



Canada-China Friendship Society®

Ottawa Chapter

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China's Surprising Religious Revival

Religion is enjoying a significant revival in China, to the surprise of both foreign observers and the Communist Party itself, notes Professor Andre Laliberté, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Ottawa, at a CCFS-Ottawa public event.

Professor Laliberté, who first studied in Taiwan, has in recent years made religion in China a focus of his academic research.

Chinese officials now estimate that there are approximately 250 million people in China who call themselves religious. China officially recognizes 5 religious denominations: of these the most numerous are the Buddhists (100 million) and Daoists (100 million), followed by Muslims (19 million), Protestants (10 million) and Catholics (6 million).

Religions such as Buddhism and Daoism have existed in China for many centuries. Christianity is a



The growth of religion in China has surprised many outside observers. Here a vendor selling religious items at the foot of Mount Tai.

much more recent introduction to China.

In addition to these "formally recognized" religions it is estimated that millions more Chinese belong to unrecognized churches ranging from Jehovah's Witnesses to Scientology.

Although hard figures are hard to come by, most experts feel religion is on the rise in China.

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Feature

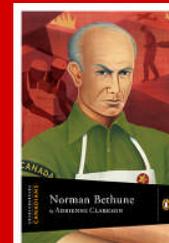
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Canada's former Governor General takes a new look at Norman Bethune

BY GILLIANE LAPOINTE
CCFS-OTTAWA VICE PRESIDENT

No Canadian is as well known in China as Dr. Norman Bethune, who died while performing medical work with Mao Tse-Tung's People's Liberation Army in 1939.

Last April 29, in the context of the Ottawa Writers Festival, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson gave a fascinating talk on her recently published biography of Dr. Norman Bethune, published in a Penguin series called "Extraordinary Canadians."

She began by explaining that she has never been happy with the way Bethune has been presented, and saw an opportunity to correct what she perceived as misconceptions about the man. In her talk entitled *The Man and the Myth* she said she wanted to debunk three myths about Bethune: that he was a

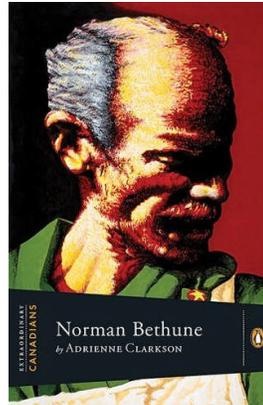
Montrealer, that he went to Spain as part of the Mackenzie-Papineau brigades and that he was a womanizer.

Ms. Clarkson worked on the book for two years, doing extensive research in cities where Bethune lived, both in Canada and in China, including Hebei province where Bethune is buried.

In her talk, Ms. Clarkson focused on Bethune's youth in northern Ontario, the son of a strict Presbyterian minister who taught the importance of leading a purposeful life. Bethune enrolled in medicine and during the summers, he spent time at Frontier College as a labourer/teacher, working at logging camps during the day and teaching English to recent immigrants at night.

In World War One, he volunteered as a stretcher bearer; was wounded in Europe and repatriated. On his return, while working as a doctor

in Montreal, he became increasingly involved in serious attempts to reform the healthcare system in Canada which he perceived as profoundly unjust. According to Clarkson, Bethune felt that his profession should be first and foremost dedicated to service to the community, rather than as a way to amass riches.



In 1936, he went to Spain with a friend, and created a system of mobile blood units, thus saving innumerable lives. By then he had become a Communist and, learning of the enormous difficulties Mao Zedong and his troops were facing in China's northwest fol-

lowing the Long March, he volunteered to go and help.

Bethune's decision to go to China was not a quixotic impulse, argued Ms. Clarkson, but a conscious decision by a man with a strong sense of purpose who thought of what should be done and then did it, up to the ultimate sacrifice but in the thick of the action.♦

China's Surprising Religious Revival

250 million Chinese say they are "religious"

PETER LARSON

Continued from page 1

"The Communist Party of China is officially atheist", noted Professor Laliberté, "and does not recognize any divine or spiritual authority". Nonetheless, he went on to men-

tion, the Chinese government officially recognizes both "the freedom to believe" and the "freedom to not believe". In the last 2 decades it has even helped rebuilding many churches destroyed in the Cultural Revolution.

The Chinese government generally tends to look on religion today as a quaint kind of superstition, on a par with other kinds of folk beliefs from "ancestor worship" to

"geomancy". However, it also appreciates that many religious institutions are now carrying out a positive social role – in education, health and caring for seniors, for example. Buddhist communities have traditionally played a big role in charitable work and disaster relief. In the aftermath of the terrible Sichuan earthquake of 2008, for example, various church groups played an important positive role in coping with the disaster.♦

Gilliane Lapointe elected National Vice President

Ottawa Society well represented

BY LOLAN MERKLINGER

At its semi-annual meeting on April 26th, the FCCFA board of directors unanimously elected Gilliane Lapointe as its national vice president. She will work alongside Fred Drewe, the new president. Drewe is also president of the Manitoba chapter in Winnipeg; and a retired university professor. Fred will now communicate with the CPAFFC on behalf of the Federation.

The Ottawa Chapter of the FCCFA now has three representatives on the board of directors of the Federation of Canada China Friendship Associations.

After nearly four interesting years as president of the FCCFA during which she led two Canadian delega-

tions to China (2005, 2006), Dr. Lolan Wang Merklinger announced her intention in fall 2008 to step down from that position for personal reasons.

As the immediate past president of the Federation, Lolan Merklinger will remain on the nine-member board as a voting member. The third Ottawa member of the FCCFA board is Dr. James Steele.

The FCCFA, founded in 1980, is a national organisation made up of five chapters: Victoria, Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Toronto, with Ottawa the largest branch.

With its original thirteen branches, it held a near monopoly on Canadian tourist travel to China in its first decade. That changed with increased tourism to China enabled by the opening up of China. The Federation's work has since evolved over the years such as organizing delegations for two-week China visits on the invitation by the Beijing-based

Chinese People's Association For Friendship With Foreign Countries for the purpose of exchanging views on the promotion of Canada China people-to-people friendship.

The FCCFA has also hosted a number of senior visiting delegations from China including senior CPAFFC vice-president Madame Li Xiaolin (2006) and Chinese provincial deputy governors for whom meetings with senior Canadian federal and provincial officials and parliamentary representatives have been organized. In September 2008 the Federation organized a cross-country visit for a CPAFFC delegation.

The Federation board holds semi-annual teleconferences and physically meets every three years, most recently in November 2008 in Hunan, China. Past Federation presidents from Ottawa have been Tsin Van in addition to Lolan Merklinger. Its annual newsletter now appears online at www.fccfa.ca. ♦

Members' Corner

Meet Former Ambassador Arthur Menzies, O.C.

BY LOLAN MERKLINGER

Many CCFS-Ottawa members recognize Arthur R. Menzies – even if they don't know him personally. He attends every CCFS-Ottawa meeting he can, and always asks pertinent questions.



Arthur has been a member of CCFS-Ottawa for over twenty years. His Chinese name is Ming Ming De. Born in Zhangde

(present-day Anyang) in North Henan, China, he attended schools in Weihui, Beijing, and Kobe-Japan before attending the University of Toronto and Harvard. By then he had joined the Department of External Affairs and married Sheila Skelton whom he had met at Harvard. During a 42-year diplomatic career Mr. Menzies served in many countries and at NATO. He was from 1976 to 1980 Canada's ambassador to China.

After retiring in 1982, Mr. Menzies travelled across Canada lecturing on China and Asia. In 1997 he gave a slide presentation to the

CCFS membership on his and his wife's experiences in China.

He became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2000. In 2004 his birthplace Anyang City proclaimed the house where he was born a Protected Treasure in honour of Mr. Menzies' missionary father Dr. James M. Menzies, regarded as the foremost western scholar of Yin-Shang culture and oracle bone inscriptions. In recognition of his many contributions to friendship between the peoples of Canada and China, CCFS-Ottawa awarded Mr. Menzies with the title of Honorary Life Member in November 2007. ♦

Political Change in China

Looks can be deceiving

BY PETER LARSON

Westerners have been so focused on the vast economic revolution that has taken place in China in the last 30 years, that they might have overlooked the important political changes that are also taking place in that country, argued Bernie Frolic, at an interesting evening of the CCFS-Ottawa.

polls give it resounding popular support. While it is wise to question the validity of such polls, there is enough other evidence to show that the Party has a firm grip on power.”

But if you scratch below the surface, significant political changes are under way, according to Professor Frolic, who often visits China.

The Communist Party is rapidly changing in its composition, in the

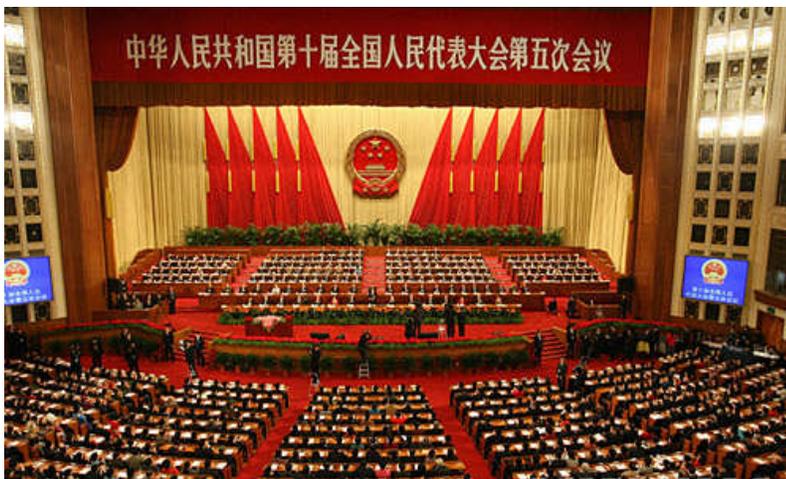
Once seen as a “rubber stamp” organisation, the NPC “has begun to acquire a more meaningful role, through the work of its 150 member Standing Committee that meets throughout the year, the preparation and passage of national legislation, the holding of public hearings on proposed legislation, and the promotion of its legitimacy as a popular institution in the media and at the annual March NPC Congress”.

Finally, Dr. Frolic talked about the increasing role for non-governmental organisations in China. China’s first NGO’s were rather timid organizations by western standards – even seen as agents of the government. “

“But by 2006, many western style NGO’s were emerging in China. For example, individual home owners are organizing themselves in defense of recently acquired housing property against developers, using newly established laws and regulations to support their case. These were not state-led NGO’s; it was the real stuff, grass-roots (*caogen*) bottom up civil society”.

According to Dr. Frolic – there may be as many as 400,000 NGO’s of different sorts in China today. “Many, he says, “are no longer satisfied to be “handmaidens to the state,” and seek a more challenging role.

As great as China’s economic changes have been, it is possible that its political changes will turn out to be even more significant for the future of the country.♦



The National People’s Congress, once seen as a “rubber stamp organisation”, has begun to take on a more meaningful role, according to Professor Frolic.

Frolic, who is Emeritus professor of Political Science at York University, and a long time student of China, spent the evening focusing on some of the political developments occurring in China.

Compared to the dramatic economic changes, China’s political change might appear slow.

“Twenty years after Tiananmen”, notes Dr. Frolic, “the Communist Party is fully in control, unchallenged by any significant potential opponents. Chinese public opinion

competence of its members and in its openness, notes Frolic, who often teaches at Chinese Communist Party meetings. “Many party members have studied abroad, and can now compare favorably with top executives in many western countries. At the same time, the party has become more democratic internally, more transparent and more willing to be accountable to the people.”

There is a similar transformation in many state institutions, argued the professor, citing the example of the National People’s Congress.

CCFS-Ottawa Treasurer Dr. Shiyou Li helps China learn from Canadian Forestry experience

*Rising standard of living spurs
interest in ornamental trees*

BY DR. SHIYOU LI

At the invitation of the Hefei Foreign Experts Bureau, Dr. Shiyou Li of Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada (and Treasurer of our Ottawa branch of CCFS) visited several organizations for one week in April in Hefei, the capital city of Anhui province.

Anhui is an agricultural province in eastern China with a population of over 65 million. The living standard of Anhui has improved rapidly in the last two decades. De-

mand for ornamentals to beautify residences and landscapes has tremendously increased. Because of this, farmers in Anhui, have switched from traditional agricultural crops, such as rice and cotton to growing ornamentals. Many are interested in introducing species from foreign countries into China. As a matter of fact, red maples, Canada's emblematic tree species, have been planted in streets of Hefei.

During his trip, Shiyou visited the various offices and met many Chinese counterparts in the area of forestry and ornamentals. He also visited a couple of nurseries and offered his advice to researchers and owners in terms of propagation and production technologies of woody ornamentals.



Dr. Shiyou Li (left) visited a nursery near Hefei with his Chinese host, Director Ding. Trees in the foreground were two-year old North America native red maple seedlings.

At the request of his Chinese hosts, Dr. Li presented two technical seminars during his visit, one on pest management for ornamentals, and another introducing Canadian forests and future directions of forestry in Canada. His seminars were well attended by about 100 audiences for each, including researchers, governmental officials, industry specialists and university graduates. Shiyou answered quite a few questions at the end of each seminar. Both seminars were very well received.

With the rapid increase of international trade between Canada and China, both countries need to enhance collaboration in every aspect of life and academic exchange is just one of them.♦

China's Security Policy

“China is a Peaceful Country”

*Senior Colonel Cai Ping on
China's Security Policy*

BY PETER LARSON

Over 50 people, including a number from the Canadian Department of National Defense, heard Senior Colonel Cai Ping, Defence Attaché of the Chinese Embassy present an overview of China's military policy.

His high-level talk covered 4 aspects of security policy: paying increased attention both to the traditional and the non-traditional threats to secu-

rity; giving weight to military and political security as well as economic, cultural, information, financial, energy, climate, and public security; and giving full weight to supporting international security co-operation.

The presentation was followed by a very lively question period, covering issues as widely diverse as China-Taiwan military relations, the role of the Chinese navy off the coast of Africa, Chinese fishing in the Indian Ocean,



Colonel Ping faced a lively question period after his presentation.

and questions about reports that China is planning to build one or more aircraft carriers.♦

China issues “National Action Plan on Human Rights”

*Document gives priority to
“economic rights over political
rights”*

DR. CHARLES BURTON
Brock University

China published its first working plan on human rights last April, pledging to further protect and improve human rights conditions. The National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010), issued by the Information Office of the State Council, (or Cabinet), highlighted goals that would be implemented in less than two years.

This action made China one of 26

countries that have responded to the United Nations' call to establish a national human rights plan.

The 54-page document outlines rights in five areas:

- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Civil and Political Rights;
- Rights and Interests of Ethnic Minorities, Women, Children, Elderly People and the Disabled;
- Education in Human Rights; and,
- International Human Rights.

The document indicates that while it agrees that all these rights are important, it is Chinese Government policy to give priority to economic, social and cultural rights and the



"right to development" over civil and political rights.

Pressures on the Chinese government with respect to human rights have been growing both inside and outside China. “The Action plan was issued in the context of the high degree of publicity given inside and outside China to the "Charter 08", a manifesto signed by over 303 prominent Chinese intellectuals and human rights activists in December 2008,” notes Professor Charles Burton.

“It also responds to recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council Working Group which last March called on China to publish and "swiftly implement" a human rights action plan”, notes Dr. Burton who travels frequently between Canada and China.

“While this Human Rights Action Plan is short on specific commitments, (...) the existence of such an authoritative government statement on human rights (... means...) the Government of China can be held accountable, concludes Dr. Burton.♦



United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour. China has been heavily criticized in the West for its record on Human Rights. China’s recently released “action plan” is in response to a call from the United Nations Working Group on Human Rights.

Shangri-la, Yunnan, China's new tourist hot spot

BY PETER LARSON

In case you missed it, last May's National Geographic Magazine had an article dedicated to Shangri-la, one of China's newest tourist "hot spots". Below are the first 3 paragraphs from the several page article by NGM contributing writer Mark Jenkins, who has been visiting China for 15 years. As usual, the NGM photos were wonderful.

"Welcome to Shangri-La.

"A decade ago this was an obscure, one-horse village on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Today, after an extreme makeover, it's one of the hottest tourist towns in China, gateway city to the Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage site in northwestern Yunnan Province.

"Ten years ago the original village was becoming a ghost town of derelict buildings and deserted dirt roads. Most residents had moved

out of their traditional homes—commodious chalet-like farmhouses with stone walls and magnificent wooden beams—into more modern structures with running water and septic systems. The historic quarter they left behind

mediately. Water and sewer lines were buried beneath the crooked lanes. Electricity and the Internet were snaked in. The old homes were rebuilt and turned into fancy shops. New shops were constructed in the same style but with



No wonder they called it "Shangri la"

seemed doomed.

"Tourism saved the place. The Tibetan farmhouses were suddenly rediscovered as unique, endemic architecture that could turn a profit. Redevelopment began im-

mediately. Water and sewer lines were buried beneath the crooked lanes. Electricity and the Internet were snaked in. The old homes were rebuilt and turned into fancy shops. New shops were constructed in the same style but with baroque facades—ornately carved dragons and swans and tigers—to attract Chinese tourists. Which they did: More than three million tourists, almost 90 percent of them Chinese, visited Shangri-La last year."♦

The full article (and pictures) are available on the net at:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/05/parallel-rivers/jenkins-text>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

- September 17: **Mr. Loic Gouadec** will be giving a talk and demonstration on “**Tai Ji Chuan**”

Tai Ji (Tai Chi) is a series of complex, slow-motion movements, each named and designed (for example, The White Crane Spreads its Wings) to ensure effective circulation of the Qi, or intrinsic energy of the universe, through the mind and body. It derives partly from the Shaolin Temple martial arts of China and partly from Daoism. Mr. Gouadec, who lives in Ottawa is an expert in the art.

*As is customary, admission for CCFS-Ottawa members is free; non-members pay a \$5 admission to the above events. This event begins at 7:30 pm and will be held at **Library and Archives Canada, Wellington Street, Room 156**.*

NEW MEMBERS

A Warm Welcome is Extended to: DAVID and PENNY BURKE, ISSAC T. and GLORIA GOODING, YINGLIANG HUANG, ANDRÉ LALIBERTÉ, CHRISTINE LENIS, DAVID and JANICE DOWLING, ANDREW ROMAINE, Prof. ALAN RYAN, YU SHEN and RYOGN YAO, CAROL VAVRO, HAILIN WANG, Dr. HOWARD WOODS & PROF. GURLI WOODS. We apologize for any new members' names that may be inadvertently left out.

BACKGROUNDEERS: XINJIANG

The recent troubles in **Urumqi**, in western China have put China under the spotlight again. The situation in Xinjiang is complex and its often hard to put the troubles in any kind of context. Lolan Merklinger was at the library recently and found a number of references on Xingjian and the Uygurs.

- Colin Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation*; London, New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003, viii + 216 pp
- Colin Mackerras, *China, Xinjiang and Central Asia: History, Transition and Crossborder Interaction*; publ. June 2009, accessible on the Internet
- James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993; 440pp, covers the present; hardcover
- S. Frederick Starr, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*; M.E. Sharpe, 2004, 484pp. paperback



Ürümqi, Xinjiang, China. This city in China's far west has seen phenomenal growth over the past twenty years.