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# Nero in Beijing — The Communist Party Declares War on Christians

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The news out of China grows worse as reports of the arrest, detention, harassment, and beatings of Christians come from across China. The most publicized case thus far is the repeated oppression against a Beijing congregation that has led to numerous arrests and a crackdown within China's capital.

In a very important editorial statement, *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial board set the record straight. "Religious persecution is always abhorrent, but in this case it's also a political blunder," the paper stated.

Further:

*The incident is a microcosm of the wider problems caused by China's crackdown. Beijing insists it wants to promote a harmonious and stable society. Yet by arresting prominent activists for no apparent reason, the security forces are doing the opposite: Those who were once content to live quietly with the Party's restrictions on free expression are now compelled to speak out.*



Observers warn that China is sending the signal that it will not allow the eruption of protests like those that have spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

There is more to it, of course. Central to this crackdown is the paranoia of the Communist Party. One of the hallmarks of democratic societies is the existence of thriving "mediating institutions" between the individual and the brute power of the state. In the United States, these mediating institutions include everything from the PTA to your local church and the neighborhood reading club.

One dimension of the Communist Party's idolatry is that it allows no mediating institutions between its power and the individual. It greatly fears these organizations, especially the church.

One reason — Christians in China now outnumber members of the Communist Party.

China's strategy was detailed by the paper's editorial:

*This may come as a surprise to some in the West. Until recently, Beijing had played a skillful game of applying the screws just enough to keep everybody in line while easing state control over most aspects of people's lives, including employment, choice of a spouse, housing, religion and even the ability to criticize the government in limited terms. International human rights advocates had to admit that most Chinese enjoyed greater freedom than ever before, and many foreigners downplayed arrests of dissidents as aberrations against a general trend of liberalization.*

In other words, "those who doubted the Communist Party's sincerity were right all along."

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“Caesar in Beijing,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Saturday, April 23, 2011.

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