

Former underground bishops' head dies



Bishop Peter Liu Guandong of Yixian in 2006. Retired Bishop Peter Liu Guandong of Yixian, former acting president of the “underground” Church community’s bishops’ conference, died on October 28 at the age of 94.

The Vatican-approved bishop, who escaped house arrest and lived in hiding for the last 16 years of his life, was buried in secret the following day by priests and laypeople, according to Church sources in Yixian, Hebei province.

An underground priest, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told ucanews.com that Bishop Liu was “a key figure” in the establishment of the bishops’ conference in 1989, which “contributed to the continual existence in China of a Church that is loyal to the Holy See.”

Born in 1919, Bishop Liu entered the seminary in 1935 and was ordained a priest in 1945.

In 1955, he was arrested and imprisoned for two years for opposing the independent Church movement.

In 1958, he was arrested again and received a life sentence for opposing the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, a government-sanctioned body that promotes an independent Church. When he was eventually released in 1981, he began to evangelize across China.

Liu was consecrated coadjutor bishop of Yixian in 1982 and became the ordinary four years later.

After suffering a stroke in 1994, he resigned from all his posts, but was placed under house arrest in Weigezhuang, his hometown.

In 1997, when he was unable to take care of himself, several priests managed to sneak him past his guards and rescue him from house arrest. He spent his remaining years in hiding, the sources said.

His successor Bishop Cosmas Shi Enxiang was detained by the authorities in 2001. He has not been seen since.

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