large sums of money, materials, and manpower and thus obstruct the building up of material and Socialist civilization. Of course we should not demolish existing structures, but fully consult with believers and important persons in religious circles concerning them in order to reach a satisfactory solution based on the actual situation.

All normal religious activities held in places so designated, as well as those which, according to religious custom, take place in believers' homes--Buddha worship, scripture chanting, incense burning, prayer, Bible study, preaching, Mass, baptism, initiation as a monk or nun, fasting, celebration of religious festivals, extreme unction, funerals, etc.--are all to be conducted by religious organizations and religious believers themselves, under protection of law and without interference from any quarter. With approval of the responsible government department, temples and churches can sell a limited quantity of religious reading matter, religious articles, and works of religious art. As for Protestants gathering in homes for worship services, in principle this should not be allowed, yet this prohibition should not be too rigidly enforced. Rather, persons in the patriotic religious organizations should make special efforts to persuade the mass of religious believers to make more appropriate arrangements.

All places of worship are under the administrative control of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, but the religious organizations and professional religious themselves are responsible for their management. Religious organizations should arrange the scope, frequency, and time of religious services, avoiding interference with the social order and the times set aside for production and labor. No one should go to places of worship to carry on atheist propaganda, nor to incite arguments among the believing masses over the existence of God. In like manner, no religious organization or believer should propagate or preach religion outside places designated for religious services, nor propagate theism, nor hand out religious tracts or other religious reading matter which has not been approved for publication by the responsible government department. In order to ensure further normalization of religious activities, the government should hereafter, in accordance with due process of law, consult fully with representatives from religious circles in order to draw up feasible religious legislation that can be carried out in practice.

Major temples and churches famous for their scenic beauty are not only places of worship, but are also cultural facilities of important historical value. Responsible religious organizations and

professional religious should be charged with making painstaking efforts to safeguard them by seeing that these monuments receive good care, that the buildings are kept in good repair, and the environment fully protected so that the buildings are kept in good repair, and the environment fully protected so that the surroundings are clean, peaceful, and quiet, suitable for tourism. Under the direction of the responsible government department and religious organizations, the income derived from alms and donations received by these temples and churches can be used mainly for maintenance. A part of this income can even be used as an incentive and reward for professional religious in charge of such places who have been outstanding in this regard.

VII. The Patriotic Religious Organizations

To give full play to the function of the patriotic religious organizations is to implement the Party's religious policy and is an important organizational guarantee for the normalization of religious activities. There are a total of eight national patriotic religious organizations, namely: the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Chinese Daoist Association, the Chinese Islamic Association, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Catholic Religious Affairs Committee, the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Chinese Protestant "Three-Self" patriotic Movement, and the China Christian Council. Besides these, there are a number of social groups and local organizations having a religious character. The basic task of these patriotic religious organizations is to assist the Party and the government to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief, to help the broad mass of religious believers and persons in religious circles to continually raise their patriotic and socialist consciousness, to represent the lawful rights and interest of religious circles, to organize normal religious activities, and to manage religious affairs well. All patriotic religious organizations should follow the Party's and government's leadership. Party and government cadres in turn should become adept in supporting and helping religious organizations to solve their own problems. They should not monopolize or do things these organizations should do themselves. Only in this way can we fully develop the positive characteristics of these organizations and allow them to play their proper role and enable them, within constitutional and lawful limits, to voluntarily perform useful work. Thus they can truly become religious groups with a positive influence, and can act as bridges for the Party's and government's work of winning over, uniting with, and educating persons in religious circles.

Furthermore, in order to enable each religion to meet expenses under a program of self-support and self-management, we must conscientiously carry out the policy stipulations governing income from house and property rentals. As for the contributions and donations made by believers, there will be no need to interfere as long as they are freely offered and small in quantity. But professional religious should be convinced that private possession of religious income from temples and churches is not allowed and that any action that forces contributions to be made is forbidden.

VIII. Educating a New Generation of Clergy

The training and education of the younger generation of patriotic religious personnel in a planned way will have decisive significance for the future image of our country's religious organizations. We should not only continue to win over, unite with, and educate the present generation of persons in religious circles, but we should also help each religious organization set up seminaries to train well new religious personnel. The task of these seminaries is to create a contingent of

young religious personnel who, in terms of politics, fervently love their homeland and support the Party's leadership and the Socialist system and who possess sufficient religious knowledge. These seminaries should hold entrance examinations and admit upright, patriotic young people who wish to devote themselves seriously to this religious profession and who have reached a certain level of cultural development. They should not forcibly enroll persons unwilling to undertake this profession or lacking in the necessary cultural educational foundation. Those young professional religious personnel who prove unfitted for this profession should be transferred elsewhere.

All these young professional religious should continually heighten their patriotic and Socialist consciousness and make efforts to improve their cultural level and their religious knowledge. They should loyally implement the Party's religious policy. They should show respect to all those upright, patriotic professional religious of the older generation, and conscientiously study and imitate their good qualities. These older and upright patriotic religious professionals should, in turn, cherish these younger patriotic professional religious. In this way the younger ones will become integrated into the patriotic progressive elements of the religious world, and, under the leadership of the Party, will become the mainstay ensuring that religious organizations follow the correct direction in their activities.

IX. Communist Party Members and Religion; Relations with Religious Ethnic Minorities

The fact that our Party proclaims and implements a policy of freedom of religious belief does not, of course, mean that Communist Party members can freely believe in religion. The policy of freedom of religious belief is directed toward the citizens of our country; it is not applicable to Party members. Unlike the average citizen, the Party member belongs to a Marxist political party, and there can be no doubt at all that s/he must be an atheist and not a theist. Our Party has clearly stated on many previous occasions: A Communist Party member cannot be a religious believer; s/he cannot take part in religious activities. Any member who persists in going against this proscription should be told to leave the Party. This proscription is altogether correct, and, as far as the Party as a whole is concerned, its implementation should be insisted on in the future. The present question concerns the implementation of this proscription among those ethnic minorities whose people are basically all religious believers. Here, implementation must follow the actual circumstances, and so make use of proper measures, not oversimplifying matters.

We must realize that although a considerable number of Communist Party members among these ethnic minorities loyally implement the Party line, do positive work for the Party, and obey its discipline, they cannot completely shake off all religious influence. Party organizations should in no way simply cast these Party members aside, but should patiently and meticulously carry out ideological work while taking measures to develop more fully their positive political activism, helping them gradually to acquire a dialectical and historical materialist worldview and to gradually shake off the fetters of a religious ideology. Obviously, as we go about expanding our membership, we must take great care not to be rushed into recruiting devout religious believers or those with strong religious sentiments. As for that very small number of party members who have shown extreme perversity by not only believing in religion but also joining with those who fan religious fanaticism, even to the point of using this fanaticism to oppose the four basic principles, attack the Party line and its aim and policy, and destroy national integrity and ethnic unity, persons such as these have already completely departed from the standpoint fundamental

to Party members. If after having undergone education and criticism, they continue to persist in their erroneous position or feign compliance, then we must resolutely remove them from the Party. If they have committed any criminal acts, then these must be investigated to fix responsibility before the law.

Even though those Party members who live at the grass-roots level among these ethnic minorities where the majority believe in religion have already freed themselves from religious belief, yet if they were to refuse to take part in any of those traditional marriage or funeral ceremonies or mass festivals which have some religious significance, then they would find themselves cut off and isolated from the masses. Therefore, in applying those precepts which forbid Party members who live among these ethnic minorities from joining in religious activities, we must act according to concrete circumstances, according to the principle of differentiation in order to allow Party members to continue to maintain close links with the masses. Although many of the traditional marriage and funeral ceremonies and mass festivals among these ethnic minorities have a religious tradition and significance, they have already essentially become merely a part of ethnic custom and tradition. So long as our comrades, especially those living at the grass-roots level, mark clearly the line between ideology and religious belief, then they can show appropriate respect to and compliance with these ethnic customs and traditions in their daily lives. Of course, this does not mean that those customs and traditions which prove harmful to production or the physical and mental health of the masses should not be appropriately reformed in accordance with the desire of the majority of the people. But to lump these ethnic customs and traditions together with religious activities is not right and will be harmful to ethnic unity and to the correct handling of the religious question.

All Party members must come to the profound realization that our country is a Socialist state made up of many ethnic minorities. Each minority and each religion is differently situated with regard to this question of the relationship between religion and the ethnic minorities. There are some ethnic minorities in which nearly all the people believe in one particular religion, Islam or Lamaism, for example. Among these peoples, the question of religion and ethnicity is frequently intertwined. But within the Han race, there is basically no relationship between ethnic background and Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Therefore, we must become adept in distinguishing very concretely the particular situation of each ethnic group and of each religion, and in sizing up the differences and relationships between ethnicity and religion, that we may proceed correctly in our handling of them. We must certainly be vigilant and oppose any use of religious fanaticism to divide our people and any words or actions which damage the unity among our ethnic groups. If our Party cannot with clear mind and firm step master this particular question in the present great struggle as we strive to lead such a great nation of so many ethnic groups as ours forward to become a modern Socialist state, then we shall not be able with any success to unite our peoples to advance together toward this goal.

X. Criminal and Counter-Revolutionary Activities under the Cover of Religion

The resolute protection of all normal religious activity suggests, at the same time, a determined crackdown on all criminal and antirevolutionary activities which hide behind the facade of religion, which includes all superstitious practices which fall outside the scope of religion and are injurious to the national welfare as well as to the life and property of the people. All antirevolutionary or other criminal elements who hide behind the facade of religion will be

severely punished according to the law. Former professional religious, released upon completion of their term of imprisonment, who return to criminal activities will be punished again in accordance with the law. All banned reactionary secret societies, sorcerers, and witches, without exception, are forbidden to resume their activities. All those who spread fallacies to deceive and who cheat people of their money will, without exception, be severely punished according to the law. Party cadres who profit by these illegal activities will be dealt with all the more severely. Finally, all who make their living by phrenology, fortune telling, and geomancy should be educated, admonished, and helped to earn their living through their own labor and not to engage again in these superstitious practices which only deceive people. Should they not obey, then they should be dealt with according to the law.

In dealing according to the law with all antirevolutionary and other criminal elements who lurk within religious ranks, Party committees on each level and pertinent government departments must pay very close attention to cultivating public opinion. They should make use of irrefutable facts to fully expose the way in which these bad elements use religion to further their destructive activities. Furthermore, they should take care to clearly delineate the line dividing normal religious activities from criminal ones, pointing out that cracking down on criminal activities is in no way to attack, but is rather to protect, normal religious activities. Only then can we successfully win over, unite with, and educate the broad mass of religious believers and bring about the normalization of religious activities.

XI. The International Relations of China's Religions

Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism, which occupy a very important place among our national religions, are at the same time ranked among the major world religions, and all exercise extensive influence in their societies. Catholicism and Protestantism are widespread in Europe, North America, and Latin America, and other places. Buddhism is strong in Japan and Southeast Asia, while Islam holds sway in several dozen countries in Asia and Africa. Some of these religions are esteemed as state religions in a number of countries. At the present time, contacts with international religious groups are increasing, along with the expansion of our country's other international contacts, a situation which has important significance for extending our country's political influence. But at the same time there are reactionary religious groups abroad, especially the imperialistic ones such as the Vatican and Protestant Foreign-mission societies, who strive to use all possible occasions to carry on their efforts at infiltration "to return to the China mainland." Our policy is to actively develop friendly international religious contacts, but also to firmly resist infiltration by hostile foreign religious forces.

According to this policy of the Party, religious persons within our country can, and even should, engage in mutual visits and friendly contacts with religious persons abroad as well as develop academic and cultural exchanges in the religious field. But in all these various contacts, they must firmly adhere to the principle of an independent, self-governing church, and resolutely resist the designs of all reactionary religious forces from abroad who desire to once again gain control over religion in our country. They must determinedly refuse any meddling or interfering in Chinese religious affairs by foreign churches or religious personages, nor must they permit any foreign religious organization (and this includes all groups and their attendant organizations) to use any means to enter our country for missionary work or to secretly introduce and distribute religious literature on a large scale.

All religious organizations and individuals must be educated not to make use of any means whatsoever to solicit funds from foreign church organizations, and religious persons and groups in our country as well as other groups and individuals must refuse any subsidy or funds offered by foreign church organizations for religious purposes. As for donations or offerings given in accordance with religious custom by foreign believers, overseas Chinese, or compatriots from Hongkong and Macao to temples and churches within our territory, these may be accepted. But if it is a question of large contributions or offerings, permission must be sought from the provincial, urban, or autonomous-area governments or from the central government department responsible for these matters before any religious body can accept them on its own, even though it can be established that the donor acts purely out of religious fervor with no strings attached.

We must be vigilant and pay close attention to hostile religious forces from abroad who set up underground churches and other illegal organizations. We must act resolutely to attack those organizations that carry out destructive espionage under the guise of religion. Of course, in doing so, we must not act rashly, but rather investigate thoroughly, have irrefutable evidence at hand, choose the right moment, and execute the case in accordance with lawful procedures.

The new task we now face is that of developing friendly relationships with foreign religious groups while maintaining our policy of independence. The correct guiding principles and policies of the central government and the Party provide the essential basis for doing this type of work well. We should handle the domestic religious question realistically and effectively, strengthen our study of the history of world religion and its present situation, and make efforts to train talented people able to engage in international religious activities. Facts have proven over and over again that if we handle the domestic situation well, then all hostile religious forces from abroad will have little or no opportunity to exploit the situation to their own advantage. Then the international contacts undertaken by religious groups will make smoother and sounder progress and the positive function they should have will be given full play.

XII. The Role of the Party and State Organs in Handling the Religious Question

The basic guarantee for the successful handling of the religious question is the strengthening of the Party's leadership. The Party's religious work is an important constituent of the Party's united front and of its work among the masses since it touches upon various aspects of social life. This demands that Party committees on each level must vigorously direct and organize all relevant departments, which include the United Front Department, the Bureau of Religious Affairs, the Bureau of National Minorities, the Department for Politics and Law, the Departments of Propaganda, Culture, Education, Science and Technology, and Health, as well as the Labor Unions, the Youth League, the Women's Federation, and all other mass organizations, in order to unify ideology, knowledge, and policy. The Departments must each take responsibility for their own work, but act in close coordination and take a realistic grasp of this important task in order to conscientiously and unremittingly carry it through to a successful conclusion.

We must strengthen the government organs responsible for religious affairs, to enable all cadres who give themselves to this particular work to study the Marxist theory of religion in a systematic way, to thoroughly understand the Party's fundamental viewpoint and policy on the religious question, to maintain close relationships with the mass of religious believers, and to

consult on equal terms with persons in religious circles in order to cooperate and work together.

An important constituent of the Party's theoretical work on religion is the use of the Marxist viewpoint and method to carry out scientific research on the religious question. An important task for the Party on the propaganda front is the use of Marxist philosophy to criticize idealism (which includes theism), and to educate the masses, especially the broad mass of young people, in a dialectical and historical materialist and scientific worldview. To do this, we must strengthen our propaganda in scientific and cultural knowledge as these relate to an understanding of natural phenomena, the evolution of society, and of human life, with its old age sickness, death, and ill and good fortune. An indispensable aspect of the Party's theoretical foundation is the establishment of theoretical research teams armed with Marxist ideology for the study of religious theory which would strive to set up organizations for religious research and make use of related university disciplines. Of course, when we publish articles in newspapers and magazines on the religious question, we should adopt a prudent attitude so as not to violate the present policy nor to offend the religious sensibilities of the mass of believers. Those in academic circles should respect the religious mentality of those in religious circles, whereas those in religious circles should also respect the research and propaganda activities carried on by academia in its Marxist interpretation of religion.

The central authorities of Party and State emphasize once again that all Party members must clearly understand that the Party's religious policy is not just a temporary expedient, but a decisive strategy based on the scientific theoretical foundation of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, which takes as its goal the national unification of the people for the common task of building a powerful, modernized Socialist state. Under Socialism, the only correct fundamental way to solve the religious question lies precisely in safeguarding the freedom of religious belief. Only after the gradual development of the Socialist, economic, cultural, scientific, and technological enterprise and of a socialist civilization with its own material and spiritual values, will the type of society and level of awareness that gave rise to the existence of religion gradually disappear. Such a great enterprise naturally cannot be accomplished within a short period of time, nor even within one, two or three generations. Only after a long period of history, after many generations have passed, and after the combined struggle of the broad masses of both believers and nonbelievers will this come about. At that time, the Chinese people, on Chinese soil, will have thoroughly rid themselves of all impoverishment, ignorance, and spiritual emptiness, and will have become a highly developed civilization of material and spiritual values, able to take its place in the front ranks of mankind in the glorious world. At that time, the vast majority of our citizens will be able to deal with the world and our fellowmen from a conscious scientific viewpoint, and no longer have any need for recourse to an illusory world of gods to seek spiritual solace. This is precisely what Marx and Engels have predicted--that there will be an age when people will have freed themselves from all alienating forces controlling the world and will have come to the stage when they will consciously plan and control the whole of social life. This is also what Comrade Mao Zedong meant when he said that the people, relying on themselves alone, will create a new age both for themselves and for the world. Only when we enter this new age will all that shows a religious face in the present world finally disappear. Therefore, each of us Party members from generation to generation, must put forth all our best efforts in the struggle to bring about this brilliant future.

This translation is taken from Donald MacInnis, RELIGION IN CHINA TODAY: POLICY AND PRACTICE (1989), 8-26.