Last week, I was blessed to interview Steven Mosher, longtime president of the Population Research Institute and expert on China, about his latest book, *The Devil and Communist China* (TAN Books, 2024). We discussed the spread of Communism into China from Soviet Russia, Mao Zedong's rise to power and long reign of terror, the CCP's "Catholic Patriotic Association" and the plight of Chinese Catholics, the Sino-Vatican Agreement, current conditions in China under Xi Jinping, and more. Mosher also shared about his experience as the first American social scientist to visit Communist China and the brutalities he witnessed while there, which ultimately led to his conversion to Christ and His Church.

This interview is very timely in light of recent confirmation that the Vatican hopes to renew its secret deal with the Chinese Communist Party yet again (despite accusations in late 2022 that the CCP violated the agreement), as well as Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to China last week to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

For those who prefer written format, see below for a written interview throughout which we cover similar ground as during our video discussion.

The video is also available on YouTube (see here).

***Catholic Family News* (CFN): Before we get into the contents of your latest book, perhaps you could share a little about your personal and professional background. You are known as being the first American social scientist to visit mainland China at the invitation of the Chinese government. Under what circumstances was that invitation extended and what was the purpose of your visit?**

Steven Mosher (SM): In January 1979, for the first time in 30 years, it became possible to do research in Communist China. Washington and Beijing had just signed a "Scholarly Exchange Agreement", under the terms of which 50 American scholars were going to be allowed into the country for up to a year. Although I was a very junior scholar — I was just completing my doctorate at Stanford University — I was one of those chosen. The National Science Foundation had selected me, I later learned, because I could read, write, and speak Chinese, both Mandarin and Cantonese.

But then a problem arose. My research proposal called for me to do a broad study of how Communism had changed life in China. It turned out that the Chinese Communist Party did not want an American social scientist talking to ordinary people in China about the Party and its leaders. My proposal was the only one out of 50 that was turned down. It was only after President Jimmy Carter personally intervened with China's leader Deng Xiaoping that I

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got the go-ahead.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was right to be worried about what I would find. Many of the people I met in China privately told me that life had been better before the Communists came in 1949. Their lives had been turned upside down by the revolution, farms confiscated, businesses destroyed. The "New China" that leftist Stanford professors had taught me about turned out to be a lie.

CFN: Your author biography notes that when you visited China, you were "a pro-choice atheist." Can you share a little about your conversion to Catholicism and the profound impact your visit to Communist China had on that journey?

SM: My year in China was a turning point in my life in many respects, but chiefly because it was there that I discovered the existence of evil and began to seek the good, which ultimately led me to God and to the Church that He founded.

You see, I was in China at the beginning of the one-child policy, living in a rural village in a Chinese commune. One day the authorities came into my village and rounded up all of the mothers who were pregnant with their second, third, or higher order child. These women were told that their unborn children were enemies of the state and they must get abortions. The ones who refused were arrested, taken away from their homes and families, and locked up in the commune headquarters. I went with them.

There I saw them subjected to grueling morning-to-night brainwashing sessions and half-starved. These went on day after day until they gave in. I always thought of myself as a supporter of a woman's "right to choose," but these pregnant moms were denied the right to choose life for their babies.

I also went with them as they were taken to the abortuary where this slaughter of the innocents was being carried out. There they were given lethal injections into the womb to kill their unborn child, followed by a caesarean section abortion. Why a c-section, you ask? Because many of these women were already seven, eight, and even nine months pregnant.

You cannot be in an operating room where a late-term abortion is being carried out and not know what is happening. The sight of a dead or dying baby being pulled from the wounded body of its mother is engraved on your memory forever. And that was the moment that I became pro-life. It was as if I was standing on the Temple of the Moon in the days of the Aztecs and watching the pagan priests sacrifice human beings. This was the killing of a tiny human being who had done nothing to deserve the death sentence. I became pro-life in that moment.

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This encounter with evil also marked the beginning of my conversion. You see, I had been taught at Stanford that morals were relative, ethics were situational, and that good and evil were merely cultural constructs. Now in that operating room I came face-to-face with a great evil and I must say that it shook me to the very core. It seemed to me that I was left with only two choices. I could either conclude, in the face of this horror, that the universe was mad. Or I could conclude that, if such a great evil can exist, there must be a countervailing good. I didn't want to live in an insane asylum, so I began to seek the good and was soon led to the source of all goodness, our Heavenly Father.

So it was that, in a very real sense, I found God in China by witnessing the evil deeds of the CCP.

CFN: While our main focus is your latest book, I do want to alert readers to one of your previous works that is very relevant to understanding China's totalitarian history, which predates the Communist takeover of China by many centuries.

You observe in *Bully of Asia* (2017), "A Chinese emperor — the Oriental despot *par excellence* — wielded far more power than any Western monarch, however absolute,"[1] and further note, "China's early innovations in statecraft — totalitarianism and hegemony — are less well known than its discovery of gunpowder or its cultivation of silkworms, but they may ultimately prove to have the greater impact on the world."[2]

Can you explain how ancient Chinese rulers invented totalitarianism, as well as the concept of hegemony? How did these ancient traditions, including the so-called "Legalist" school of statecraft, predispose China for Communism?

SM: Over 2,000 years ago China was already ruled with an iron fist. The political power of the "Son of Heaven," as the emperor was called, was guaranteed by a political system called Legalism.

Legalism was very similar to modern-day Communism. The emperor's rule was enforced by a centralized bureaucracy, a secret police, and a standing army. His spies were everywhere, and mutual surveillance networks were set up among the population at large. The production of iron and salt were state monopolies, and ordinary people were forbidden to own weapons.

Use "ten punishments for one reward," the Legalists advised the emperors. "Burn the books of competing schools of thought and persecute anyone who resists." Mass executions and concentrations camps followed.

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The Legalists also created the world's first personality cult in an attempt to convince the people that they were ruled by a "god." Song and dance troops traveled throughout the empire singing the emperor's praises. His statues and monuments were everywhere.

Acting on the Legalists' frank, brutal, and cynical advice, China's first emperor — Qin Shi Huang in Chinese — created the world's first totalitarian state in 220 B.C. Legalism had entered China's cultural DNA. It continued to replicate itself down through the centuries and the dynasties.

Many people have heard about Confucius, while few have heard about Legalism. That's because later emperors made a great show of Confucian rites and rituals, and of leading by moral example. After all, Confucius had taught that one of a ruler's most important responsibilities was to educate his subjects in virtue through exhortation, persuasion, and by moral example. "If a ruler himself is upright, all will go well without command. If the ruler himself is not upright, even when he gives commands, he will not be obeyed."

But China's emperors were "Confucianist on the outside, Legalist on the inside" (*wairu neifa*). Underneath the silken costume of Confucianism lurked the iron scaffolding of Legalism. The personality cult, the secret police, and the concentration camps never went away.

As a young Communist, Mao Zedong decided it was the brutal Emperor Qin Shi Huang that he would seek to emulate, and the totalitarian Legalist order that he would seek to recreate. He, too, would rule China with an iron fist, resurrecting and modernizing the totalitarian institutions earlier employed by his merciless hero.

To successfully establish the "Qin order" in the modern age, however, Mao needed two things. He needed to reconfigure Legalism for modern times. And he needed a replacement for Confucianism, a new overarching ideology that would soften the harshness of his governance in the eyes of the people. Communism fit the bill.

With the victory of the Communist revolution in Russia, Mao and the rest of China's revolutionaries had found the perfect vehicle for their ambitions. The imported Marxism-Leninism, while claiming to be "modern" and "progressive", was every bit as totalitarian as Legalism. The absolute authority of the CCP and its leaders followed the absolute authority of the emperor. Mao would wield his power in a way very similar to Chinese emperors of the past. He would be called "Chairman," but he was really the first Red Emperor.

Mao was utterly ruthless. He was offended when someone compared him to Emperor Qin Shi Huang. "Emperor Qin Shi Huang was not that outstanding," he scoffed in 1958. "He

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only buried alive 460 Confucian scholars. We buried 460 *thousand* Confucian scholars. [Some] have accused us of being Emperor Qin Shi Huang. This is not true. We are a hundred times worse than Emperor Qin."

CFN: We now come to your latest book, *The Devil and Communist China*, a good amount of which focuses on Mao Zedong (1893-1976), China's first Communist dictator. For starters, when did Communism first spread into China from Soviet Russia and how did Mao rise to power within the Chinese Communist ranks?

SM: The Communist revolution in China helped to fulfill the prediction of Our Lady of Fatima that "Russia will spread her errors throughout the world." Once the Bolsheviks had solidified their control over Russia in 1920, Lenin wasted no time in sending agents to China to found the Chinese Communist Party and provide it with financial support.

Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin, went on to become Mao's chief backer. When the other Communist leaders, tired of Mao's scheming, double-dealing and blackmailing, tried to oust Mao from the leadership of the Party, Stalin defended him. He was impressed by Mao's utter ruthlessness, and correctly saw in him a proper son of Marx and Lenin — a kindred evil spirit. And the money kept coming. In fact, the famous "Long March" was undertaken by the CCP to get close enough to the border of the Soviet Union so their "Soviet Older Brothers" could resupply them with weapons and ammunition.

The Chinese Communists basically sat out the Second World War, leaving the Nationalists alone to fight the Japanese invaders. Then, in the closing days of the war, the Soviet Union moved into Manchuria to accept the surrender of the Japanese forces there. The entire captured Japanese arsenal — including howitzers, tanks, planes and gunboats — was turned over to Mao's Red Army.

It was then that Mao finally sent his armies on the march. Paying no attention to the mounting civilian death tolls, he ordered city after city blockaded and their populations starved into submission. It was a campaign of unmatched brutality. After the Manchurian city of Changchun was encircled, for example, one of Mao's leading military commanders, Lin Biao, ordered his forces to turn the capital into a "city of death." During the siege that followed, an estimated 160,000 people died. General Lin's men then easily captured the city, declaring victory on October 20, 1948. China was Mao's within the year.

CFN: In your book, you relate the story of Mao's mother "taking her young son on a kind of religious pilgrimage," during which she "rechristened him *Shi san ya-zi*, which means 'The Third Son of the Monolith.'"[3] Can you explain the significance of this new name and how the event as a whole impacted Mao throughout his life?

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SM: Here is how this religious pilgrimage, as I call it, took place. There was a stone monolith about eight feet high some distance from the village that was thought to be inhabited by a spirit. Mao's mother took her young son there and made him kneel and kowtow before the monolith, and asked the spirit of the monolith to adopt him. To confirm the spiritual connection between Mao and the monolith she rechristened him, giving him the new name, *Shi san ya-zi,* which means "The Third Son of the Monolith."

It was a kind of pagan baptismal rite, although one with a very different meaning than its Christian counterpart. A Christian baptism is conferred "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," at which time the baptized receives his name in the Church, usually the name of a saint. This patron saint not only provides a model of charity but intercedes for us in Heaven. Little Mao also received a name in the course of this pagan rite, but it was a name totally foreign to Christian sentiment. To me, "Third Son of the Monolith" has echoes of the demonic.

Mao's mother wanted supernatural protection for her young son. But seeking a relationship with a non-corporeal spirit entity is dangerous, and Catholics are cautioned against such practices for good reason. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warns: "All practices of *magic* or *sorcery*, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others — even if this were for the purpose of restoring their health — are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion" (para. 2117).

Calling it a Satanic baptism may not be all that far from the mark. In contrast with a Christian baptism, in which a child is named and offered to the Triune God, it was a kind of anti-baptism in which the infant Mao was given a false name and offered to a false god. It may have opened up young Mao to demonic influence at an early age.

The Third Son of the Monolith certainly behaved as though he were at least "infested" with an unholy spirit that was constantly goading him to evil. He was to grow up into one of the most ruthless, pitiless individuals who ever lived. At every turn, he invariably took the darkest path. One can almost hear Satan screeching that "Mao Zedong is 'stone,' and upon this 'stone' I will build a demonic temple of horrors."

CFN: Whether or not Mao became diabolically possessed as a result of his monolith experience, he indisputably grew up to be "lawless and godless by his own admission," as you observe in your book (Chapter 5). Over the course of several chapters, in fact, you demonstrate how Mao habitually violated all of the Ten Commandments. What are a few examples of his "lawless and godless" behavior?

SM: Well, there are lots of examples of his lawlessness to choose from. After arriving in

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Yenan at the end of the Long March, he assassinated one rival (Liu Chih-tan), poisoned another (Wang Ming), and deliberately sent the forces of a third (Chang Kuo-tao) to be entrapped and annihilated by the Nationalist forces. He butchered their followers by the hundreds and thousands. His rise to the top of the Chinese Communist Party owed a lot to his callous disregard for human life — and for God's Commandments, which are written on every human heart.

After the revolution, his disregard for the life, liberty, and property of the Chinese people reached truly diabolical heights. He forced hundreds of millions of China's villagers into giant "people's communes." Then, when the communes failed and famine struck in the early 1960s, Mao was unmoved. The people could live on "tree bark and grass," he quipped.

Soon tens of millions of people were dying of starvation. Mao dismissed their plight. "When there is not enough to eat, people starve to death," he said matter-of-factly. "It is better to let half of the people die so that the other half can eat their fill."

But it is Mao's heartless remark about human fertilizer that stands out in my mind. "Deaths have benefits," he observed at the time. "They fertilize the ground."

Given the trail of deceit and destruction that Mao wrought over the course of his long life, the spirit to whom his mother entrusted him must have been malevolent indeed.

CFN: You refer to Mao as "The Killingest Man in History" (Chapter 7) and state, "If you wonder how a billion people fell under the control of Chairman Mao, the answer is simple: abject terror."[4] When it comes to 20th-century mass murderers, most people seem to focus immediately on Hitler and Stalin without even considering Mao. How does Mao compare to them in regard to total death tolls and general devastation?

SM: Communism — the idea that man can create his own heaven on earth — is the most deadly idea ever conceived in the history of the world. This communist killing machine has killed more people than any war, famine, or pestilence in human history. And its most deadly operator, by far, was Mao Zedong.

All Communist regimes are led by lawless, violent men — Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot, and the North Korean Kims — who kill wantonly, violently, and with zero regard for human life. But none of these mass murderers, or even all of them put together, come close to matching the magnitude of Mao and the CCP's slaughter of the Chinese people. Mao Zedong spent his nights thinking of new ways to terrorize the Chinese into obeying his dictates — ways that invariably involved the arrest, torture, and execution of large numbers

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of people.

The Black Book of Communism estimated that the total death toll from 20th-century Communism approached 100 million. China topped the list with 65 million deaths while the USSR, with 20 million deaths, came in a distant second.

But 40 years of studying the People's Republic of China (PRC) has convinced me that the figure of 65 million given in the *Black Book* is actually an underestimate. It overlooks the 45 million or more Chinese who were starved to death by the Communists from 1960-1962 in the worst famine in human history. The 400 million tiny victims, both born and unborn, of the One-Child Policy must also be added to the death toll.

Only God knows the exact number of those killed by Chinese Communism, but by my calculations the number is close to 500 million, a truly insane level of butchery.

CFN: The Catholic Church has consistently condemned Communism as intrinsically evil, from Pius IX's initial censure in *Qui Pluribus* (1846) to Pius XI labeling it a "satanic scourge" in *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). Thus, when Communists rise to power they invariably target Catholics, in particular, for persecution. You summarize "The Chinese Communist Party's War on Catholics (and All Religions)" in your book (Chapter 14), beginning with Mao and continuing into the present.

Unlike most other Communist regimes, the CCP has attempted to subvert and suppress the true Church in China by means of the so-called "Catholic Patriotic Association," which you describe as "a front organization," one derived from Mao's "second magic weapon, united front tactics."[5] How has this CCP false church alienated and abused faithful Chinese Catholics since its inception in 1957?

SM: As you point out, the Vatican used to understand that Communism and the Catholic Faith are irreconcilable. The great Archbishop Fulton Sheen once wrote, "When a State sets itself up as absolute as God, when it claims sovereignty over the soul, when it destroys freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, then the State has ceased to be political and has begun to be a counter-Church."

There is no question that the CCP is just such a "counter-Church." It demands that all Chinese be faithful members of its quasi-religious communist cult. And its leaders, starting with Mao Zedong, are utterly hostile to the Catholic Faith.

Chairman Mao won the civil war with the Nationalists in 1950, but his war on religion was only just getting started. For the next eight years he brutally suppressed the practice of

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Christian faith. Foreign Catholic and Protestant missionaries were, to a man, accused of being spies for whatever country they hailed from. Most were simply arrested and deported, but others were sent to prison, where they were tortured into writing confessions. A few, like Maryknoll Bishop Francis Ford, were tortured to death.

The millions of Chinese Catholics, of course, fared much worse. They saw their churches closed down, their bishops and priests arrested and sentenced to long prison terms or executed. The crackdown in Shanghai came on September 8, 1955, when the Bishop of Shanghai, Bishop Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei, along with several hundred priests and Church leaders, was arrested and imprisoned. Bishop Kung was later sentenced to life imprisonment for so-called counterrevolutionary activities, which is Communist-speak for his refusal to break with Rome.

Yet by 1957, it was evident that Mao's effort to stamp out religion had failed. No one had told him that Christians, especially Catholic Christians, understand that they will often be persecuted by the world for practicing their faith. Or that Christianity, even under the vicious persecution of emperors like Nero and Diocletian, had continued to spread throughout the Roman empire.

Mao often bragged about his three "magic weapons," which were propaganda, united front tactics, and the People's Liberation Army. Now, since neither anti-Catholic propaganda nor deadly force had crushed the Church, he decided it was time to change tactics. He would set up a front group to infiltrate the Church in China and destroy it from within. Such "United Front" tactics, as they were called, had helped him win the civil war.

This is why, in 1957, he set up a front organization called the Catholic Patriotic Association. His goal was to seize control of the Catholic Church in China, sever all ties between the Vatican and Chinese Catholics, and attempt to make the now-domesticated Church serve the interests of the CCP.

While some bishops, priests, and laity joined the schismatic Catholic Patriotic Association, often under duress, others refused to have anything to do it. Instead, courageously refusing the Party's demands to break with Rome, they went into the catacombs, risking arrest and imprisonment, and all too often torture and death, to remain faithful. They were — and are — known as the underground Church.

CFN: Tragically, the Vatican entered into what it calls "a Provisional Agreement" with the CCP "on the appointment of Bishops" in September of 2018, an agreement which was renewed in October of 2020 and again two years later. You cover this Sino-Vatican Agreement, the actual text and details of which remain secret, in your

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book, observing that "[it] is perversely being used by the Communist authorities to crush the long-suffering but faithful underground Catholic Church while the Vatican stands silently by."[6] Why do you think the Vatican entered into such a scandalous deal with the CCP?

SM: The short answer is that Pope Francis wanted it and he picked the wrong man to pursue the negotiations: now-defrocked and disgraced Theodore McCarrick. Why a notorious homosexual predator was given such a sensitive assignment, one which would affect the fate of millions of souls, is a mystery.

Perhaps it was because McCarrick had recklessly promised the Pope, "With God's help, before He calls me home, I will help to bring you China and the great dream of Matteo Ricci will begin to be realized once again." In any event, he received the Pope's blessing to continue his shuttle diplomacy on the Vatican's behalf.

This continued effort by the Vatican had a downside. It drew the attention of the Chinese Party-State to the activities of the Catholic Church in China. Catholics form a small minority of the Chinese population and are scattered in communities throughout the length and breadth of the country. As such, they were able to evangelize, build churches, and even open seminaries, all while attracting relatively little hostile attention from the central government. "The mountains are high, and the emperor is far away," as the Chinese are wont to say.

Once Vatican officials again began holding discussions with Beijing officials, however, the Party-State began to pay a lot more attention to the activities of the domestic followers of this "hostile foreign power." In other words, the mere fact of opening negotiations put a target on the backs of Chinese Catholics. The "space" in which it had operated began to shrink under the unblinking eye of state surveillance.

The Chinese Communist Party is a jealous "god." "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" is its catechism, the members of the Party are its priesthood, and the head of the Party serves as its high priest. The whole of China serves as its temple, and within whose sacred precincts its people are encouraged to worship the Party.

Bear in mind that, all the while the negotiations were going on, the walls were closing in on all religious activity in China. Even before the agreement came into effect, new regulations decreed that all religious sites and clergymen must be registered, religious activities were forbidden outside of registered venues, non-registered clergymen were forbidden to host religious liturgies, and minors and party members were forbidden from entering churches.

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The reasons why the CCP bothered to open discussions with the Vatican at all became clear when the Holy Father consecrated all the Patriotic bishops that he and Pope Benedict, for very good reasons, had previously rejected.

They became even clearer once the Vatican announced in September 2018 that agreement was in force. Bishops and priests came under heavy pressure to join the schismatic Patriotic Church. They were told by their Communist minders that this was the Vatican's wish, and many did so.

Was Pope Francis misled by Theodore McCarrick, by the Communist Chinese, or by his own naivete with regard to Communism, or by all three? It is impossible for me to say.

CFN: In his message to Chinese Catholics (Sept. 26, 2018), Pope Francis claimed that "the Agreement sets out stable elements of cooperation between the state authorities and the Apostolic See, in the hope of providing the Catholic community with good shepherds." And yet, is it not the case that many Chinese dioceses remain without a bishop at all, let alone a good shepherd?

SM: It is hard to say what the Vatican has gotten in return for an agreement that Cardinal Joseph Zen, the retired archbishop of Hong Kong, openly calls a "sell-out" of the underground Church. It is perhaps easier to say what it has not gotten.

It has not gotten China to consent to the ordination of the roughly 40 bishop candidates identified by the Holy See within the Patriotic Church, some of whom have already been secretly ordained. Neither has it gotten the Communist authorities to accept a significant number of bishops of the underground community. In fact, of the 40 or so underground bishops, only a couple have received official recognition by the Communists. Finally, it has not resulted in the appointment of bishops in the roughly 40 episcopal sees in China that currently stand empty.

The only thing that the Vatican and the Chinese authorities seem to have in common is a belief that there should only be one Catholic church in China. For General Secretary Xi Jinping and his minions, that means eliminating the underground Church. For the Vatican, it means encouraging everyone (without explicitly saying so) to join the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, which it seems to believe offers a safe, legal haven for Catholics to practice their faith.

But it doesn't. The CPCA is merely an instrument that the Chinese Communist Party is using to bring all Catholics under Party control. The ultimate goal of the atheistic Communists who run China remains the same: to destroy all religious faith within China's borders.

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"When, before the signing of the Agreement, we remained fearless and maintained our faith no matter how much we were coerced, the Holy See would have supported us, too," noted underground Bishop Guo, who was removed from his diocese at the CCP's request. "But now, we're really helpless. To be frank, whoever persists [in not joining the CPCA] will suffer greater suppression and persecution from the CCP."

CFN: Roughly seven months before the Sino-Vatican Agreement was signed, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, then-chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, visited China and said afterwards, "Right now, those who are best implementing the social doctrine of the Church are the Chinese." What is your reaction to this claim?

SM: I was utterly amazed that anyone — anyone outside of CCP propagandists, that is — would make such a ridiculous claim. It made the Church that had once stood strong against Communism under Pope St. John Paul II into a laughingstock. Bishop Sanchez Sorondo also claimed that "China is evolving very well…you cannot think that the China of today is the China of John Paul II or the Russia of the Cold War".

On my next visit to Rome, I sought a meeting with Bishop Sanchez Sorondo in the hope of setting him straight. We met together for a very cordial lunch, after which he took me on a tour of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in the Vatican.

We spent four hours together, which gave me time to recount all the many human rights abuses — from the persecution of Catholics to the forced abortion of young mothers to the execution of prisoners in order to sell their organs — that the Communists were guilty of. The China of today was not the China of John Paul II, I told him. It was far worse.

The bishop did not dispute what I told him, nor did he repeat his nonsensical claims to me. He may only have uttered them in the first place, it seems to me, to go along with Pope Francis's China agenda. Francis had made it clear to his inner circle that he wanted to reach an understanding with the CCP on the appointment of bishops and, ultimately, to normalize diplomatic relations. As I mentioned above, both those efforts seem to have failed.

CFN: You conclude *The Devil and Communist China* with a chapter entitled "Mao's Enduring Spector" in which you focus on Xi Jinping, China's current dictator, whom you call "Mao's True Son".[7] In what ways has Xi's leadership resulted in a return to Maoist doctrine and practice?

SM: Xi Jinping models himself on the late Mao Zedong in all things. He wears baggy, unfashionable Mao suits to Party gatherings and has reinstituted such Maoist practices as

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"self-criticism" sessions. He publishes collections of his speeches and sayings in a format identical to Mao's own "Selected Works" and has made them required reading for tens of millions of Party members. The masses are encouraged to refer to their new leader as Big Daddy Xi, an echo of the old Confucian precept of the emperor as a father to his people. Party propagandists, in other words, acting upon Xi's orders, have created a personality cult right out of the Cultural Revolution.

Quotations from Xi's works blossom on village walls and appear on the screens of smart phones. In private homes, in the exact same space once occupied by large posters of Chairman Mao, equally large posters of Xi's beaming face gaze down upon his subjects.

Big Daddy Xi's repeated invocation of Maoist phrases and practices suggest he knows *exactly* what he is doing in channeling the late Chairman. He has ramped up the detention of dissidents of all stripes and launched an internet crackdown. The accounts of critics have been closed down and some arrested. Mao put fear into his critics by using a tactic known in China as "killing the chicken to warn the monkeys." The critics are sacrificial "chickens" — high-profile victims who are publicly pilloried in order to intimidate the other chattering internet "monkeys" into silence.

Xi Jinping, like Mao before him, even betrayed his closest ally and the man who was perhaps most responsible for his rise, Hu Jintao. Hu was publicly humiliated at the last Party Congress, bodily pulled out of his seat and escorted out of the room in full view of the assembled Central Committee of the CCP.

What has emerged from the vicious infighting characteristic of Communist parties everywhere, in other words, is a new Red Emperor, as great and terrible as the old one.

To make matters even worse, Xi is a committed Communist and is slowly strangling the life out of China's once-thriving private sector. He has decided that control over the population is more important than producing goods. This tale can only have one of two endings: Economic collapse and famine. Or war.

CFN: Roughly three weeks before Russia began what President Vladimir Putin calls "a special military operation" in Ukraine — that is, a territorial invasion resulting in an ongoing war — Putin visited China and signed a joint statement with Xi in which they "call for the establishment of a new kind of relationships between world powers on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation." The joint statement also stipulates that "[f]riendship between the two States has no limits, there are no 'forbidden' areas of cooperation," reminiscent of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and

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Mutual Assistance signed by Stalin and Mao in 1950.

In light of recent history and present circumstances, do you think that such "friendship" between Putin's Russia and Xi's China poses a threat to world peace and stability? Which of the two nations do you think poses the greater geopolitical threat?

SM: For the last two years, Xi Jinping has been acting out an ancient Chinese stratagem. It's called "Sitting on the mountaintop watching the tigers fight."

Or, as we say in the US, albeit much less poetically: "Let's you and him fight."

From his perch on the mountaintop, Xi is closely following the fighting in Ukraine and Gaza and the world's reaction. There is no doubt that Xi hopes Putin succeeds in finally taking the former Soviet Republic of Ukraine, or that Hamas and Hezbollah continue to absorb Israel's attention and deplete American resources. After all, he hopes one day soon to launch his own "special military operation" against the island of Taiwan.

China's strategic alliance with Russia and its support of Iran and Hamas has already paid rich dividends for Xi: Putin's Ukrainian adventure and the Hamas terrorist attack has diverted America's attention from Asia to Europe. American forces are being dispersed and American munitions are being depleted. Over the same time period, China has added 20 ships to its navy and 400 planes to its air force.

The Biden administration continuously hammers Russia on Ukraine but scarcely mentions China, a country that constantly threatens to invade democratic Taiwan or sink the Philippine navy.

Let's not forget that Putin flew to Beijing just before the invasion of Ukraine to meet with Xi. There he signed no fewer than 15 different agreements on trade, including oil and natural gas. Then, just as Putin's panzers began rolling into Ukraine, China opened its doors to Russian wheat. The two countries even signed a shipping agreement to thwart the anticipated embargo.

In other words, Putin set about expanding his empire knowing that the Chinese Communist Party had his back and would help to ease the pain of the economic sanctions that were sure to follow the invasion.

The old Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s has been reborn. Only this time China is the dominant power, not Russia, and the bigger threat to the U.S. and the world.

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CFN: In closing, I know you agree that the battle we face in regard to Communist China is ultimately spiritual in nature. What do you think it will take to drive the demon of Communism out of China and truly Christianize that nation?

SM: Mao Zedong was, in my opinion, one of the most evil men who ever lived. Mao and his minions wove a path of destruction through modern China that was unprecedented in its sheer destructiveness. His efforts to remake China's political economy, obliterate China's history, and even reinvent human nature led to disaster upon disaster. The totalitarian regime that he created continues to pay its dues to the devil on a regular basis, dealing out death to unborn babies, persecution to Christians, and genocide to restless minorities. It is, without question, the greatest organized instrument of Satan in the world today.

Evil is not a pleasant subject, but Christians can profit from confronting it. Indeed, we are called in Scripture to do exactly this: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). One way to ensure that we are opposed to Satan and his demons is to understand and expose the sins of an evil genius like Mao. And then ask God to empower us to do the opposite. Pray for God's protection of Catholics (and other Christians) in China, and for its conversion. The CCP may seem to be at the height of their power, but nothing is impossible with God.

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[1] Steven W. Mosher, *Bully of Asia: Why China's Dream is the New Threat to World Order* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2017), p. 33.

[2] *Ibid*., 34.

[3] Steven W. Mosher, *The Devil and Communist China: From Mao Down to Xi* (Gastonia: TAN Books, 2024), p. 61.

[4] *Ibid*., 103.

[5] *Ibid*., 221.

[6] *Ibid*., 234.

[7] *Ibid*., 252.

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