

THIERRY DE MONTBRIAL

Founder and Chairman of the WPC

We thought of having this session, religion and politics in China, because it is clear that very few people, or too few people are aware of the importance of the subject of religion in China. It is absurd to say that China would be the only country in the world that is not religious. Not only does China have a religious dimension, but this dimension is perceived as very threatening in the long-term by the regime. That was shown in particular at the last party Congress, the 19th Congress of the Communist Party, and the repression is more and more visible. By the way, we have lost the moderator who is somewhere in the hotel, but perhaps he has fallen asleep, but this is why I am introducing the subject. After all, I am responsible for the organisation of this panel, so why not. I will just retreat in a second after briefly introducing the two speakers. Franciscus Verellen is a very prominent scholar who is very well-known by all the sinologists and he is a particular expert on the Tang period, but also on the subject of religion in general. From Hong Kong, where both of them are based, he follows contemporary issues very closely as well, particularly this issue of religion. Franciscus is the author of many very scholarly books, but I do not think that will be the subject tonight. Franciscus is something like 20% French.

Franciscus VERELLEN

French is my adopted nationality.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL

You choose the percentage. Jean-Pierre is one of the best-known experts on China in France and he has a worldwide reputation. He has also been based in Hong Kong, for how many years Jean-Pierre?

Jean-Pierre CABESTAN

11 years.

Thierry de MONTBRIAL

11 years. Franciscus will start with a focus on this religious aspect in particular and Jean-Pierre will take the floor next and talk about the political situation in China more generally. This being said, I thank everybody, and I will sit on the first row because my presence is no longer needed. Thank you very much.