

**THE DEVIL AND  
COMMUNIST CHINA**



# **THE DEVIL AND COMMUNIST CHINA**

**FROM MAO DOWN TO XI**

**STEVEN W. MOSHER**

**TAN BOOKS  
GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA**

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*I dedicate this book to my wife of nearly four decades,  
Vera Lorraine Mosher.*

*When God decided that my soul was worth  
saving, he brought Vera into my life.*



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*“Morality begins at the point of a gun.”*

—Mao Zedong

*“Both the theory and practice of Communism are completely inhuman.”*

—Aleksandre Solzhenitsyn



# FOREWORD

As author of *The Devil and Karl Marx*, I regrettably know a few things about Communist China. Worst among them, here is a country that, according to the seminal 1999 Harvard University Press volume *The Black Book of Communism*, was responsible for the deaths of sixty-five million people under Communism in the twentieth century. Within the first two decades of Communist China's existence, primarily under Mao's Great Leap Forward (1957–60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–69), tens of millions of innocent people perished. They died from purges, malnutrition, starvation, the collectivization of agriculture, and an overall wrenching transformation of society through militantly atheistic, totalitarian Communism.

The ghastly death estimate for China in *The Black Book*—which, according to the latest research on Mao's reign of terror, might actually be low—exceeds that of any country in history, including the Soviet Union, once rightly dubbed by President Ronald Reagan as an “evil empire.” And when one adds in the horrific number of unborn babies snuffed out in the womb, especially via China's lethal one-child policy, the actual number of deaths under the nation's long march of Communism is unthinkable still larger. Add in the vast homicide against the unborn, and the killing field grows from tens of millions to hundreds of millions. Indeed, Steven Mosher estimates that 400 million human beings were killed off by the one-child policy.

Communist China has produced more deaths than any nation in the history of humanity. In the large sweep of history, that is no small accomplishment. It is downright diabolical.

I am prompted to quote Karl Marx here, specifically one of his chilling poems about the devil—namely, an 1841 work called “The Player.”

There, the morbid Marx waxed perversely about a “blood-dark sword” that stabs “unerringly within thy soul. . . . The hellish vapors rise and fill the brain, till I go mad and my heart is utterly changed.” “See the sword,” declared Marx, “the Prince of Darkness sold it to me.” Marx said of this dark prince, “For he beats the time and gives the signs. Ever more boldly I play the dance of death.”

Marxism in China has been just that, a dance of death, one that could only please the Prince of Darkness.

There is no one who knows this better than Steven Mosher. Mosher, who began fighting Communism in China as a graduate student over forty years ago from inside the belly of the beast itself, calls this death apparatus the “Chinese Communist Killing Machine” and dubs Chairman Mao “the killingest man in history.” Mosher notes of Mao that there are “lies, damned lies, and then Mao’s lies.” Like Lucifer, the Father of Lies, Mao Zedong (1893–1976) thrived on lying. The late Václav Havel once spoke of “the communist culture of the lie,” but few Communists could live up to Mao’s deceit. Like Lucifer, Mao built his kingdom on lies.

That, too, was no small accomplishment. It meant that billions suffered, and not just inside the walls of the Chinese Marxist empire.

From the Chinese Civil War in the late 1940s to the Korean War in the 1950s, the Vietnam War in the 1960s, Pol Pot’s Cambodia in the 1970s, Tiananmen Square in 1989, and the one-child policy across multiple decades, Mao has bequeathed death, death, and more death. And he did not do so alone. There have been plenty of handmaidens. Various Communist successors have stepped in to take a turn cranking the wheels of the killing machine. Red China’s blood-dark sword has laid out corpses not only among those who starved to death from collectivization policies, or among pro-democracy students gunned down or smashed by tanks in Beijing in June 1989, or among the expectant mothers forced round-the-clock into abortion factories, but also through the COVID-19 nightmare unleashed upon an entire unsuspecting world. China found a way to spread the plague of Communism to all countries, affecting all of our lives.

Well, Karl Marx did close the *Manifesto* by saying that Communists had a “world to win.”

If only the Chinese Communist Killing Machine could have just stayed home. It was bad enough cranking along there. But like the devil unchained, Communism in China could not contain itself within the nation’s geographical boundaries. Of course, such has been the ideology of Communism. The ideology has blown across borders. Like a phantom, it could not be contained.

“A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism,” wrote Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the opening lines of *The Communist Manifesto*. “All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.”

It was fitting that Marx and Engels called their ideology a specter, one that needed to be exorcised. It was also fitting that they first listed the pope among those poised to confront the specter. The Catholic Church described Communism as a “satanic scourge,” one that “conceals in itself a false messianic idea.” Communism orchestrated a form of “class-warfare which causes rivers of blood to flow,” a “savage barbarity.” Marxists were “the powers of darkness.” The Church declared: “The evil we must combat is at its origin primarily an evil of the spiritual order. From this polluted source the monstrous emanations of the communistic system flow with satanic logic.”<sup>1</sup>

As Steven Mosher notes, Mao’s enduring specter continues to haunt. Even as the one-child policy was finally changed, abortion became a way of life. Today, Chinese people are freer to have children than they were thirty years ago. But now, they are choosing not to. And still more unelected Communist leaders have taken the reins from Mao to repress the citizenry and harm lives.

Here again, the culprit is clear: this evil that we must combat is, at its origin, primarily an evil of the spiritual order. Steven Mosher is the rare international observer that understands that the force we face in

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (March 19, 1937), nos. 20, 57, 77.

China is not just a political one, or even strictly an ideological one, but a spiritual one, a diabolical one.

Going back to the late 1970s, few have taken on that specter like Steven Mosher. Read this book and join him in that worthy battle.

—Paul Kengor, PhD

August 21, 2023, Feast of Saint Pius X

INTRODUCTION

# THE CHINESE COMMUNIST KILLING MACHINE

“It is important to start with a presentation of the numbers. . . . Any ideology with a trail of rot like this is not of God but of the forces against God. It is not of God’s creation but a fallen angel’s anti-creation. It is not of the light but of the dark,”<sup>1</sup> wrote Paul Kengor in *The Devil and Karl Marx*. As Kengor suggests, no treatment of Communism should begin without mentioning its defining characteristic: mass murder.

Communism—the pernicious idea that man could create his own heaven on earth—is, quite simply, the most deadly idea ever conceived in the history of the world. It is no exaggeration to say that this misbegotten faith, once it came to power, has killed more people than any war, famine, or pestilence in human history.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of its bloody existence, Communist Parties have quite often been the chief cause of the wars, famines, and diseases that have racked other nations and, upon occasion, the world. The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by a virus that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) deliberately spread around the world, is only the latest example of how the bloodbath that is Communism often spreads beyond its borders.

Nowhere has the death toll from this tyrannical system been higher than in China. This was not a necessary consequence of the country’s

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<sup>1</sup> Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx*, xv.

<sup>2</sup> See Mosher, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Pandemics*.

large population. Rather, it followed directly from the proclivities of the evil genius who imposed Communism on the Chinese people. As we will see, Mao Zedong spent his nights thinking of new ways to terrorize the Chinese people to get them to obey the dictates of his adopted faith, ways that invariably involved the stigmatization, torture, and execution of millions of people. The Communist killing machine that he operated was more than capable of cutting a wide swath through the population.

One could fill a library with books about the manifold suffering and death caused by Communism's bloody century, and the section on the CCP depredations in China alone would require an entire wing.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, we have *The Black Book of Communism*, which ably summarizes the carnage.<sup>4</sup> One of the authors, Stephane Courtois, writes, "Communist regimes turned mass crime into a full-blown system of government." And the result was murderous.

"Communist regimes did not just commit criminal acts," observes Professor Martin Malia of the University of California at Berkeley, "but they were criminal enterprises in their very essence: on principal, so to speak, they all ruled lawlessly, by violence, and without regard for human life."<sup>5</sup> And they were led by lawless, violent men—Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot, and the North Korean Kim—who killed 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 crimes against the Chinese people.

*The Black Book of Communism* estimated that the total death toll from twentieth-century Communism approached 100 million.<sup>6</sup> And China tops the list:

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<sup>3</sup> The Victims of Communism Foundation, based in Washington, DC, has made a good start at such a library. It is worth a visit if one is ever in our nation's capital.

<sup>4</sup> Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*.

<sup>5</sup> Malia in Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, xvii–xviii.

<sup>6</sup> Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, 4.



- China: 65 million deaths
- USSR: 20 million deaths
- North Korea: 2 million deaths
- Cambodia: 2 million deaths
- Vietnam: 1 million deaths
- Eastern Europe: 1 million deaths
- Africa: 1.7 million deaths
- Afghanistan: 1.5 million deaths
- Latin America: 150,000 deaths

The thought that two-thirds of the total victims of Communism died at the hands of the criminal enterprise known as the CCP is horrifying enough. But forty years of studying the People's Republic of China (PRC) has convinced me that sixty-five million casualties is a gross underestimate. Others agree. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, in their brilliantly researched book *Mao: The Unknown Story*, give a figure of more than seventy million deaths attributable to Mao during his time in power.<sup>7</sup>

But I believe the figure is even higher, and not only because the killing has continued since Mao went to be with Marx in 1976. Two major campaigns, each producing millions of additional fatalities, must be added to the list. The first major addition to this figure is the correct number of Chinese who were starved to death by the communists from 1960 to 1962 in the worst famine in human history: up to 45 million (chapter 7).<sup>8</sup> The second and even greater addition to this number is the 400 million tiny victims, both born and unborn, of the CCP's long-running one-child policy, of which Mao was the godfather (chapter 13). 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.

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<sup>7</sup> Chang, *Mao*.

<sup>8</sup> The two best studies of the famine are Frank Dikötter's *Mao's Great Famine* and Jasper Becker's *Hungry Ghosts*.

The title of this book is *The Devil and Communist China*, but it could just as accurately be called *The Devil and Chairman Mao*. Mao Zedong looms too large in the history of the CCP not to have several chapters devoted to his crimes. If one adds together the years that Lenin (1917–1924) and Stalin (1924–1953) governed the Soviet Union, this still does not match the span of time, from 1935 to 1976, that Mao controlled the party.

As alluded to already, his forty-one-year reign was one long killing spree, with the vast number of deaths caused by his direct orders. He led some of the CCP's earliest terror campaigns, carried out in the "Red Base Areas" that he controlled in the 1930s, and was responsible for millions of civilian deaths during the Chinese Civil War in the years following. Moreover, in the fifties and sixties, after he had conquered all of China, he repeatedly executed bloody campaigns to target, isolate, and destroy different elements of Chinese society. He did this not just to eliminate potential opposition but, as he freely admitted, to terrorize the rest of the population into unquestioning obedience.

The use of terror as a tool for political control continues in China to the present day. Mao's ghost can be seen at work in the genocidal attacks on the Uyghurs, the persecution of the Falun Gong, and the insane COVID-19 lockdowns of entire provinces. The Communist system that Mao created in China—inspired by Marx, weaponized by Lenin, and exported to China by Stalin—continues to devour large numbers of victims to the present day. It is a criminal enterprise that, like its chief progenitor, kills willfully, violently, and with zero regard for human life. "How can you make a revolution without executions," Lenin decreed,<sup>9</sup> and people have been dying by the millions in China ever since.

As always, there will be those who attempt to exonerate Chinese Communism by blaming Mao alone for its excesses. But Mao the man is inseparable from the ideas and organization that empowered him. In

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<sup>9</sup> Fischer, *The Life of Lenin*, 435.

Marxism, Mao found the perfect ideology to justify his long-running reign of terror, while in Leninism, he discovered the blunt instrument that he would use to bludgeon the people into obedience. In Mao's hands, Communism became a weapon of mass destruction.

Yet while Mao and Communism were clearly a match made in hell, it is also true that the devil is a busy matchmaker. If Mao had not emerged victorious from the CCP's vicious intra-party struggles of the 1930s and '40s, some other lawless, narcissistic, power-hungry megalomaniac would have fought his way to the top. Marxism-Leninism breeds such creatures as surely as scum forms on the surface of a stagnant pond. Lenin's dictum—"Whatever furthers the revolution is ethical"—attracts cold, heartless psychopaths like honey attracts flies.

This is why China's current leader, Xi Jinping, takes Mao as his model in all things. It is why he and other top leaders continue to commit crimes against people and groups in China not all that dissimilar from his long-dead master. He, like Mao, believes that "morality begins at the point of a gun."<sup>10</sup>

Mao made no secret of his lawlessness when he was interviewed late in life by the American journalist Edgar Snow. In fact, he used a common Chinese expression—"I am a monk holding an umbrella; I have neither hair [law] or heaven"—that meant he rejected the laws of both man and God. Snow was either taken aback by this admission or failed to understand it at all. In any event, in his 1938 hagiography, *Red Star Over China*, he merely wrote that Mao lacked "religious feeling."<sup>11</sup> In fact, the lawless Mao was echoing the *non serviam* of the very first rebel, Satan himself. By saying he was lawless and godless, he was admitting that he served only himself.

To say that Mao was a sociopath or a psychopath does not capture the essence of the man. He certainly had elements of both in his personality.

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<sup>10</sup> AZ Quotes, "Mao Zedong Quotes."

<sup>11</sup> Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 112. Although not a member of the Communist Party, in both the public press and in private letters, Snow distained capitalism and fervently argued for putting "the control of the means of production in the hands of the people." See Mosher, *Chinese Misperceived*, 57.

Like a classic sociopath, he had few friends and was antisocial in his attitudes and behavior. Like a classic psychopath, he was cold, heartless, and even inhuman to others, including his own children. For Mao, nothing was sacred except his own being. Among the ancient Chinese philosophers, the only ones who rejected all authority—the laws of both man and God—were Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Chuang Tzu, especially, is known for his bold declaration—almost a self-deification—that “I, heaven, and earth were born together, and I share the same body with the universe.”<sup>12</sup> Chuang Tzu was, not surprisingly, one of Mao’s favorite sages.

I am not going to argue that Chairman Mao or his chief followers were possessed by the devil, although, as Paul Kengor persuasively argues in *The Devil and Karl Marx*, some of Communism’s past adherents certainly seemed to be. I have come across no evidence that Mao himself directly engaged in anything resembling a séance, a satanic ritual, or black magic. Still, as a child, he was once dedicated to a stone “god” of sorts that was thought to have protective powers.

When one puts the thoughts, acts, and words of the late Chairman Mao Zedong under a microscope, one sees a human being behaving at his absolute worst. Mao seems to have convinced himself that the universe and everything in it existed solely for his own satisfaction. And in this—his own private metaverse, as it were—good and evil did not exist. To call Mao’s godlike conception of himself megalomania does not do it justice. Lucifer, the enemy of God and the author of evil, must have been proud of this aspiring antichrist and of the bloody path he carved through history.

The question that we must ask about such a dark soul is this: If Mao and his ilk *had* explicitly made a Faustian bargain with the devil, would they have said or done anything differently? Clearly, the answer is no.

When we examine the lives of Mao Zedong and his followers, we are not just looking at rapacious psychopathic monsters, we are looking at one of the human faces of Satan. And we must never do this unless we simultaneously look also into our own hearts.

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<sup>12</sup> Chuang Tzu, “The Chuang Tzu.”

There are lessons to be learned from studying the motives and actions of Mao and his successors, but only if we do not allow ourselves to be mesmerized by the horrors that we behold. This book is, above all, a cautionary tale about the evil that awaits us if we abandon God and embrace evil. We must not only recoil from Mao's embrace of Satanic thoughts and practices, which brought death to the Chinese people, but also deliberately move in the opposite direction, toward the life-giving truths of Jesus Christ, who is the Truth incarnate (see Jn 14:6).

Christ should be our exemplar in all things. Undaunted by the evil in the world, He lived to glorify His Father in heaven, was obedient to His earthly parents, embraced little children, kept Himself pure in every way, always told the truth, and in an act of breathtaking generosity, laid down His life for us so that we might have salvation.

Before we go explore the dark abyss of evil that Mao wrought in China and in his own life, let us resolve to enthrone Jesus in our hearts and live for Him on earth. Embrace that which is true, beautiful, and worthy of praise and live a life filled with love, compassion, and mercy.

Now, to Mao.



PART I

# THE ANCIENT DRAGON ENTERS THE MODERN AGE

*“Every society’s judgments and conduct reflect a vision of man and his destiny. Without the light the Gospel sheds on God and man, societies easily become totalitarian.”*

*—Catechism of the Catholic Church 2257*

Thanks to Christianity, the totalitarian impulse had been banished from the West for nearly two thousand years and only began to creep back in with the radical secularism of the French philosophers and the revolution that followed. It had never really left China.





## CHAPTER I

# “A SPECTER IS HAUNTING EUROPE,” BUT IT NEVER REALLY LEFT CHINA

*“We are indebted to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin for giving us a weapon. The weapon is not a machine gun, but Marxism-Leninism.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Mao Zedong

The opening lines of *The Communist Manifesto* read like a declaration of spiritual warfare. “A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism,” wrote Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848. In what can only be described as a sympathy ploy, they went on to claim that “all the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.”

The implication was that their new ideology was the innocent victim of a religious war. The truth is that Marx and Engels were inciting one, though they might play the victim. Militant atheists both, they were self-consciously setting out to destroy Christian civilization, a civilization that had lasted nearly two thousand years at that point. It should not surprise anyone that this, the opening declaration of a war that continues to the present day, turns the truth on its head. Bearing false witness, like mass murder, is one of Communism’s chief characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> Mao Zedong, “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship,” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 4, 412.

There is no doubt that Marx and Engels intended to replace all existing religions with a secular one of their own. As Paul Kengor writes, the two even “viewed the initial draft of their manifesto as a revolutionary ‘catechism’ for an awaiting world. More than that, they saw it and referred to it, certainly in the initial draft stage, as a literal Communist Confession of Faith before later opting for the title that stuck. ‘Think over the Confession of Faith a bit,’ Engels wrote to Marx in November 1847. ‘I believe that we had better drop the catechism form and call the thing: Communist Manifesto.’”<sup>2</sup>

The original title—a Communist Confession of Faith—would have been a more accurate reflection of what they were up to. It was a vision of man and his destiny that completely rejected the light of the Gospel. In its place, they created a false Gospel, one that promised to create heaven on earth for those who believed in them and followed their commandments. Marx even suggested that he and his movement would, as Kengor writes, “play the role of sacrificial savior on behalf of a new covenant for the new world.” The current generation of Communists, wrote Marx, “resembles the Jews whom Moses led out of the wilderness. It must not only conquer a new world; it must also perish in order to make room for the people who are fit for a new world.”<sup>3</sup> Of course, in “perishing” they would take a couple hundred million innocents with them.

In a strange resonance with the Ten Commandments delivered by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, the *Communist Manifesto* also listed exactly ten Communist commandments. Here they are in full:

1. The abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of all property of emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of

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<sup>2</sup> Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Quotes from Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx*, 28.

- a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.
  7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste land, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
  8. Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
  9. . . . gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.
  10. Free education for all children in public schools.<sup>4</sup>

Note that while each and every one of the original Ten Commandments dealt with matters of personal morality, not a single one of the manifesto's ten Communist commandments did. There is not a "thou shalt" or a "thou shalt not" in sight. The individual had no importance in his own right. There were only two options: be subsumed into the masses or be killed.

Marx and Engels were drawing up a grand blueprint for the complete reordering of society. And the role of the masses in their factory plan for the human race was to serve as interchangeable cogs in a giant machine. The public had no choice in the matter because, according to the diabolical duo, they were "obligated" to serve wherever the state required them to. Their individual views were unimportant unless they tried to flee or rebel. At that point, they would have to be eliminated and replaced on the societal assembly line by those who had been properly indoctrinated in the "free public schools."

Not only wealth but the population itself would be redistributed in accordance with the needs of the state. According to the blueprint laid out by Marx, the state would create "industrial armies" for agriculture.

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<sup>4</sup> Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

Mao Zedong attempted to operationalize this idea in his “people’s communes,” which failed so spectacularly that forty-five million or more Chinese died along with them from 1960 to 1962.

Vladimir Lenin and his Bolsheviks, and, later, Mao and his Chinese Communist Party (CCP), would follow the manifesto in broad outline, especially in their militant atheism, abolition of private property, antagonism toward the family, and treatment of “the masses” as a disposable commodity.

### **Godless to the Core**

Perhaps the single most salient ideological feature of Communism is its utter hatred of God. The one truth that Marxist believers despised more than the existence of heaven, a true utopia infinitely superior to their earthly one, was the idea of a being superior to themselves. Marx and Engels were not merely atheists who denied the existence of God. Rather, like their direct ideological descendants, as progressives of the present age, they believed that religion was nothing more than an artifice of mankind. To them, it was the cause of most, if not all, of man’s ills.

The “social justice” Christians who, even today, still believe that it is possible to reconcile Communism and Christianity would not have received a warm welcome from Karl Marx himself. In Marx’s opinion, “the social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, humility. . . . So much for the social principles of Christianity.”<sup>5</sup> Christians “abased” themselves by submitting to what Marx considered to be a false God. He considered them to be “cowards” because they refused to face life without the crutch of religion.

Marx’s most famous quote concerning faith was that “religion is the opium of the people.” Mao shared this view. He once told the Dalai Lama, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism, that religion is “poison.” On another occasion, he compared Christian missionaries in China to the Nazis in Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx*, 29.

Marx's attitude toward religion was even harsher than his "opiate of the people" remark would suggest. He was fully on board with the sentiments of his sometime friend, the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who wrote, "If God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him." In the words of Paul Kengor, Marx was onboard with Bakunin's "nasty, angry, cynical view of God and religion, [with Bakunin] stating that religion enslaves, debases, and corrupts, and that 'all religions are cruel, all founded on blood.'"<sup>6</sup>

If that is the standard we must use, then Communism has turned out to be the cruelest religion. It was founded on more blood than would have been shed in ten thousand Spanish Inquisitions. The total number of people sacrificed to pagan gods from the beginning of time—from the ancient Canaanites who burned infants alive in Baal's ovens to the bloody sacrifices offered up to the Aztec temple gods—is only a fraction of those murdered by the Communist killing machine in the last century.

The wages of not just ignoring but viciously trampling upon the first three commandments, which outline the love, respect, and time owed to God, have resulted in countless deaths, including spiritual ones.

### **Abolition of Private Property**

Second only to their hatred of God was the determination of the founding fathers of Communism to ban the holding of property. Marx was unequivocal on this point: "The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property."<sup>7</sup> In the *Communist Manifesto* itself, he and his partner in crime insisted on this point. They argued to doubters that it was wholly justified, saying, "In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your private property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend. . . . You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kengor, 18–19.

<sup>7</sup> Kengor, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Kengor, 8–9.

Those who believed, like Marx, that all property was theft<sup>9</sup> were prepared to right this imagined injustice by committing a real one: they would use the power of the state to steal the people's property from them, forever. The confiscation of property by Communist states represents a radical break not just with Judeo-Christian tradition but also with the cultural practices of every human society that has ever existed on the planet. The hunter has a natural right to his kill, just as the farmer has a natural right to his crop. To be sure, the exactions by the ruling authorities grew progressively more severe as societies grew more complex. The leader of the clan demanded less from his clansmen than the tribal chief did from his tribe, whose levies were in turn dwarfed by the taxes that the local prince imposed on his people. But no society's rulers had ever sought to reduce every single inhabitant to a propertyless slave of the state. Until the advent of Communism, that is.

The Communists' problem is that people instinctively understand that private property is a natural right. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is enshrined in the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not steal."<sup>10</sup> As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, "The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbor and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labor. For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods and *respect for the right to private property*."<sup>11</sup>

And again: "A system that 'subordinates the basic rights of individuals and of group to the collective organization of production [i.e., Communism] is contrary to human dignity.'"<sup>12</sup> One of the corollaries that follows naturally from this commandment is the prohibition of slavery: "The moral law forbids acts which, for commercial or

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<sup>9</sup> The phrase is Proudhon's, a socialist who later turned against Marx for the latter's radical views. See Kengor, 10.

<sup>10</sup> See Ex 20:15; Dt 5:19.

<sup>11</sup> CCC 2401 (italics added).

<sup>12</sup> CCC 2423.

totalitarian purposes, lead to the enslavement of human beings, or to their being bought, sold or exchange like merchandise.”<sup>13</sup>

There is no doubt that Marx the totalitarian intended to virtually enslave the population. Immediately after declaring that everyone would be deprived of their property, Marx and Engels dictated that people would be “obliged” (read: forced) to labor and that the labor would be performed whatever and wherever the state assigned them. The people’s labor, no less than its property, was to be stolen from it by the Communist state and redistributed for its own purposes.

Saint Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, calls out such people: “thieves, nor the greedy, . . . nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God” (6:10). Communists, who worship the material world, are quite prepared to rob everyone of their property and freedom in order to build an illusory kingdom of man. Together, they constitute the largest criminal conspiracy, comprised of the greediest class of people, that has ever existed.

Those who would unjustly rob us of both our property and our freedom still prowl the world. Repackaging themselves as progressives, these modern-day Communists may have abandoned traditional Marxist terminology, but their underlying goal remains the same. “You will own nothing and be happy” is nothing more than a clever restatement of the two-century-long Communist delusion of totalitarian societal perfection.

### **Abolition of the Family**

The first and most fundamental unit of social organization is the natural family, consisting of a father, a mother, and their natural or adopted children. The success of the family throughout history is due to the complementarity of the sexes, as well as the love and mutual respect that unites parents and children. Aside from those who have voluntarily adopted a monastic existence, the family is the only truly “communist” society, one in which everyone ideally works for the common good.

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<sup>13</sup> CCC 2455.

It is no surprise that all Communists, starting with Marx and Engels themselves, see the family as an obstacle to their own plans to reorganize society. When in power, they invariably set out to weaken, if not entirely destroy, this God-given and highly fruitful social organization to make way for their own restructuring of society into a giant collective.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels were not at all circumspect about their plans for the family. They wanted to abolish it completely. They anticipated that the reaction of their followers to this proposal would be shock and disbelief, noting, “Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists [to abolish the family].”<sup>14</sup> But they do not relent.

Instead, they justify their attack on the natural family by claiming that the family is not a natural social unit at all. According to Marx and Engels, it is simply an artifact of “capital” and “private gain,” and that it “exists only among the bourgeoisie.” Once you expropriate everyone’s property, they suggest, it will simply disappear: “The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course . . . with the vanishing of capital.”

Abolishing the family among the proletariat will be even easier, the two conspirators contended, because it really didn’t exist in the first place. That’s right. Marx and Engels, in pursuit of their illusory utopia, dismiss the lived experience of tens of billions of men and women down through history who have joined together to create happy, fulfilling lives together for themselves and their children despite only having the bare necessities of life. Instead, they grasp at social pathologies like public prostitution, child labor, and family breakdown among the lower classes in mid-nineteenth-century England and claim that there is a “practical absence of the family” among the poor.<sup>15</sup>

The ready dismissal of the family by Marx and Engels—and, as we will see, by Mao—is surely a reflection of their own rejection of the bonds of marriage, family, and children. Marx sponged off his parents his entire life, and his failure to provide for his family left his wife and

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<sup>14</sup> Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

<sup>15</sup> Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.



children destitute. Engels, too, relied on his family for “capital” and for decades refused to marry at all. Mao had four wives, countless concubines, and a number of children, none of whom he was very attached to. Each of these Communist revolutionaries who wanted to abolish the family had already “abolished” their own.

Several of their Communist ten commandments were intended to weaken the family. To strip families of their wealth, private enterprises, including family-owned businesses, were to be obliterated. All right of inheritance was to be abolished. To raise loyal minions of the state, all children were to be educated in public schools. The ultimate goal was to remove children from their parents shortly after birth, raising them in state-run crèches, completely destroying the natural affection that binds children to parents.<sup>16</sup>

### **Abolition of National Identity**

Not only the family but nations would fall before the leveling scythe of Communism. Marx and Engels make it clear that both “countries and nationality” are to be abolished on the grounds that “the working men have no country.” They admit, however, that, as a practical matter, the proletariat would first have to seize control of the nations in which they reside. After that initial success, they must turn their attention to the entire world. The first nations captured would be used as launching pads for revolutions in neighboring countries, with the goal being to bring all nations under the banner of the hammer and sickle.

“United action,” they insisted, would enable Communism to sweep across the planet. It would obliterate national boundaries and national identities in the process and create a global utopia. This grandiose plan was the fever dream not only of Marx and Engels, or Lenin and Stalin, but also many of those who followed them, including Mao Zedong. It is not generally known that Mao, in 1958, set up what was called an “Earth Control Committee” for the day when the whole world would be

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<sup>16</sup> As we will see, Mao attempted this during the Great Leap Forward (1958–60), with predictably disastrous results.

red. Someone, after all, had to be in charge, and the ambitious chairman could think of no better candidate than himself and the CCP that he led.

### **The Devaluation of Life**

Marx claimed that under Communism, all men would become renaissance men. Writing in his *German Ideology* (1845), he promised, “In Communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to be one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, herdsman, or critic.”<sup>17</sup>

To a worker laboring twelve hours a day in a noisy, smoke-filled factory, that would sound like paradise. But I suspect that Marx was here writing about himself, given that he spent his days doing exactly as he pleased, sometimes scribbling away in the British library, other times taking long walks.

In reality, Marx had little empathy for ordinary working men, with whom he almost never rubbed shoulders. To him and his ideological descendants, men like Mao Zedong, they were “the proletariat” or “the masses”: a faceless mass of “units” of production whose individual members possessed little dignity or worth.

The “bourgeoisie” and “capitalists” had it even worse in the Communists’ view, for they had forfeited their right to life itself by their exploitation of the masses. The “five bad classes,” as Mao later called them, were to be terrorized into submission, if not destroyed entirely.

This subsuming of the individual to intellectual constructs like “the masses” and “class” goes a long way toward explaining why mass murder is one of the chief characteristics of Communism wherever it is found. Though it is mightily aided by the psychopathic, tyrannical character of its leaders.

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<sup>17</sup> Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx*, 7.

### **Communism Comes to Europe and China**

These Communist proposals to destroy God, family, country, and life itself were rightly shocking to the Christian sensibilities of Europe as they existed in 1848. It was no wonder that in addition to “Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies,” the vast majority of society aligned against the Communists. A specter may have been haunting Europe in 1848, but it took the better part of a century for that specter to become powerful enough to take control of Russia and begin its reign of evil.

Marx had originally proposed that Communism required such a radical rupture in human relations, and such a deliberate destruction of the existing social order, that it could only be accomplished through a reign of terror. In reality, it took something far worse than that: a world war. It was World War I and the starvation, privation, and sheer terror that accompanied that conflict that brought Lenin’s Bolsheviks into power in Russia.

It took a second world war to spread Communism to Eastern Europe and, eventually, to China. Were it not for the Japanese invasion of China and the chaos that followed, the Communists would never have succeeded in conquering China. The Red Army’s ascension to power was further smoothed by an ancient Chinese totalitarian philosophy called legalism, which predisposed the people to accept the dominant role of the state.

In the West, the deification of Roman rulers and the glorification of the state had gradually given way to the teachings of Christ, who had revealed His authentic kingship over all humanity. The temptation of the ancient serpent—“You will be like God” (Gn 3:5)—was suppressed for a time among Western kings and princes by a broad popular understanding of man’s subordinate place in the universe *and* his eternal destiny. After all, if everyone from peasant to king were mere creatures, answerable to a higher being, that put to rest the illusions of even the most megalomaniac of rulers.

Satan's whispers to Christian kings thus largely fell on deaf ears. Though when they didn't—when the king fell prey to the blandishments of his courtiers and began to imagine that he was something more than mortal—there were always those in the population at large to mock his pretensions. *The Emperor's New Clothes* is not merely a fairy tale but a popular metaphor for the fate of a man suffering from such hubris.

The satanic delusion of Communism arrived in the West in the nineteenth century after having taken, thanks to Christianity, a nearly two-thousand-year detour. But the East had remained ever in thrall to the ancient totalitarian dragon's practices. China had never been Christianized. The dragon had never been exorcised from China. On the contrary, he became the country's national symbol.

If the imposition of Communism in the West was a break with Christian civilization, in China one could almost say that it represented a continuity. The governing philosophy throughout dynastic times owed a lot to the ancient Chinese school of political theory called legalism. Developed during the period in Chinese history known as the Warring States, legalism was a kind of proto-totalitarianism that had long legitimized the encroachments of the state into the private lives of its citizens. Because of this confluence, the resistance to Communist ideas among both the intelligentsia and the population at large was much weaker than it otherwise might have been. The Communists in China found themselves on much friendlier ground than they had in Europe.

Not everyone saw the parallels between Imperial China's police state practices and modern-day Marxist-Leninism. But one young Communist did, and he wasted no time in taking advantage of it. Cloaking his imperial ambitions in Communist drivel about democracy, equality, and the withering away of the state, Mao Zedong mobilized the power of the state in his quest to become China's first Red Emperor. And against all odds, this man who took his lawlessness and godlessness as a point of pride succeeded.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE RISE OF REVOLUTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERN CHINA

### *Empires Fall, Empires Rise*

The nineteenth century saw China's last dynasty, the Qing, in terminal decline. The corruption of the imperial court and the ineptitude of its officials had led to widespread poverty and runaway inflation. Rebellions broke out in different parts of the Qing Empire; chief among these was the Taiping Rebellion, which engulfed the country from 1850 to 1864. Russia, Germany, Great Britain, and other imperial powers all took advantage of the growing weakness of the Qing. They forced the emperor to sign "unequal treaties," ceding trade, territory, and legal rights to them.<sup>1</sup> Rapidly modernizing Japan was particularly aggressive, seizing Taiwan and a Qing tributary state, Korea, in 1895, and wresting Manchuria away from Russia a decade later. The tottering remains of the Qing finally fell to the republican revolution of 1911–12, and six-year-old Emperor Puyi was forced to abdicate.

Following the collapse of the Qing, most provinces in China were ruled by local warlords. The southern province of Guangdong—the most Westernized of China's provinces—was the sole exception. It was under the control of the Nationalist Party of China, also called the Kuomintang, or KMT, which was headed by a charismatic leader by the name of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Almost alone among his contemporaries, Dr. Sun had studied in

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<sup>1</sup> Schoppa, "From Empire to People's Republic," 47–50.

America and developed a clear understanding of our country's republican form of government. This understanding was immeasurably aided by his conversion to Christianity while he was there.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Sun was instrumental in establishing the Republic of China—he modeled its constitution on the US Constitution—and was elected its first president.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Sun had thought deeply about how to reunite and restore China to its proper place among nations, and he devised a program called the Three Principles of the People to accomplish this end.<sup>4</sup> The three principles in question were democracy, nationalism, and the people's welfare, or well-being.

To help China catch up to the modern world, many young Chinese joined Dr. Sun in seeking to bring Western democratic ideals into their country. This effort at renewal became known as the New Culture Movement. China also aided the Western democracies in a practical way during the First World War by sending over 100,000 workers to support the British and French armies as they were engaging in grueling trench warfare on the Western Front.<sup>5</sup> This only added to the outrage felt by the Chinese people when, at the end of the war, the German concession in the Chinese province of Shantung was not given back to China, as the Western allies had promised. Instead, it was handed over to Imperial Japan.<sup>6</sup>

Massive student protests against this betrayal broke out across the country. Key figures of this patriotic awakening, which came to be known as the May Fourth Movement, later emerged as important political leaders in the Nationalist government. Others, however, angrily rejected American-style democracy, blaming progressive President Woodrow Wilson for the loss of Shantung. Many of these individuals became Marxists, convinced that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia offered a better model for freeing China from both imperialism *and* poverty than the West.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Holcomb, *A History of East Asia*, 263.

<sup>3</sup> Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Bergere, 352.

<sup>5</sup> Mosher, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Pandemics*.

<sup>6</sup> Wood, *Betrayed Ally*.

<sup>7</sup> Schoppa, "From Empire to People's Republic," 59–60.

Marxism-Leninism also freed them from the moral restraints demanded by a republican system of government, including respect for the fundamental dignity and inalienable rights of the human person.

Lenin wasted little time in taking advantage of the opportunity to sow revolution in the world's most populous country. Following the establishment of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1919, Bolshevik agents were soon on their way to China. In July 1921, they convened a meeting of leading Chinese Marxists in Shanghai, where they established the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The newly formed party followed Leninist lines, with power heavily concentrated in the hands of a few. Mao, who had only become a Marxist the year before, played a minor role in the meeting. But from his base in Hunan province, he immediately began plotting how to climb the power pyramid.

While financially supporting the CCP, Moscow also approached Dr. Sun, offering to help him build an army to unify China, but only on the condition that he would allow the Communists to join the effort. He agreed, and the first United Front was formed in 1924.<sup>8</sup> But before the Nationalist army was ready to march, Dr. Sun died. The KMT's senior military commander, General Chiang Kai-shek, was elected as his successor, and the following year, what would become known as the Northern Expedition got under way. Chiang's forces defeated one warlord after another as they made their way up the Chinese coast, successfully capturing Shanghai in early 1927.

Shanghai was the center of CCP influence and activity in China, and its agents began to secretly infiltrate Nationalist ranks, corrupting it from within. Chiang, who would soon become, like Dr. Sun himself, a committed Christian, decided that the time had come to break with the Communists. In April 1927, he struck. By the time the smoke cleared, the Communist Party had been virtually wiped out in its one-time stronghold. The Chinese Civil War, which was to last for more than two decades, had begun.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Schoppa, 61.

<sup>9</sup> Schoppa, 62–63.

### Political Power Grows Out of the Barrel of a Gun

Up to this point, Mao had merely been a bit player in Hunan province, with no military forces under his command. But already Mao had learned, as he told one of Stalin's agents in late 1927, that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." And so he set out to get his hands on some. On the pretext of launching an uprising in the city of Changsha, he convinced Party Central to give him operational control of the CCP's only military force. As soon as he took command, he ordered them not to advance but instead to retreat into the hills. He led them deep into the rugged Jinggang Mountains and set up a Communist base area, with himself in charge, of course.<sup>10</sup>

It was the first time, but certainly not the last time, that Mao would deceive and betray not just the party leadership but even those he called comrades in order to advance his career. Over the course of the forced march to Jinggangshan, for example, many of his soldiers died of dysentery and disease, and large numbers deserted. But none of that gave Mao pause. He had gotten what he wanted, and that was the only thing that mattered.

The fortunes of the Red Base Areas in South China rose and fell in the years that followed, as did Mao's own. Wearied of his scheming, double-dealing, and blackmailing, other Communist leaders repeatedly tried to oust Mao from his position in the leadership, if not from the party itself. They failed, primarily because Moscow—which in those days meant Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin—was impressed by Mao's utter ruthlessness and correctly saw in him a proper son of Marx and Lenin, a kindred evil spirit. But the other leaders did manage to sideline Mao for a time by giving him the largely ceremonial post of head of state.

Chiang Kai-shek, determined to excise the cancer of Communism from China once and for all, launched an encirclement campaign against the largest Red base in 1933. As the noose gradually tightened

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<sup>10</sup> See Chang, *Mao*, esp. chapter 5, "Hijacking a Red Force and Taking Over Bandit Land."



around the Communist “capital” of Ruijin, the party leadership, facing annihilation, decided to make a run for it the following year. They hoped to make their way close enough to the border of the Soviet Union so their “Soviet Older Brothers” could resupply them with weapons and ammunition.

Constantly harried by Nationalist forces, it took the Red Army over a year to reach the northern city of Yan’an.<sup>11</sup> Only a few thousand troops survived the six-thousand-mile journey, but in the course of it, Mao’s fortunes dramatically improved. For it was during this “Long March,” as it was later romanticized in Communist propaganda, that Mao Zedong finally seized control of the CCP.<sup>12</sup> Only his death forty-two years later would finally end the tyrannical reign of the first Red Emperor.

The CCP was further saved from defeat by Imperial Japan, which sent its forces into China in 1938. While Chiang’s Nationalist army heroically fought against the invaders for the next seven years, Mao refused to let his forces engage. Instead, working behind Chiang’s back and behind the Japanese lines, he relentlessly fortified his forces and expanded the Red Base Areas under his control.

Following Japan’s defeat in the Second World War by the United States, and using arms and equipment supplied by the Soviet Union, the chairman finally sent his long-husbanded armies on the march. Paying no attention to the mounting death tolls, Chairman Mao 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

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<sup>11</sup> Chang and Halliday argue in *Mao: The Unknown Story* that Chiang Kai-shek’s forces were merely herding the rapidly diminishing ranks of the Red Army along rather than attempting to annihilate it. The most likely reason for Chiang’s restraint, they explain, was that Stalin was holding the Generalissimo’s son hostage in Russia and that Chiang was in effort proposing a kind of prisoner exchange. Give me back my son, he told Stalin, and I will let your miserable little guerilla force live. See chapter 12, “Chiang Lets the Reds Go.”

<sup>12</sup> Chang, *Mao*, 65–66.

the capital into a “city of death.”<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

### **Purge after Bloody Purge**

On October 1, 1949, Mao stood on top of the Gate of Heavenly Peace overlooking Tiananmen Square and proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China.<sup>15</sup>

The chairman of the CCP had posed as a simple “land reformer,” even a believer in democracy, during the civil war.<sup>16</sup> Now he showed his true face, embarking on a brutal campaign to impose his vision of Communism on China. One group after another was targeted in nationwide campaigns of terror called “purges.” In the cities, this meant targeting officials of the former government and successful businessmen (“capitalists”). While in the countryside, it meant anyone who owned more land than they could farm themselves (“landlords”). Those who were targeted lost their businesses, their farms, and often their lives as well.<sup>17</sup>

Farmland was redistributed equally to all, but the party soon took it away again. They forced the farmers into larger and larger collectives, where they were ordered to farm the land in common. But the purpose of the purges was not just the redistribution of wealth or land. Mao promoted the purges as official state policy to eliminate opposition to the CCP. According to Frank Dikötter, “Mao emphasized that terror should be ‘stable,’ ‘precise,’ and ‘ruthless’: the campaign should [therefore] be carried out with surgical precision, without any slippage into random slaughter, which would undermine the standing of the party.”<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Mao cautioned against killing too few, saying,

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<sup>13</sup> Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, xi.

<sup>14</sup> Dikötter, xi.

<sup>15</sup> Cheek, *Mao Zedong and China’s Revolutions*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> Mosher, *Chinese Misperceived*.

<sup>17</sup> Mosher, *Broken Earth*.

<sup>18</sup> Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, 88.

“In provinces where few have been killed a large batch should be killed; the killings can absolutely not be allowed to stop too early.”<sup>19</sup>

The Communist Party admits that two to three million people lost their lives to such purges in the first three years of the People’s Republic.<sup>20</sup> Based on my own research in rural China in 1979–80, however, I believe the actual number is much, much higher, and others agree.<sup>21</sup> The official statistics released by Communist officials in China are constructed for political advantage and often bear little resemblance to the actual reality.

Political campaigns resulting in purges have remained a feature of life in the People’s Republic of China down to the present day.

### **The Great Leap Forward**

The end of the civil war and the strong work ethic of the Chinese people set the stage for rapid economic growth in the 1950s. Borrowing the Soviet economic model in the hope of quickly industrializing, the CCP introduced its First Five-Year Plan in 1953.<sup>22</sup> But even as China’s economy grew, the party bureaucracy grew even faster, and Mao grew impatient with the pace of change.<sup>23</sup> He decided that both food and factory production could be greatly increased if China’s peasants were forced into huge collective farms called “people’s communes.” This was the *Communist Manifesto*’s “industrial armies [for] agriculture” come to life.

Mao laid out his plans in the Second Five-Year Plan, which called for “launching the country into a race to catch up with more developed countries through breakneck industrialization and collectivization of the countryside.”<sup>24</sup> Mao, who couldn’t read a balance sheet but excelled at crafting clever slogans, announced that it was time for China to take a “Great Leap Forward.” He declared that China must catch up to

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<sup>19</sup> Dikötter, 88.

<sup>20</sup> Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, 481.

<sup>21</sup> Short, *Mao*, 436.

<sup>22</sup> Worden, *China*, 215.

<sup>23</sup> Worden, 215.

<sup>24</sup> Worden, 84.

industrialized nations like Great Britain in steel production within three years.

Mao's fantasy of overnight industrialization did not speed up China's economic development. Instead, it resulted in a cascading series of disasters. Many villagers were unhappy about being drafted into "industrial armies" and were tortured, or even beaten to death, for refusing to join the new "people's communes." More than 2.5 million people perished in this way as the communes were organized and the Great Leap Forward began.<sup>25</sup>

The quotas handed to commune officials for the production of iron—"to catch up to Great Britain in steel production"—set in motion another disaster. Since the vast majority of China's eighty thousand communes had no access to iron ore, or the coal they would need to refine it, this was the equivalent of being told to weave straw into gold. Fearful of failing to meet their quotas, commune officials ordered villagers to stop tending their crops and instead build crude "backyard furnaces."<sup>26</sup> To make up for the lack of iron ore, they were then told to throw everything made of iron they could find, including their own cooking pots and water buckets, into the furnaces. Finally, to make up for the lack of coal, they were told to fire the furnaces by stripping the surrounding countryside bare of trees and their own homes of furniture. In all, perhaps 10 percent of China's forests were cut down to use as fuel.<sup>27</sup>

But the real tragedy was just beginning. In their haste to produce "steel"—most of which had to be later re-smelted if it could be used at all—the cadres in charge of the communes had neglected their primary duty: to allow the villagers to produce enough food to feed China's massive population. By late 1959, the country was in the grip of the worst famine in all human history. During the following three years, forty-five million or more people starved to death.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine*, 298.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, "China's Great Leap Forward," 31.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism*, 464.

### The Cultural Revolution

The chaos, death, and destruction caused by the Great Leap Forward generated enormous resentment and anger toward the CCP and the leader who had ordered it. Hundreds of thousands of citizens wrote letters complaining about the lack of food, excessive working hours, poor housing, and more.<sup>29</sup> Even within the party, Mao faced a barrage of criticism.

Stung by this criticism, Mao was forced to retreat. The backyard furnaces were torn down, and peasants were allotted small plots of land on which to grow vegetables. Control over food production was shifted from the giant “people’s communes” down to smaller, village-sized collectives called “production brigades” and “production teams.” One thing didn’t change, however. Communist cadres would continue to control most of the land, and wield all the power, in the countryside.<sup>30</sup>

The seething chairman, who would never admit that his critics were justified, plotted revenge for this loss of face. He had two aims. The first was to resolidify his grip on power by purging his enemies within the party. The second was to systemically destroy all traces of China’s traditional culture and beliefs in order to replace it with a new Communist society according to his own vision. The Great Sloganeer—as he might be called—announced that China was in need of a Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. For his shock troops—his brown-shirts, as it were—he would use China’s millions of young, impressionable students. He even coined a term for them. They were to be called Chairman Mao’s Red Guards.

The Cultural Revolution began on May 16, 1966, when the *People’s Daily* newspaper published an article claiming that “counter-revolutionary revisionists” had “sneaked into the Party, the government, the army, and various cultural circles.”<sup>31</sup> Students across China were forced to study the “thought of Chairman Mao” because it was their

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<sup>29</sup> Courtois, 221.

<sup>30</sup> Mosher, *Broken Earth*.

<sup>31</sup> Chinese Communist Party, “The CCP’s May 16th Circular (1966).”

duty to “make China Maoist from inside out . . . help the working people of other countries make the world red . . . and then the whole universe.”<sup>32</sup> The youth were whipped into a frenzy by such propaganda and, organized into Red Guard units, began attacking anyone they suspected of being disloyal to Chairman Mao.

Mao himself encouraged the students to pursue violent revolution and forbade the police and the military from acting against them. Not surprisingly, Mao’s enemies in the party and government were the first to come under attack by Red Guard units secretly under his direction. But the students soon turned on their teachers, their parents, and even on other Red Guard groups as well. This unrestrained violence led to mass killings across the country and, in some areas, something close to civil war.

By 1968, Mao’s enemies within the party had been killed or imprisoned, and he decided to end the chaos. The army was brought in to disarm and disband the Red Guard units and restore order. “Revolutionary party committees” led by army officers were placed in charge of the government.<sup>33</sup>

To ensure that the millions of Red Guards he had trained and unleashed on his enemies would cause no further trouble, Mao eventually banished his young zealots to the countryside. They were told that they were being sent down to the countryside to “learn from the peasants,” who would warmly welcome them as fellow revolutionaries.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the peasants saw these city youth, who were unused to working in the fields, as just more mouths to feed. It didn’t take long for these “sent-down youth,” as they were called, to realize that they had been betrayed by the leader they had formerly idolized. Instead of returning to their schools to finish their education, they found themselves condemned to a life of hard labor in a barren countryside that had been devastated by the Great Leap Forward.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Chong, *China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, 105.

<sup>33</sup> Dikotter, *The Cultural Revolution*, xvi.

<sup>34</sup> Dikotter, 192–95.

<sup>35</sup> Dikotter, 192–95.

The Cultural Revolution only came to an end with Mao's death in 1976. Over the course of this ten-year-long political campaign, according to the CCP's own numbers, "20 million people died [and] 100 million people were persecuted."<sup>36</sup>

Mao's passing, however, did not end the cycle of political campaigns and purges. From forced abortions in the one-child policy<sup>37</sup> to the persecution of Christians and Falun Gong Buddhists, from the crushing of the Tibetan independence movement to the genocide of the Uyghurs in China's far west, China remains today a totalitarian, one-party Communist state with one of the worst human rights records in the world.<sup>38</sup>

How did the Communists manage to seize power in China and, despite repeated disasters that caused tens of millions of lives, stay in power? And why does China, more than three decades after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, still remain in thrall to this deadly ideology?

The answer lies in an ancient totalitarian political system called legalism, a modern abomination called Marxist-Leninism, and the bastard child that Mao spawned by crossbreeding the two.

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<sup>36</sup> Ma Licheng, *Confrontation*, 261.

<sup>37</sup> Mosher, *A Mother's Ordeal*.

<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International, "China 2020."