

## DON BOSCO IN MAINLAND CHINA A CASE STUDY ON REPORTS FROM SHENBAO (SHANGHAI NEWS), 1929-1949

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### 1. Introduction

Modern Shanghai was born on August 29, 1842 under the (unequal) Treaty of Nanjing. Eighty years later, it was a booming city of 3 million inhabitants. West of the walled Chinese city, an International Concession and a French Concession (1849-1943) were carved out, both with extraterritorial privileges. It was a city of great contrasts, in which both “Fish and Dragons mixed together”: dragons, at times, could simultaneously be businessmen, gang leaders and philanthropists.

#### 1.1. Salesians in Shanghai (1924-1949)

The arrival of the Salesians in Shanghai in late 1924<sup>1</sup> was facilitated by one such businessman-philanthropist, Catholic Action leader Mr. Joseph Lo Pahong<sup>2</sup>. In the 25 years that followed, which encompassed Salesian work in

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<sup>1</sup> The Salesians first landed in Macao in 1906 and expanded in the mainland in 1919 with the Vicariate Apostolic of Shiuchow. In 1923 a Visitatoria was set up, and in 1926 the China Province, which initially comprised also Japan and Thailand, was born. See Carlo SOCOL, *The Birth of the China Province and the Expansion of the Salesian Work in East Asia (1926-1927)*, in Nestor IMPELIDO (ed.), *The Beginnings of the Salesian Presence in East Asia*. Part one: *The Salesians of Don Bosco*. Acts of the Seminar on Salesian History (Hong Kong, 4-6 December 2004). (= ACSSA – Varia, 2). Hong Kong, Don Bosco Press 2006, pp. 47-61; ID., *The history of Salesian education in China*, in Xiaozhou XU – Roberto GIANNATELLI (ed.), *Educational innovation: perspectives of internationalization*. Hangzhou, Zhejiang University Press 2006, pp. 26-35.

<sup>2</sup> On Joseph Lo Pahong (Lu Bohong), see Joseph MASSON, *Un millionnaire chinois au service de gueux: Joseph Lo Pa Hong 1875-1937*. Louvain, A.U.C.A.M. 1950. Lo was at times referred to as “the Don Bosco of Nantao”. Cf *Address of His Excellency the Internuncio at the end of the Educational Convention (February 1948)*, in “China Missionary” (1948) 150.

Shanghai, this thriving city-port weathered three major crises: civil war in 1927, bombings by the Japanese in 1932 and occupation in 1937-1945.

The twenty-four Salesians forming the first community, some of them mere teenagers, arrived in two groups, sixteen on 11 October 1924 and the remainder on 16 January 1925. They settled in Nantao, in the Chinese section of the city, and took charge of the orphans of the St. Joseph Hospice, established by a Committee of dedicated Catholics and administered by its chairman, Mr. Joseph Lo. In purpose-built spacious premises, they offered the young boarders, orphans or abandoned children, primary school education and vocational training. In March 1927, less than three years into the project, troops from the KMT southern army occupied most of the building and turned it into a military hospital, causing students and staff to dramatically take refuge in the French Concession. Eventually only part of the third floor could be secured, and there some 40 homeless youngsters, supervised by the Rector on his own, camped out for the next 16 months.

Having weighed all options, the Salesians decided not to quit Shanghai, seen as the gateway to northward expansion. In late 1928 they moved out of the Nantao house altogether<sup>3</sup>, when a hard-won permission was obtained from the Bishop to open the Don Bosco Institute in the industrial district of Yangshupu<sup>4</sup>, inside the more secure International Concession. That meant restarting anew out of a small rented house in Liaoyang Road, which the handful of dedicated Salesians shared with some orphans and aspirants.

Notwithstanding military attacks by the Japanese imperial army in 1932 and 1937, renewed motivation and determination, buoyed by the city's well-known resilience and ability to weather political storms and economic crises, helped the small group of missionaries to forge ahead: raise funds, buy enough land lot by lot at 740 Holung Road (later Hangzhou Road), and restart from scratch.

The extraordinary relaunching of Salesian work in Shanghai revolved around the setting up of the Don Bosco Industrial School & Orphanage, which began operating in 1932, and gradually offered boarders and day boys primary and secondary school education and courses in Printing, Publishing, Bookbinding, Woodworking and Electro-engineering.

<sup>3</sup> In 1931, asked by the bishop, the Salesians returned and accepted the spiritual direction of Zhengxiu School in the St. Joseph Hospice. The foundation was a branch of Don Bosco Institute. Spiritual assistance was also offered to immigrants and soldiers of the Italian garrison, with a weekly class of Italian language for the children. *Breve cronistoria dei primi 25 anni dell'Ispettorato: Sviluppi e variazioni in ordine cronologico [1923-1947]*, in ISPETTORIA SALESIANA DELLA CHINA DI MARIA AUSILIATRICE, *Elenco dei confratelli e delle case per l'anno 1948-1949*. Macau, Tipografia Salesiana 1948, s.p.

<sup>4</sup> "Je permets aux Religieux Salesiens d'ouvrir une école professionnelle pour les enfants du quartier de Yangtzepoo dans la ville de Shanghai. Shanghai le 8 octobre 1928. +P. Paris, Vic. Ap.". Manuscript letter by Mons. Jules P. Paris SJ, (d. 1931), in ASC F724.

No longer financed – and no longer controlled! – by Mr. Lo, the Salesians initially received help from the Italian Fascist government<sup>5</sup>, but sought long term financing and sustainability by rallying local Catholic leaders, Portuguese friends from Macao and Cantonese admirers: thus, buoyed by the recent beatification of Don Bosco, “Salesian Cooperation” took root in Shanghai.

A flurry of initiatives brought new life and perspectives: the inauguration of a new building, the opening of an oratory and the debut of the “*Don Bosco Bulletin*” (1933); the arrival of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, chaplaincy services to the sisters and to the St. Joseph Hospital and Hospice in Nantao (1934), the opening of the Dominic Savio agricultural colony (1934, 1936). In 1935 solemn celebrations were held to commemorate Don Bosco’s canonization. In 1936 the Mary Help of Christians parish and school were added in the Zhabei district. The August 1937 vicious bombing of Zhabei by Japanese maritime and air forces was a mere hiccup in the progress of development: temporarily closed, the Don Bosco school reopened in 1938 and in the following year it operated to capacity with more than 900 pupils. In 1939 the Italian government put forward a proposal to entrust the Salesians with an ambitious services complex comprising a Don Bosco shrine and a hospital in Yangshupu, but the project was soon abandoned because it was considered non-viable. At this stage there was one canonically-erected house, with four presences and fourteen Salesians<sup>6</sup>.

In 1940 the Nantao St. Joseph Institute, now in the hands of the Vicar Apostolic and of Shanghai’s Catholic Action, was entrusted to the Salesians: its founder, Mr. Lo, had been assassinated three years earlier by anti-Japanese elements. Primary, secondary and vocational schools opened. In August of that year the spacious Nantao house opened its doors to some 60 students of philosophy, theology and (in October) the novices and their superiors from Hong Kong. Following Italy’s entry in World War II at Hitler’s side Italian and German nationals had had to leave the British Colony. The Salesian presence in Shanghai grew considerably as a result. In 1941 a juniorate was opened to cater for vocations “from the north”, their numbers soon swelling to over one hundred. That same year the Thai province also sent some of its students to complete their theological studies in Shanghai.

Before the war Salesian work had only limited impact in Catholic Shanghai. The 1940 massive arrival of Salesians to the Nantao House considerably changed that. The young religious and their superiors were basically refugees, like many others who flocked to the port-city in those years (including tens of thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany) but they contributed an inflow of energy and talent that helped to gradually bring about a new era of youthful spiri-

<sup>5</sup> In 1932 a House of the Missionary and later a Procure were set up. *Cronaca Shanghai 1931-1934*, in ASC F918.

<sup>6</sup> *Les Missions de Chine*, in “Shanghai” (1940) 209-210.

tual and apostolic vitality. The young Salesians, with their oratory, music, theater and operetta performances, catechetical exhibitions and liturgical service, etc. enlivened the scene of Catholic Shanghai and helped to noticeably raise the profile of the Salesian presence in the city, under the charismatic leadership of the Provincial, Don Carlo Braga. The war brought also grave difficulties in procuring food and other basic means of support, as the city was flooded with refugees which doubled the population to 6 million<sup>7</sup>. Public sympathy helped considerably, but meeting the most basic needs became a daily worry. By the end of the war there were over 80 Salesians in four houses in Shanghai, a flourishing juniorate and a house of studies<sup>8</sup>. The development could not go unnoticed, even outside Catholic circles.

### 1.2. *Catholic Shanghai and Don Bosco prior to and after the arrival of the Salesians*

In the years 1917-1919 a flurry of local initiatives and events introduced the figure of Don Bosco to Catholic Shanghai. In 1917 the life and work of the Turin saint were featured in an article contributed by the young Jesuit scholastic and future sinologist Pasquale D'Elia SJ (1890-1963) and published in two parts by the Shanghai-based "*Revue Catholique*". The contents derived from an unidentified, possibly French source. This is the first biography of Don Bosco to be published in Chinese. The following year a summary of the two articles was published in Macao. The modest, 18 pages' booklet was to be printed by the Salesian Orphanage in Macao directed by Fr. Luigi Versiglia. The printing shop had just acquired Chinese language types, and it was suggested that the first work to be printed should be the life of Don Bosco. Eventually the work had to be entrusted to a more experienced commercial printer<sup>10</sup>. In September

<sup>7</sup> 1943 the Salesians were entrusted with the spiritual direction of the College of Russians, of Hungarian Catholics and neophytes converted from Judaism.

<sup>8</sup> The new geographic distribution of Salesian young forces resulting from the forced exodus from Hong Kong led to consideration of the possibility of setting up a Northern Province, with headquarters in Shanghai, separate from the existing Province operating in Macao, Shaoguan (Guangdong) and Kunming (Yunnan). In 1947 Shanghai was chosen as the venue for the Provincial Chapter, in preparation for GC16. While the Novitiate and Philosophy Studentate moved back to Hong Kong in 1947, the Theologate remained in Shanghai. *Breve cronistoria...*

<sup>9</sup> 德修士, 童鲍司高若望司铎传略, 《圣教杂志》, 67 (1917) 118-123; 68 (1917) 168-175. Pasquale D'ELIA, *A brief biography of Don Giovanni Bosco*, in "*Revue Catholique*" 67 (1917) 118-123 and 68 (1917) 168-175.

<sup>10</sup> 德修士, 童鲍司高若望司铎传略, 澳门无原罪工艺学堂, 澳门 ]1918. Pasquale D'ELIA, *A brief biography of Don Bosco*. [Macao], The Macao Immaculate Conception Institute 1918. A second Macao edition was published in 1929 for the beatification of Don Bosco. A Shanghai 1935 reprint by Don Bosco Institute: 德修士, 童鲍司高若望司铎传略, 教育之范, 【1935】上海鲍斯高学校印。

1918 the first expedition of missionaries heading for the Shiuchow Mission passed through Shanghai, where they visited the Hospice of Mr. Lo Pahong. This led to the fortuitous encounter with fifty young street boys playing in the playground: Mr. Lo had been praying to Don Bosco “for ten years” to find a solution to his lack of suitable educators to take care of them. The Catholic businessman obtained the support of the Jesuit Vicar Apostolic, who in December 1919 wrote to Fr. Luigi Versiglia inviting him to visit Shanghai and consider the possibility of the Salesians taking over the management of the hospice<sup>11</sup>. That same year 1919 saw the publication by the Shanghai Catholic Action of the first translation into Chinese of a book by Don Bosco, the life of Dominic Savio, made from the French edition by Zhu Xisheng<sup>12</sup>.

As a newly arrived religious group, apart from a warm cooperative relationship with the Jesuits which was not without its misunderstandings and occasional *faux pas*, the Salesians experienced the aloofness of other religious orders, whose presence in the city was limited to the running of their respective Mission Procures. Things changed in mid-1935, on the occasion of the solemn celebrations of Don Bosco’s canonization and a series of events widely reported in the local press. This helped to draw all the Religious Orders nearby and the public at large to know Don Bosco. Rain notwithstanding, the May 31 – June 2 events were a “veritable triumph”, which saw the participation of ambassadors, consuls, representatives of the city government and several nations, bishops, clergy and crowds of Chinese and expatriate sympathizers. Biographies of Don Bosco printed in-house were distributed in their thousands in several languages. One such biography was graced with a preface by the famed educationist Joseph Ma Xiangbo<sup>13</sup>.

Plentiful news about Don Bosco and the Salesians can be found in Catholic publications, but for the purpose of this research, of special interest to us are the reports published in *Shenbao*, Shanghai’s premier Chinese language commercial newspaper (1872-1949), avowedly secular, considered *The Times* of Shanghai, a veritable “encyclopedia” to understand and study modern China<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Paris to Versiglia, 24 december 1919 in AIC – Shanghai 1919 -1930

<sup>12</sup> 朱希圣, 可敬的多名我啥维豪传, 上海, 1919. Xisheng ZHU, *La vie de Dominique Savio*. Shanghai 1919. The biography has been entered in at least two lists of “rare books”: 游斌, 北京大学图书馆存“燕京大学”基督教书目, 北大图书馆 2000; Bin YOU, *Catalogue of Yen-ching Rare Books in Peking University Library. Project of Library for Chinese Christian Archives*. Beijing, University Library 2000, [http://m.blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_669e82e70101auzd.html#page=1](http://m.blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_669e82e70101auzd.html#page=1); 明清基督宗教汉语文献总书目, 18 june 2013 *General bibliography of Chinese literature on Christianity in the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, 18 june 2016, <http://www.chinesecs.cn/?p=974>, both accessed on 23 may 2016.

<sup>13</sup> On Ma Xiangbo (1840-1939) see Ruth HAYHOE – Yongling LU (eds.), *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China 1840-1939*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe 1996.

<sup>14</sup> 疏宜菲, 程瑛婷, 2008-2014, 年《申报》研究综述, 《新闻世界》3 (2015) 101-102; Yifei SHU – Yingting CHENG, *Research Review of “Shun Pao” from 2008 to 2014*, in “News World” 3 (2015) 101-102; 刘立红, 《申报》的发展历程及影响, 《新闻爱好者》,

### 1.3. *Shenbao*, its database and the research

The entire *Shenbao* collection of 25,599 issues for a total of 164,824 pages has been photocopied in 400 exemplars and subsequently digitalized. Hence a digital library is available for consultation.

For the purpose of this research, the following words were searched:

“鲍斯高”(Bao Sigao) or “Bosco”  
 “慈幼会”(Ci You Hui) or “Love Youth Society”, Chinese name for “Salesian”, SDB  
 “母佑会”(Mu You Hui) or “Daughters of Mary Help of Christians”, DMHC

These are the words presently most widely used in academic circles in China that are closely related to what – for reasons of expediency and inclusiveness – we will call “*the Don Bosco Group*”<sup>15</sup>.

Initial research for the period being investigated resulted in more than 500 entries for searches on the three names, as against 195 for “Jesuit”. However, it soon became evident that a protestant, government-backed ‘National Child Welfare Association’ (中华慈幼协会 literally “Love Youth Association”) born in 1928, two years after the Salesians adopted their current Chinese name, was responsible for more than 300 entries<sup>16</sup>. This left us with 105 genuine entries related to the Don Bosco Group: having removed duplicates, we had a total of 40 entries (as against 81 for Jesuits) spanning the years 1931- 1948, still worth a careful analysis.

## 2. “Shenbao” in related exposure analysis of Don Bosco and related words

### 2.1. *Research results*

Results produced by our search on reports or announcements on the Don Bosco groups start in June 1935 and end in late 1948. Contents may be grouped under five headings:

5 “2010” 112-113; Lihong LIU, *The development process and influence of “Shun Pao”*, in “News lover” 5 (2010) 112-113; 董婉苏, 史敏杰, 史量才对《申报》发展的贡献, 《新闻与写作》, 1 (2006) 22-23; Wansu DONG, *SHI Minjie, Shi Liangcai’s contribution to the development of “Shun Pao”*, in “News and writing” 1 (2006) 22-23.

<sup>15</sup> The following and other research engines were used for the research: “万方数据” (<http://g.wanfangdata.com.cn>), “维普资讯” (<http://lib.cqvip.com>), “超星数字图书馆” (<http://www.sslibrary.com>), “读秀学术搜索” (<http://edu.duxiu.com>), “万方数据” (<http://c.g.wanfangdata.com.cn>), “中国知网” (<http://www.cnki.net>), “民国时期期刊全文数据库” (<http://www.cnbkcsy.cn>), “甲报数据库”及“搜神” (<http://m.soshen.cn>) and “谷歌学术” (Hyperlink <https://scholar.google.com>; <https://scholar.google.com>. Accessed 12 October 2015).

<sup>16</sup> See below 3.1 and note 29.

2.1.1. Religious activities:

- two special-column reports on celebrations of Don Bosco's canonization: given the rarity of reports on Catholic activities by "*Shenbao*", an extensive analysis of this section is offered in this paper.

2.1.2. Social activities:

- one mention regarding the Don Bosco School football coach participating in social or sports activities;
- four reports about performances by the Don Bosco drama club and brass band at large scale Catholic, social or charitable events;

2.1.3. Contribution to society:

- six successive reports on SDB and DMHC work;
- five reports on Don Bosco group's contribution in the specific context of relief work for minors in difficulty; the paper analyses at some length these 1943 reports on Salesian work;
- admiration for Don Bosco in the bibliography of former Jesuit and influential educator Joseph Ma Xiangbo;
- the Don Bosco group twice mentioned in honours conferred on social celebrity Mr. Joseph Lo

2.1.4. Economic sources:

- eight reports regarding the Don Bosco group fundraising activities.

2.1.5. Ads by Don Bosco groups:

- four student recruitment ads by Don Bosco School;
- one teacher recruitment announcement;
- one report for the loss of an oil distribution card;
- six legal notices.

2.2. *The Don Bosco commemoration*

Words referring to religious and charitable activities by the Don Bosco group appear in the *Shenbao* six times. Two special columns report the 1935 May 31 – June 2 triduum celebrating the first anniversary of Don Bosco's canonization. Following the reports, one can reconstruct the various activities.

Fr. Ernesto Fontana<sup>17</sup>, rector and procurator of the Salesian Society in Shanghai, made special arrangements for a three-day celebration in Mr. Joseph

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Ernesto Fontana (1902-1942) arrived as a cleric in Shanghai in 1924 and was ordained there in 1926. Experienced, capable and trusted by his Superiors, he is considered the founder of Salesian work in Shanghai. In the 1939 he was at the same time rector of all three Salesian presences and Procurator of the Salesian Society. The Italian Consul con-

Lo's "New Puyutang" St. Joseph church in Nantao, the place the Salesians had given up eight years earlier in 1928. On the last day of the triduum, from eight to ten o'clock in the morning, a pontifical Mass was celebrated by Mgr. Zhu Kaimin, bishop of Haimen, in the presence of nearly one thousand people<sup>18</sup>. Pomp was a dominant characteristic of the event, which the reports described as follows:

"The image of St. John Bosco was hanging in the church festively decorated and lit by electric torches. During the offering of the sacrifice, the Zhengxiu High School choir sang and performed music, beautiful sound waves coming from a distance, the main celebrant surrounded by priests and representatives from each district, and a flock of over a thousand faithful".

At 3 p.m., Bishop Zhu presided at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. After the ceremony, the bishop delivered a lecture on the history of St. John Bosco.

At 4 p.m., in the great hall of Zhengxiu Middle School a grand civil celebration was held: Guohuo Road was jammed by incoming traffic and crowds of people. Participants included a representative of the Shanghai mayor, city secretary Mr. Yu Hunjun, Italian ambassador Vincenzo Lojacono and Lady Lojacono, the Italian consul, the bishop of Shanghai Mgr. August Haouisée SJ, the bishop of Zhengzhou Mgr. Luigi Calza SX, Aurora University Rector Pere Georges Germain SJ, Catholic leader Mr. Lo Pahong, the principal of every Shanghai Catholic high school, priests and representatives, the Salesian Provincial Fr. Carlo Braga and many more, totaling more than two thousand people attending the celebration.

The report specially mentioned the hall layout: the Vatican flag hanging in the hall doorway, the interior decorated with flags and flowers, a hand-painted portrait of Don Bosco stood out solemnly above the rostrum. In order to increase the festive atmosphere, the Italian navy band played music, and the gymnastics team from the Salesian Institute of Macao performed a choreographed gymnastics display

tested some of his business dealings, as a consequence of which Fontana felt threatened and left Shanghai. He died in Dili in 1942. Mario RASSIGA, *In Memoriam. A tribute to the deceased Salesians who worked in China (1906-1986)*. Hong Kong 1987, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> Mgr. Simon Zhu (Tsu) Kaimin SJ (1868-1960) from a prominent Shanghai Catholic family, one of the first six Chinese bishops consecrated by Pius XI on 2 August 1926. Vicar Apostolic (1926-1946) and then bishop of Haimen (1946-1960), great friend of the Salesians, principal co-consecrator of Mgr. Ignaz Canazei (19 novembre 1930) and of Bishop Michele Arduino (29 June 1948). See *Bishop Simon Zhu Kai-min (Chu or Tsu Kai-min), S.J.* in <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bchu.html>, accessed 22 May 2016. Also Jean-Pierre CHARBONNIER, *Christians in China A.D. 600 to 2000*. San Francisco 2007, pp. 396-397. In 1934 Mgr. Zhu invited the Salesians to open an agricultural school in Haimen, which did not have the required financial backing, and in 1936 had to be transferred to Neziang (Nanxiang) in Shanghai. *Breve cronistoria...*

This is the first time that an article on Don Bosco and Salesian work appeared in *Shenbao*, and in itself, it is a rare report on religious activities by the Shanghai newspaper. Reading through the lines of the report, one may think of two reasons for this, one political and the other social: first, both Chinese and expatriates came together as one family, religion creating harmony to achieve “world peace as its final goal” in a delicate political moment for China due to the Japanese imperialistic expansion and communist insurgence. The Salesians had already been in Shanghai for more than a decade: people now could have a deeper understanding of the identity and spirit of “St. John Bosco, a savior of unemployed and out of school youths, a mentor in social education, and example of the best and truest humanitarian spirit”, thoughts with which the columnist concluded his report<sup>19</sup>; secondly, among the guests were notable people like the mayor’s own representative, the Italian ambassador and consul, and celebrities such as Mr. Joseph Lo. Hence the *Shenbao* reported the event both in the international and local news sections on Sunday and Tuesday, and mentioned all the celebrities by name. This, of course, had a considerable social significance and impact.

As we know, the celebrations had actually been carefully planned and impeccably executed. The celebrations of Don Bosco were conceived of as the “official baptism of Salesian work” in the Asian metropolis:

“The presence of the Italian ambassador, the participation of the talented gymnastics team from Macao, the flawless musical rendition of exceptional impact such as the Perosi Mass with orchestra accompaniment, the double European and Chinese celebrations, the well-organized preparation of newspapers and the handing out of myriads of biographies and other prints from our own printing department: all of this contributed to the success ... even though Shanghai had banished all together public processions... due to the delicate Japanese and communist situation”<sup>20</sup>.

### 2.3. *Music, theatre and sports*

In the context of Catholic church events and Catholic charity activities two *Shenbao* reports mention the participation of St. Joseph (in Chinese *Yixin*, i.e. One Heart) Middle School band and the Salesian Seminary Choir: the first occasion was on February 2, 1947, when Vicar Apostolic Auguste Haouisée took possession of *Dongjiadu* cathedral as first bishop of Shanghai following the establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy in China (11 April 1946); the second on

<sup>19</sup> *The heritage of the late Italian clergyman Don Bosco – The commemoration of his canonization to be held in New Puyutang on May 31*, in “*Shenbao*” (2 June 1935) 11 and *Solemn commemoration of the canonization of Catholic Saint John Bosco*, in “*Shenbao*” (4 June 1935) 9.

<sup>20</sup> Fontana to Berruti, 14 June 1936 in ASC F724. The mythical Long March by the Communist forces (1934-1935), encircled by the Kuomintang armies, was still underway.

February 25, 1948, reporting on a week-long national Catholic Education Conference held in Shanghai (15-21 February 1948). *Shenbao* rarely reported religious activities, but on these two occasions the Holy See envoy Msgr. Antonio Riberi<sup>21</sup>, relevant government officials and numerous church dignitaries were in attendance. Hence, a special coverage of the two events appeared in the paper's social and educational section.

“At the Bishop's inaugural ceremony, «performances by the band of Yixin School and the Salesian Seminary Choir, filled the cathedral with clear and loud sounds and voices...».

At the opening mass of the Catholic Education Conference, “The Salesian Brothers Choir sang with resounding voices, filling the hall with sweet and harmonious sounds”<sup>22</sup>.

Two other activities respectively in February and June 1944 appeared among social events and athletics news. On February 20, the Salesians organized a charity fundraising party in the Aurora University hall, which among other things featured the operetta “*I due piccoli savoiard*” performed in Shanghainese by the Salesian brothers and aspirants in the presence of the bishops and of Jesuit professors<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Riberi (1897-1967) Nuncio in China from 1946 to his resignation in 1951. He was made a cardinal in 1967. <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/briberi.html>, accessed on 23 may 2016. On Riberi, cf Elisa GIUNIPERO, *Chiesa cattolica e Cina comunista dalla rivoluzione del 1949 al Concilio Vaticano II*. Brescia 2007, passim.

<sup>22</sup> *Bishop A. Haouisée yesterday sworn in*, in “Shenbao” (4 february 1947) 5; 2 Febbraio in *Cronaca della Casa di Nantao-Shanghai, Studentato Filosofico, Teologico, Noviziato, dal 1 Febbraio 1944 al Giugno 1950*, in AIC Cronache; *National Catholic Educational Congress opens in Shanghai. Over a hundred participants for the week-long event. Nuncio A. Riberi, Archbishops Paul Yu Pin and Thomas Tien Ken-sin officiate*, in “Shenbao” (26 february 1948) 6.

<sup>23</sup> “Shenbao” (19 april 1944) 4; Cronaca Nantao, 2 february 1944. The House Chronicler reports on a thoroughly enjoyable performance that filled with wonder “those who do not know the Salesians”. Had the operetta been performed in Mandarin, the national language, rather than in the Shanghainese dialect, it would have been just perfect, given “the diehard nationalism” then prevailing. The original operetta is *Les deux petits savoyards*, music by Nicolas Dalayrac 1791, libretto by Marsollier des Vivetieres, Italian adaptation by Giuseppe Carpani. Besides this, other operettas were performed by brothers and aspirants during the war years:

*San Tarcisio* (music by Ettore Pelegatti, libretto by Marcello Glustich, performed in 1943),

*Marco il Pescatore* (music by Vincenzo Cimatti 1922, Libretto by Ruffillo Uguccioni),

*Matteo Ricci* (music by Ettore Pelegatti 1944, libretto by Marcello Glustich, performed in 1944),

*Il Figliol Prodigio* (music by V. Cimatti 1926, Libretto by Antonio Cojazzi),

*Domenico Savio* (music by V. Cimatti 1950, performed in 1950).

*Il Cieco di Gerico* (music by V. Cimatti 1908, Libretto by Cesare Zoboli, performed in 1941 and 1942) and possibly others. Orchestral support came either from the Shanghai Philharmonic, or the Conte Verde Orchestra. The Italian liner Conte Verde was stranded in Shanghai and the crew shared quarters with Salesians in Nantao during the war. See also Mario RASSIGA, *Cenno storico dell'opera salesiana in Cina*. III/4. Aberdeen, Technical School 1975, pp. 96, 100, 106.

On June 30, the Catholic diocese and the St. Joseph Hospice organized a charity football match between a Chinese selection and a Portuguese selection: in addition to the names of the two sides, the news announced that “spectators could enjoy performances of famous Italian operatic arias by the Salesian band”<sup>24</sup>. Salesian musical prowess, fruit of dedicated education and constant rehearsing, was gradually asserting itself in Shanghai at social events and on religious occasions.

In the sports section of *Shenbao*, at least four items are carried related to football matches organized by Don Bosco School or in which the school team took part. A one off special mention refers to Mr. Cai Shisong, the Don Bosco football team coach<sup>25</sup>. Football, of all disciplines, held special place in Salesian schools in China wherever the Provincial Superior, Don Carlo Braga, an ardent fan and promoter of the sport, was present<sup>26</sup>.

#### 2.4. *Other entries related to the Don Bosco group*

In the classified section of business news one can find six items related to the procurator and rector Fr. Ernesto Fontana, including two on December 26-27, 1939 being declarations of nullity of 18 cheques and of a tenant’s contract. It was during the anti-Japanese resistance war, when Fr. Fontana was known to be buying property in the Zhabei zone rendered vacant by the Japanese.

There are three items related to a lawyer’s letter, published on consecutive days, 5-8 February 1941 regarding unsatisfactory supplies, overdue payments and unauthorized transactions. During the war the procurator had bought a batch of supplies. For reasons yet to be verified the Italian Consul General in Shanghai, Gennaro Pagano di Melito, had the shipment blocked; thus the goods could not be delivered on time. Fr. Fontana was caught up in a struggle between the Consul and a group of Italian businessmen, was referred to the consular tribunal and in September 1941 barred from the city of Shanghai<sup>27</sup>. He eventually chose to quietly leave China and settled in Dili, East Timor, where he died of cholera on 6 August 1942. The last announcement about him on October 3, 1941 is linked to these events: the lawyer representing Fontana and a certain

<sup>24</sup> “Tomorrow a charity football match: Chinese selection takes on Portuguese selection. Tickets on sale today”, in “*Shenbao*” (29 June 1944) 3.

<sup>25</sup> “*Shenbao*” 23 (November 1935); (22 August 1939); (12 April 1940) and (27 August 1942).

<sup>26</sup> Carlo BRAGA, *Lettere*. Edited by R. Bracchi. Pro Manuscripto. V. Tassinari, Braga’s biographer, calls him “very knowledgeable about and an ardent fan of football”. Vasco TASSINARI, *Il romanzo di un missionario valtellinese. L’avventurosa vicenda esistenziale di don Carlo Braga, in Italia, Cina, Filippine*. Edizione rinnovellata e ridotta del libro: *L’uomo che ebbe tre patrie*. Bologna, GESP 1994, p. 220.

<sup>27</sup> ASMAE (Archivio di Stato Ministero Affari Esteri), AP 1931-1945 Cina, B. 85 (1941-XIX).

Agostino Badessi Alberti declared the end of business cooperation between the two in connection with the business of the *Società di Navigazione Italo-Cinese and G. F. Righini & Co.* in which the Procurator had invested in 1937<sup>28</sup>.

### 3. The Salesian mission

#### 3.1. A conference on “child relief work” organized by “Shenbao”

From reports by *Shenbao* over two decades, child relief work known as “love the young education” (慈幼教养 literally “love youth education and support”) was seen as the answer to a social problem – care of poor or abandoned youth – in need of urgent action. China’s modern “love the young education” program had started after the Salesians’ arrival in China. Child assistance programs and education were first implemented and developed to a certain standard and scale by missionaries: their achievements inspired locals to do the same. The National Child Welfare Association (中华慈幼协会, literally “China Love the Young Society”) with headquarters in Shanghai, was established by the National Christian Council in April 1928 at the beginning of the “Nanjing Decade” (1928-1937). It was the most influential among charity groups, committed to overall society’s attention to children’s rights and interests. It was chaired by Mr. H.H. Kung (1881-1967), minister of finance (1933-1944) and governor of the central bank (1933-1945). In 1932 it promoted China’s first children’s day, and made a significant contribution to wartime relief of refugee children<sup>29</sup>.

Ciyou (慈幼, Love the Young, is the name shared by both the Salesian Society (慈幼会 *iyouhui*) and the National Child Welfare Association (中华慈幼协会). Ci (慈), benevolent love, often associated with Ren (仁), benevolence, as Renci (仁慈), meaning kindness, benevolence, mercy. The name, the concept and the action are rooted in the tradition of the ancient classics: “The third precept is: Respect the old and be kind to the young” (Mencius)<sup>30</sup>. Ciyou (慈幼) *ngzi*, explained commentator Zheng Xuan (AD127-200), means “loving the young and the little”<sup>31</sup>.

In 1937 China was fully engaged in the war of resistance against Japanese invasion: the war produced more than 12 million refugees. Among them, minors were naturally countless and governmental and non-governmental relief agencies together saved nearly 200,000 such “children in distress” (苦儿 or 苦难儿童)

<sup>28</sup> “Shenbao” (3 october 1941) 2.

<sup>29</sup> 黄莉莉, 中华慈幼协会研究 (1928-1938), 华中师范大学硕士学位论文, 2008. Lili HUANG, *Study on China National Child Welfare Association (1928-1938)*. MA Dissertation at Huazhong Normal University 2008.

<sup>30</sup> 三命曰: “敬老慈幼。”, 《孟子·告子下》, Mengzi Gaozi II.

<sup>31</sup> 郑玄注: “慈幼, 谓爱幼少也。”《孟子·告子下》 Mengzi Gaozi II, comment by Zheng Xuan (AD127-200).

as they were known. Scholars conclude that only in 1938 did the Kuomintang government's war disaster relief agencies manage to combine relief with education and open dedicated institutions<sup>32</sup>, no doubt influenced by the work of missionaries, especially the Jesuits and the Salesians. The Salesians had comprehensive plans for child relief service: besides relief, the children of poor migrant workers (known as “工儿”, “labour children” or “street children”) were provided with specific education and helped to become workers competent in new industrial skills. Because of this, when referring to child relief work, people would first and foremost think of the Salesians, who by then were operating eight industrial schools in China. Thus, in an article entitled *Labour children's paradise: homes tending workers' children*, the “Shenbao” would un-hesitantly pick the Bosco group as the best:

“Among foreign agencies doing ‘Child Relief Work’ (慈幼工作) in China, the largest and most specialized, hence with superior and consistent results, are the Salesians. They are managed by Italians, and they are now in Shanghai, Xuzhou, Hong Kong, Macao, Qujiang and other places where they offer their trademark whole-hearted services. Most important in the international community, offering earnest and specialized relief and education services to sons and daughters of the working class, are the Catholic Salesians of Don Bosco, intent on continuing to develop their unstinting enterprises in China”<sup>33</sup>.

Coming to the Shanghai scene, people would naturally think of, discuss and compare Salesian work and the work done at the Jesuit-run Tushanwan orphanage, the embodiment of child care in the city, as revealed in the following fundraising advert entitled *Relief for out of school children, looking forward to generous donations*:

“Children who are early school dropouts, when they grow up cannot support themselves, thus people leading miserable lives are everywhere. Although Shanghai has Tushanwan and Don Bosco schools that shelter homeless children, teach them skills to enable them to make a living, due to limited financial resources, they cannot absorb all of them”<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> 阚香玉, *抗战时期大后方难童救济教养的特点*, 《甘肃社会科学》, 2 (2012) 170-173; Xiangyu KAN, *The characteristics of the relief and education for refugee children in the rear area during the Anti-Japanese War*, in “Gansu Social Sciences” 2 (2012) 170-173.

吴捷, *全面抗战时期国民政府的难民救济工作*, 《历史教学》, 5 (2005) 23-28; 原文发表于《大公报》, 第38-3-23期, 及《满铁调查月报》第92期; Jie WU, *The refugee relief work of the National Government during the Comprehensive Anti-Japanese War*, in “History Teaching” 5 (2005) 23-28; The original article was published in “Ta Kung Pao” (23 March 1938), and “Mantetsu Survey Report” No. 92.

<sup>33</sup> *Workers' sons and daughters paradise: homes tending workers' children*, in “Shenbao” (6 October 1943) 3. Also *Ideal workers' children paradise*, in “Shenbao” (12 November 1943) 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Relief for out of school children: looking forward to generous donations*, in “Shenbao” (16 September 1941) 9.

The teaching provided at the Jesuit Tushanwan School of Arts and Crafts (Collective name including Tushanwan Printing House, Painting Gallery, Workshop and Orphanage)<sup>35</sup> and Salesian schools was quite similar, based not so much on official school programs as on the special needs of their young trainees. The newspaper, however, pointed out that the Salesians had “a system”, the Preventive Education System, which had “that” something special to offer: a well-rounded education aimed at bringing out the full potential of the young trainees. Not only did they learn a craft, but also attention was given to their human education: teachers accompanied them as they played or prayed; they had a noisy brass band and grew up in a joyful and harmonious family environment.

It would be impracticable today to try to carry out a survey of the outcome of the training imparted to children by the two industrial schools. But a report about a conference on “*Love the young education*” (“慈幼教养座谈会”) promoted by *Shenbao* in October 1944 offers some interesting elements of comparison. Among the panelists were Wang Hefeng, representing the Tushanwan Orphanage, and Fr. Michele Arduino, director of Don Bosco School and Orphanage. Both spoke of education of young people in difficulty and the unity of both technical and human education. But while Tushanwan did not go beyond skills education, though undoubtedly of proven quality, at Don Bosco Technical School the offer was more wide-ranging and far sighted. The ultimate goal of education imparted to poor children was not limited to helping them reach self-reliance through professional training, but gave students with potential a chance to further their studies<sup>36</sup>. In addition, the Don Bosco group could offer a variety of services to address the needs of young boys and girls in difficulty, the most particular of which was the Oratory, mentioned in several articles and thus described by one of the Salesian sisters:

“Whenever there is a long vacation or holiday, there are many students at home, without guidance or supervision. They simply hang out in the side streets, or do some useless and harmful things. There are some naughty ones, always out of school, wandering in the streets, untouched by human love and culture. The Oratory of the school is designed to open its doors to these children [...]”<sup>37</sup>.

Besides the “School Oratory”, which extended educative work beyond the classroom to the leisure time of students, there were oratories open to neigh-

<sup>35</sup> On Tushanwan, see 李梅香, *土山湾孤儿院之教育活动及历史意义*, 《外国中小学教育》1 (2013) 48-53; Meixiang LI, *An Educational Survey of Tushanwan Orphanage*, in “Elementary & Secondary Schooling Abroad” 1 (2013) 48-53.

<sup>36</sup> *Children Education forum*, in “Shenbao” (14 October 1944) 3. On Michele Arduino (1909-1972), rector of the Shanghai-Yangshupu Don Bosco Institute (1940-1948) and later bishop of Shiuchow (1948-1962); cf Francesco CASELLA, *Profilo biografico storico-documentario di mons. Michele Arduino ultimo vescovo di Shiuchow*, in RSS 19 (2000) 223-277.

<sup>37</sup> *Record of visit to convent of Daughters of Mary Help*, in “Shenbao” (3 September 1943) 4.

bourhood children often left to themselves. Both the Salesians and the Sisters actively offered such services, allowing children and adolescents to come in from the streets, approach and listen to the educator at will, visit the activity room, go to the playground to exercise or play games, and thus attract and accompany them as they learned to improve their ways.

The child work of the Bosco group in China was not without its difficulties and worries, the main one being financial constraints, due to the consequence of war, and the difficulty in keeping contact with headquarters in Turin, which would provide much needed financial assistance in time of need. Both the sisters and the Salesians struggled to remain sustainable and had to seek or solicit help in cash or material goods from all sectors of society to survive. The quiet relief and educational work did not go unnoticed and was widely appreciated: friends, individual donors, corporations and government agencies responded positively. A mere twenty years after the Bosco Group had landed in Shanghai (i.e. in 1943), the *Shenbao* published a positive and lengthy report on their work.

### 3.2. Don Bosco's heritage: an outstanding contribution to the Shanghai youth education cause

The Bosco group had applied for financial aid for poor students from the Shanghai City Poverty & Illness Relief Association. Aid was granted following an assessment of each applicant. Over thirty religious groups received help. Results were published in the press, and in the following weeks the various associations were interviewed and reports were published<sup>38</sup>.

"A visit to the Salesians of Don Bosco" 《鲍斯高慈幼会访问记》 was the longest and ran on five consecutive days August 8-12, 1943 in *Shenbao*, giving readers a comprehensive understanding of the group's involvement in China:

"The Salesian cause in China began at the outset of the twentieth century, meaning a third of a century of efforts for poor and underprivileged youth, which has produced a significant contribution and promoted national culture and the construction of the country. One can only have a sense of admiration, and we feel the need to offer [our readers] a deeper understanding of it"<sup>39</sup>.

Part I of the interview was a lively presentation of Don Bosco, stressing the poverty background of the great educator who chose to "save the poor through the poor", with information garnered from Ugucioni's *Un grande Italiano*, published in Hong Kong by St. Louis School in Chinese as *A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Great*

<sup>38</sup> "Shenbao" (7 & 11 May 1943). Carlo Braga mentions the event in his memoirs, affirming that the Salesian group came out tops in the assessment process. C. BRAGA, *Memorie...* Details on a second distribution of funds collected from local banks was also published in "Shenbao" (26 February 1944).

<sup>39</sup> *Third report on visit to the Salesians of Don Bosco*, in "Shenbao" (12 August 1943) 3.

*Man*<sup>40</sup>. Part II was a presentation of the Salesian Society and of its trademark services, with the Oratory on top, schools for young workers, hostels for orphans and abandoned minors and schools for various types of educational needs. In Part III, in chronicling the Salesians' entry into China, the paper mentioned the various schools established in different parts of the country: the Immaculate Conception Institute in Macao (1906), St. Louis School in Hong Kong (1927), Aberdeen Industrial School in Hong Kong and Shangzhi (Sophia) School in Kunming (1935), Middle, High and Normal Schools in Shaozhou (1924). A detailed report was offered on developments in Shanghai, i.e. Don Bosco School, St. Joseph (Yixin) School in Nantao, the Nanxiang Agricultural School, and Jiangwan School of Agriculture. The reporter pointed out how the schools and training centres had been open in a well-timed way, promoting an educational concept that is consistent with China's particular situation: Salesian schools were precisely what China needed<sup>41</sup>.

What was worth considering in Salesian education were its unique concept and the technical subjects offered: mechanics, shoemaking, tailoring, electricity, typesetting, printing, bookbinding: "The [Don Bosco] School is conceived on a grand scale, men of talent are trained successively, among China's vocational schools this is really one of the highest and most complete"<sup>42</sup>. For this the paper hailed the Salesian Society as China's training camp for "industry's reservists". The school was divided into two sections, a primary and middle school providing academic education and science teaching, the preparation and contents being just like other schools in the country. The Arts & Crafts School, on the other hand, focused on technical teaching and practice:

"On the 23rd year of the Republic (1934) the woodwork shop opened and its products were and are welcomed by the community; the following year the printing shop started, with business developing very well. On the 25th year of the Republic, the electric appliances workshop opened"<sup>43</sup>.

Thus, in stages and with painstaking effort, priests and brothers of different nationalities set up a comprehensive Industrial School, which included electrical appliances, mechanics, woodwork, printing, and a brass band. The Don Bosco School had formed many talented people: some had entered university; some had found employment in the industrial and commercial services of the city. The story was also recounted of a 19-year-old graduate who found employment with the Yangshupu power plant with a high salary, and who spontaneously do-

<sup>40</sup> Ruffillo UGUCCIONI, 十九世纪的伟人, 香港圣类斯工艺学校承印, (1939) 1948<sup>2</sup>. Ruffillo UGUCCIONI, *A 19<sup>th</sup> century great man*. St. Louis, Industrial School Salesian Printing Press (1939) 1948<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> *Third report on visit to the Salesians of Don Bosco*, in "Shenbao" (12 August 1943) 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

nated half of a monthly salary to the school: a proof of how successful the school's education was<sup>44</sup>.

### 3.3. *Hardship in times of war*

Children upbringing 慈幼教养 had always been a major social problem, but due to the perennial China civil strife and war, in the 1940s it had become dramatic. Many relief agencies helping children in distress and workers' children were facing tremendous pressure, unable to cope. Relief agencies were confronted with a stark reality, as an editorial from *Shenbao* reflected:

“As a result of social economic depression, rising prices and soaring spending, donations have diminished in number and in amounts donated. As a result, not only new cases of children in difficulty cannot be entertained, but also the fate of those who have been offered relief is hanging by a thread. These most important and most urgent problems are here today”<sup>45</sup>.

The orphanages and institutes run by the Salesian Society and by the FMA obviously were no exception: they too faced economic hardship.

In Part V of the *Shenbao* interview an obvious rhetorical question was asked regarding sustainability: would such a “perfect cause”, i.e. the Salesian work, which provides students with food, clothing, boarding, schooling, stationery, machinery and raw materials, plant and equipment “still be able to attract the millions in resources that it needs?” The Salesians had rallied third order members, the cooperators. They had been receiving help both from their international network and from the Vatican. The Shanghai city government had granted some aid. But because isolated by the war, the life of the Salesians in Shanghai was extremely difficult: the rice rations sufficed only for about two thirds of the need.

“Teachers and students were aware, there was not enough to eat, clothes were torn and shoes broken [...] there was no supply of raw materials, hence livelihood was coming to a stop, as were workshops and learning. But as in the case of a human body, how long could this situation be sustained?

The fathers and the brothers have abandoned their families and countries to come and save poor children as a lifelong career, without a salary, in our Country. Would the Chinese compatriots simply sit around, watching the impending threat?”<sup>46</sup>.

For the Sisters life was even more difficult. They had arrived in Shanghai in 1934, set up a convent on Baoxing Road in Zhabei, and ran the Sacred Heart of

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Social problem urgently awaiting solution*, editorial in “*Shenbao*” (14 October 1944) 1; *Fifth report on visit to the Salesians of Don Bosco*, in “*Shenbao*” (14 August 1943) 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Mary hospital in Canton Road. In 1937, as a consequence of the “August 13 Shanghai battle”, the hospital was destroyed: four years of painstaking effort gone in one day. The nuns served refugees and the wounded in Xinzha Road and Lu Ban Road for six months, then in 1938 they moved to Yangshupu Road and leased a western-style house to shelter orphans. After 1939 Shanghai society gradually returned to stability. However, people kept coming for help daily: sick children, abandoned babies, out of school street children increased. After the outbreak of the Pacific War, foreign donation channels were cut, the source of donations was reduced and foreign subsidies stopped altogether, while daily expenses, along with prices, soared to at least 10000 yuan per month, an unsustainable situation. Even in the face of severe shortages, the life of the nuns was still orderly: they planted their own vegetables, twice a month collected food donations valued at 450-500 yuan from vendors at the Laji Qiao (Garbage Bridge) central market. three times a month they would collect food worth 1200 yuan in Hongkou’s orchards ... Despite the poverty, “the clothes the children wear, most of which are collected and refitted by the Sisters themselves, are very clean, tidy and fit, not in the least do they look like shabby orphan girls”<sup>47</sup>.

In the twice a year handout, the Shanghai’s ‘Poor Relief Association’ had recently granted the tough Sisters a 4500-yuan subsidy: less than half of a month’s expenditure<sup>48</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusions

What originally seemed to be a research based on quantity turned out to be one based on quality materials. Though limited, this 4-hands research on religious reports in *Shenbao* is a first attempt to gauge public opinion on youth work, Don Bosco and the Salesians in Shanghai based on newspaper records. Of Don Bosco as such, *Shenbao* offers two vivid portraits: Don Bosco the Saint, and Don Bosco Founder and inspirer of the Salesian Society. However, while Catholic Shanghai revered and admired Don Bosco for his sanctity and his ability to lead the young on a path to holiness, in the *Shenbao* reports his figure re-

<sup>47</sup> “Shenbao” (3 September 1943) 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Shanghai was the largest food consumption and distributing centre in China. Shortage of food repeatedly mentioned in the reports was the result of food control by the Japanese occupying army: as a result food prices, combined with inflation, began soaring. In 1940 food rations were introduced in Shanghai. In January 1942, as the grain problem was worsening, per person food distribution was applied. 刘志英, 抗战时期上海的米粮市场, 《档案与史学》, 1999年2期, 第41-48页。and 丁志远, ““孤岛”时期租界的粮食问题研究——以租界救济为中心”, 上海师范大学 2013年硕士学位论文, 第13, 20, 27, 42, 46页。Zhiying LIU, *Rice market in Shanghai during the Anti-Japanese War*, in “Archives and History” 2 (1999) 41-48. Zhiyuan DING, *Research on food problems during the concessions “Isolated Island” period, each concession as relief center*. Master’s degree dissertation. Shanghai, Normal University 2013, pp. 13, 20, 27, 42, 46.

mains a backlighted silhouette, given shape and rendered vivid by the exemplary commitment and the dedicated educative work of the Salesians.

Pragmatic as the Chinese are, that is not surprising. Ma Xiangbo had helped channel public opinion in that direction. The 95 years old iconic educator with basic national education for all children at heart, pointed not so much to the holiness of the great saint as to the educational enterprises of the self-made entrepreneur-priest who rose from poverty and who with no means at hand managed to provide assistance to illiterate children of the working classes through love, “a reflection of the heart of the Creator God”. Ma concluded: “since the Creator wanted all those schools, the tuition fees and the teachers, do you think these were difficulties the Salesians managed to overcome? If you do not believe this, just read the biography of St. John Bosco, or possibly go and see for yourselves what the Salesians are doing in East Asia”<sup>49</sup>.

In fact, what the *Shenbao* reported was what every Shanghainese could see for him or herself: the devoted work of the Salesians for poor young people, and the timely nature of that work in the midst of China’s wartime crisis, a real contribution to future national reconstruction. The newspaper found the following newsworthy:

1. *The national expansion of typical Salesian work for the working classes achieved in a relatively very short time.* Within the lifetime of one generation, the Salesians had managed to set up 8 institutions covering different geographical areas and offering a variety of services to young Chinese in need.

2. *What today we would call a “holistic educative offer”, and the way this was carried out, i.e. by applying the Preventive System.* The *Shenbao* reports show high esteem for the general education offered by schools, professional schools and orphanages run by the Don Bosco group, seen as an advocate and trendsetter in youth relief work and social ethos. Even after society developed its own youth relief services, the work of the Don Bosco group remained outstanding.

<sup>49</sup> The biography for which Joseph Ma Xiangbo wrote his preface has not been positively identified. It could be one published and republished by the Don Bosco Institute between 1931 and 1939 based on Augustin Auffray’s 1929 biography (Augustine AUFFRAY, *Le Bienheureux Don Bosco*. Lyon, Emmanuel Vitte 1929) but no copy has been found even though several thousand copies were printed and distributed. See Fontana to Ricaldone, 18 June 1939 in ASC F724. After retiring from active life Ma Xiangbo lived on the premises of the Tushanwan Orphanage which he had helped to build, closely concerned with the issue of the education of young workers. On the later period of his life, see 朱维铮, 《马相伯集》, 复旦大学出版社, 1996年出版; 李天纲, “马相伯晚年宗教生活与思想”, 《史林》, 3 (1995) 72-85. Weizheng ZHU, *Ma Xiangbo Collection*. Fudan, University press 1996. Tiangang LI, *Ma Xiangbo’s religious life and thought in his later years*, in “Shilin” 3 (1995) 72-85.

3. *The untiring dedication and spirit of service of the Don Bosco group staff.* The reports affirm the quality spirit of the Salesian male and female religious communities: when the young relief cause was the most crucial of social problems and funding was a wartime general challenge, the Don Bosco group, mainly expatriates cut off from their countries of origin, revealed admirable dedication. True-to-life reports by *Shenbao* inspired a sympathetic vision notwithstanding the wartime circumstances.

4. *The timeliness of Salesian youth relief work.* *Shenbao* reports on youth relief or education work would often use Jesuit-run Tushanwan Orphanage and the Don Bosco School as noteworthy examples of person-centred approaches: their characteristic “work & study” education had brought a positive change to the often negative perception of relief work, and it provided constructive human resources to Country and society when China, ravaged by internal and external conflicts, most needed social support.

5. *A stimulus for all Chinese to do more to help young compatriots from the working classes and contribute to society building.* In a moment when the masses needed to be rallied to face unprecedented crises, the newspaper found it appropriate to appeal to national pride to be more social minded by pointing to the example of foreign nationals. It also pointed to good technical education as a contribution to industrial building.

A question worth considering is the objective value of the *Shenbao* reports. While reports on the few specifically religious activities relied on material provided by the Salesians themselves<sup>50</sup>, the 1943 interview regarding the ‘Don Bosco Group’ work has been written from an objective, non-confessional standpoint by non-Catholic journalists. The vocabulary employed is a witness to that. Consequently, the columns reflect the social image of Don Bosco and his group, which coincides with the mission and goals these had set for themselves.

Exclusive columns for the Don Bosco group account for just 1/4 of the total. The rest of the news items are embedded among other church activity-related reports. Each of these, however, contain some special, unique information, that are a recognition of the outstanding achievements of the Don Bosco brothers in the service of the young.

The several legal notices related to activities of procurator Fr. Ernesto Fontana reflect not only the predicaments religious groups found themselves facing in the effort to attain some degree of self-sustainability, but they also reflect the inevitable relationship of religious bodies with business and political organizations, or the bilateral, complex connections with the countries of origin. The Don Bosco group, though international, identified with Italy, a member of the three-partite axis, rooted as it was in a territory occupied by axis member Japan.

<sup>50</sup> Fontana to Berruti, 14 June 1936 in ASC F724.

#### 4.1. Epilogue

On August 15, 1945 the House Chronicler hailed the end of World War II in Shanghai. The Salesians readied themselves for further expansion of their services, with Shanghai strategically positioned as the launching platform of northern growth to continue to do in times of peace what they had been doing at great personal cost in times of war. Education was seen as a key element for national reconstruction in which the Salesians had a role to play. In 1946 the Peking orphanage school opened its doors, as requests from ten other cities were received to have similar schools established there<sup>51</sup>. The 1947 Provincial Chapter, held in Shanghai, specially debated the development of Technical Schools, the training of human resources and the innovation of curricula<sup>52</sup>. On Feb 15-21, 1948 a National Catholic Educational Congress was held in Shanghai. On the closing day, Cardinal Thomas Tien of Beijing delivered his address advocating concrete proposals for a five-year program of re-organization. Point 6 read: “Every parish should run an evening school, a Sunday school, and *a professional school on the lines of the well-known Salesian schools*”. Salesian industrial schools had become good practices people wanted to multiply nationwide<sup>53</sup>.

In 1949 the ‘National Child Welfare Association’ (中华慈幼协会) moved to Taiwan, and now it is mainly part of history. The name Ci You (慈幼) has since become a trademark of the Salesian Society, and nowadays, web translation for ‘慈幼教养’ is simply “Salesian Education”.

<sup>51</sup> The Salesian archives have files for the following cities or districts: Changsha (長沙 1946) Chongqing (重慶 1946), Hengyang (衡陽 1947), Qizhou (蘄州 1946), Kaifeng (開封 1947) Nanning (南寧 1947), Nanyang (南陽 1946), Xian (西安 1946), Jinan (濟南 1950), Qingdao (青島 1946). AIC, Fondazioni (richieste di).

<sup>52</sup> Capitolo Ispettorale IV, Shanghai-Nantao 12-22 maggio 1947. AIC, Armadio Capitoli Ispettoriali.

<sup>53</sup> Card. Tien’s program for Catholic education in China, in “China Missionary” (1948) 149.