

## **Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian: Priest who spent 20 years in jail under Mao**

The death in Shanghai of Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian leaves one of China's largest and wealthiest diocese deeply unsettled and riven by tensions generated by the Communist Party.



*Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian: Priest who spent 20 years in jail under Mao*

Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, who died on 27 April aged 96, revived the Catholic church in Shanghai after years of Maoist persecution. His death leaves one of China's largest and wealthiest dioceses deeply unsettled, riven by tensions generated by the Communist Party's insistence on tightly controlling all organised religions.

Jin's first anointed successor as acting bishop, Joseph Xing Wenzhi, resigned last year for reasons still unclear, and his replacement, Thaddeus Ma Daqin, was placed under house arrest at Shanghai's Sheshan Seminary after enraging party officials by renouncing his membership of the party-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association.

Born into a Catholic family in Shanghai in 1916, Jin was ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1938 and spent time studying in Europe. Returning to his native Shanghai in 1951, Jin was imprisoned for nearly two decades under Mao Zedong, who ordered Chinese Catholics to cut their ties with the Vatican and jailed hundreds of priests and nuns.

He was paroled in 1972 and put to work as a translator. Following Mao's death in 1976, he was formally released and named Shanghai bishop in 1988 by the Patriotic Association. Although the Vatican recognised another priest as Shanghai's bishop, Jin worked tirelessly to recover church property and rebuild congregations, achieving a remarkable degree of independence from the authorities. China has an estimated 8-12 million Catholics, around half of whom worship in congregations outside the control of the Patriotic Association.

Jin served on the official advisory body to China's parliament as well as the Patriotic Association, making him a frequent target of critics who argued that he was too co-operative with the authorities.

He acknowledged those complaints in a 2005 interview, saying he hoped that the appointment of his successor would heal the rift between the official church and the semi-clandestine one that defies party control. The two disagree most sharply over the appointment of bishops, and it remains unclear whether the Vatican and Beijing will be able to forge a consensus on a new Shanghai bishop.

"Bishop Jin Luxian loved the country and the church all his life," the official Catholic association said in a statement. "His death is not only a great loss for the Shanghai diocese, but for the entire Catholic church in China."

The Independent UK