

Ten Lessons in Modern Chinese History

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'A Revolution Derailed'¹

Zeng Bingchun, founder of the Donggu Revolutionary Base (which became part of the larger Jiangxi Soviet) and Political Commissar of the Twentieth Army, was executed at the end of May 1932. He died not on the battlefield against the GMD's encirclement campaigns, but as a result of the Red Army Rectification Campaign. He was accused of being a spy for the GMD. Zeng was only one of the tens of thousands, according to Admiral Xiao Ke and Marshal He Long, who were murdered during this wave of political cleansing.² This is a conservative figure, as some have put the number closer to 70,000. Although the CCP restored honour to Zeng during the Party's Seventh Congress in Yan'an in June 1945, this came just after it had concluded yet another Rectification Campaign, which had similar consequences. In the Jiangxi and Yan'an eras, two of the main directors of the campaigns were Xia Xi and Kang Sheng, respectively. Xia and Kang explain the fundamental problem with the CCP. They were both on the extreme left and had the backing of their leaders, the Soviet-educated Wang Ming during the Jiangxi era and the ideologue Mao himself during the Yan'an period.

We cannot understand the Mao era without understanding this kind of extreme politics and its players. Some were fanatical elements who crusaded to keep the party pure, while others were ambitious opportunists who persecuted their colleagues to orchestrate their own rise to power. Political cleansing accompanied the CCP from the very beginning of its existence: it would intensify after the CCP took power in 1949. It was and still is a problem. This lesson examines the so-called Mao era and it does so from four major perspectives: its political campaigns to purify the party and the country; its economic policies, which wreaked havoc; the revolution in culture; and Maoist diplomacy. Understanding the Mao era is vital as it can help us understand not just the post-Mao era but also, more importantly, the century of upheaval that came before it.

1 Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

2 Ian Shui and Wang Xiaoping, eds, *He Long Koushu Zhihuai* (Zhengzhou: Daxiang Chubanshe, 2010), pp. 84–102. Marshal He Long talked at great length about Xia Xi in his memoir, as he had to battle with Xia while fighting Jiang's encirclement campaigns.

'All Under the Party'³

Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Tiananmen Square on 1 October 1949, but managing what he called New China proved to be an altogether different affair to battling the Japanese and the GMD. This challenge would require another set of ideas and skills which the leaders did not yet have: they were learning how to govern at the expense of the country and its people. Although the GMD regime had been driven to Taiwan, it had left behind some remnants: spies, resistance networks, former members of the GMD administration, and sympathisers on the mainland. It is true that some tried to sabotage the newly founded PRC, but such attempts were small in number and insignificant. The regime frustrated some of the spy operations and punished those it saw as saboteurs. These measures would have already been enough to silence their fellow conspirators and sympathisers. Instead of tolerating or allowing time to change these people, the CCP launched the Suppress Counter-revolutionaries Campaign (1950–1953). As in most such cases, this campaign was expanded and extended, which led to the killing of tens of thousands.

How did this campaign unfold? First, the authorities identified those who had served the GMD in various capacities, including retired GMD officers and officials; even those who had surrendered to the CCP, leading to peaceful takeovers, were not spared. Among the most prominent of those persecuted was Deng Yihou, who had participated in the Northern Expedition in the 1920s. He left the military after the Expedition and devoted his life to establishing schools and teaching; this was something that many did as they saw education, rather than war, as the best way to save China. Deng was now sought out and labelled a counter-revolutionary, so was the father of the eminent novelist Louis Cha, a landowner in Zhejiang who simply went about his business in the countryside during decades of war.⁴ Deng and Cha's father were only two among tens of thousands who were arrested and executed without trial. This was the first of many political cleansings to come.

In the midst of the Suppress Counter-revolutionaries Campaign, the new regime launched another: the Three Antis Movement, in 1951. The CCP inherited the Republican civil administration, which was in the hands of bureaucrats who followed the old way of management and operation. Although the regime appointed cadres to head these departments, it seems that old problems continued, corruption being a typical example. To make matters worse, some of the PLA soldiers and officers turned staff imitated these bureaucrats and used their position to enrich themselves. They were gradually being corrupted and seem to have forgotten the CCP's cardinal rule: to serve the people and to harbour

3 Chu Anping, 'Some Suggestions to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou', *Guanming Daily*, 2 June 1957, front page.

4 Jin Yong (his pen-name) was awarded the OBE by the British government in 1981, as well as Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 1992 and Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2004 by the French government.

no selfish desires. The leadership, and its ideologue Chairman Mao in particular, realised that communism was losing its appeal during peacetime and launched this campaign against the three most pressing concerns: corruption, waste and bureaucracy. The campaign targeted officials who were managing government departments at different levels and in different capacities.

The Three Antis Movement exposed more problems. The regime had inherited not just the old civil apparatus but also the old economy; this was a market system where factories and businesses operated autonomously and were privately owned. Many of them continued to operate in the same fashion as they had before 1949; some even took advantage of loopholes as the CCP had not assumed full control. The regime responded with a Five Antis Campaign – against bribery, theft of state property, tax evasion, cheating on government contracts and projects, and stealing state economic intelligence. These problems were tied to the issue of corruption mentioned earlier, and some corrupt officials were punished. A good example is Liu Qingshan, Party Secretary of Tianjin, the third largest city (after Beijing and Shanghai). Liu had joined the CCP in 1931 and rose through its ranks during the Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation. As the CCP's top man in Tianjin, he was alleged to have laid his hands on a substantial portion of the funds that passed through the municipal government. He was executed in 1952.

Hardly had the regime finished these campaigns than it launched another, called *Da Su Tho*, or the Anti-Trotsky Campaign (1952–1953), and yet another, the *Su Fan*, or Purge Counter-revolutionary Movement, in 1955, which had similar consequences. The First Five-Year Plan was in full swing by the mid-1950s, so Mao turned his attention to the culture industry and intellectuals. At a Politburo meeting in April 1956, Mao proposed the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956–1957), which took its title from the instruction to 'let 100 flowers bloom and 100 schools of thought contend'. New China's literary and art workers could think and pursue their creativity freely, while scientists and academics could debate and develop their research as they saw fit. This was reinforced in April 1957 with yet another rectification campaign to combat what the CCP called bureaucracy, factionalism and idealism. It invited those who were not party members to voice their thoughts, and offer suggestions and even criticism of the regime. This was called the 'Big Burst and Big Blast'.

This call made artists and intellectuals feel that the CCP was open and democratic; some of them took this invitation at face value. Many of them criticised the regime from their own professional perspective; they were joined by the media, cadres who worked in the far-flung provinces and even by the ordinary people. Chu Anping, editor of the *Guangming Daily*, published an article titled 'Some Suggestions for Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou' on 2 June 1957. He pointed out the fundamental problem with New China, that it was 'all under the party', derived from the 'all under heaven' claim of imperial times when the Emperor, as 'Son of Heaven', laid claim to absolute authority. Chu's main point was this:

I think that the party leading the country does not equal to the party owning the country; we support the party, but we have not forgotten that we are also owners of the country. A political party fights for and procures power; its main purpose is to realise its ideals and advance its policies. To make sure the policies are carried out and strengthen its position of power, the party needs to maintain its strong position – it needs to control some of the important agencies/departments; this is natural. But to put a party leader as the head of every work unit [*dannei*], no matter how big or small, every department and every unit in the entire country, and everyone and everything has to follow the party line, and only when the party agrees can we go ahead – this way of managing is surely a bit excessive?⁵

The work unit Chu referred to was called *dannei* (单位). A factory is a *dannei*; so is a school, a hospital and a news agency. Every *dannei* was and still is headed by a Party Secretary. What Chu pointed out continues today: the CCP places itself above the country, and its leaders above the party. A graduate of the old St John's University in Shanghai who then studied at the University of London in the 1930s, Chu spoke on behalf of himself, of some within the CCP and of some outside, especially smaller political parties. He did not challenge the regime's legitimacy, let alone threaten its dominant position. But this was more than Mao and his supporters could tolerate. The *People's Daily*, the regime's mouthpiece, published an editorial on 8 June 1957 titled 'Why Is This?' It suggested that the nature of the debate had changed; it reminded people of the necessity for class struggle and instructed them to be careful of attacks from the right. This was followed by a document issued by the CCP on how to mobilise and counter the attack from the so-called 'rightists'; this was the Anti-Rightist Movement, which began in earnest in October 1957.

The regime issued documents on the criteria for identifying 'rightists'. Chief among them were those who were against socialism, against the dictatorship of the proletariat and against the leadership of the CCP in the economic and cultural sphere. Some of the most prominent rightists included Zhang Bojun, a veteran politician and co-founder of the Peasant Worker Party in 1930, an organisation that had always supported the CCP. Many of his colleagues in this and other smaller political parties received the same label. Many who spoke out were leading writers, artists and intellectuals from China's top cultural and academic institutions. They included: Jin Baoshan, a Japanese- and American-educated pioneer of public health; Fei Xiaotong, a British-educated scholar and public intellectual; Liu Haili, a prominent painter and art educator; and Ding Ling, a veteran CCP member and feminist writer. They were a few among the tens of thousands of 'rightists'. Some were put in prison, some were sent to the remote countryside to do physical labour, some committed suicide and others were executed.

5 Chu Anping, 'Some suggestions for Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou', *Guangming Daily*, 2 June 1957, front page. See also Xie Yong, *Chu Anping yu Guandao* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Chubanshe, 2005) and Han Xu, *Chu Anping Zhinan* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Preliminary estimates put the number of 'rightists' at 550,000. Many were restored 20 years later, in the post-Mao era, but some were not, including the above-mentioned Chu Anping and Zhang Bojun. Mao had invited the country's intellectual elite and party officials to speak out about their concerns; when they did so, they were reprimanded. Was this a conspiracy, using the democratic process to identify and eliminate his ideological opponents? This kind of political cleansing silenced the smaller political parties and intellectuals who would never dare to speak out again, not even today. The CCP had no more prominent critics, and this paved the way for Mao's dictatorship. But more bad news was to come for China's intellectual elite as more such political campaigns followed in the next two decades. These included: the Four Cleanse Movement (1962–1966), the Learning from Lei Feng Movement in 1963, the One Hit, Three Antis Movement in 1970, the Criticise Lin and Criticise Confucius Movement (1974–1975) and the Criticise Deng and Anti-Rightist Overturn (1975–1977). The CCP has never stopped its political campaigns since its foundation. It seems as though it survives on political campaigns. Their devastating effect on the country would be compounded by its economic policies, the focus of the next section.

*Mao's 'Three Flags'*⁶

The CCP had begun land reform in the Jiangxi Soviet in the late 1920s. Land redistribution was the panacea that made the Communist Revolution a success as the CCP took land from the landlords and gave it to peasants who supported it. The CCP regime was ready to redistribute land on a national scale after 1949. The goal was not just to redistribute but to end private ownership once and for all. The main points of the first few clauses of the new Land Reform Law stipulated clearly that the new government would terminate the feudal and exploitative land system and enforce ownership by peasants. It would confiscate the land, animals, tools and surplus grain of all landlords, in addition to their estates. It would also nationalise ancestral halls, temples, monasteries and schools. The CCP took property and belongings away from tens of thousands of landlords, small or big, like the family of Louis Cha mentioned above, and divided it among peasants. Although landlords were left with their own share, they now had to till their own land. The regime also implemented a class system where people were categorised as: rich peasant, middle peasant, lower-middle and poor peasant.

Jack Chen, an overseas Chinese journalist, spent a year (a full four seasons) in a small hamlet called Upper Felicity, 1969–1970, and provided a rare concrete account of how this worked. He thought the landlord in the village 'had not been the worst of landlords by any standard' and witnessed what happened to him:

At that time when the accounts were totted up it had been agreed by all that Landlord Man [his surname] received far more in rent and gifts and interests and free labour than he was entitled to, and he was ordered to return the surplus to the needy, the landless poor, and hired labourers of Upper Felicity. All debts and interest owing to him were cancelled. His land and tools were requisitioned, but he had been left with three mu of land for himself and as much again for his wife. This was the same share as the landless peasants got and was strictly in accordance with the land reform regulations. He had also received a share of tools like the others. Some of his houses and furniture had been requisitioned and handed over to the destitute. But he had been allowed to retain his old home on the mound and its furniture. This was discussed during the Cultural Revolution of 1966 and judged to be wrong. That year he was told to move out into a smaller cottage, and he was relieved of the last of his ill-gotten gains. The big house was reserved for public use as a brigade office and meeting room.⁷

According to one government claim, 300 million landless or land-poor peasants received 700 million acres of land. But no one has calculated how many landowners and their families lost their land, property, possessions and even lives.

With the help of the Soviet Union, in 1953 the regime launched its long-term economic policy, the First Five-Year Plan, with two major goals: to focus on industrialisation and to speed up the process of nationalisation in the economic sector. Soviet aid materialised in 156 projects. These included the building of basic infrastructure, the establishment of new aviation and automotive industries, the expansion of heavy industry and agricultural modernisation. The intention was also to increase the circulation of consumer goods and raise living standards. Railway construction (extending those from the late Qing and early Republican era and building new ones) was a major infrastructure project (Figure 7.1).

This industrial revolution helped modernise China. One great example is the development of Zhuzhou in Hunan province. A tiny settlement of a few hundred people on the banks of the Xiang River, Zhuzhou was neither politically important nor economically significant. But it was one of the eight industrial cities to be built during the First Five-Year Plan. The government invested in key industries like energy, steel and metal; it also included coal and chemical refineries, and the production of locomotives, automobiles and aeroplanes. By 1958, the city was home to more than 100 Soviet-built or government-funded factories, churning out China's first aeroplane engine, first air-to-air missile and first electric locomotive. The city continued to grow with the Five-Year Plans that followed and it now leads China's economic development as it not just produces but also exports China's high-speed trains and tracks. It is a very important industrial city in south-central China and has a population of 40 million.

The second goal of the First Five-Year Plan was to reform – to nationalise to be more precise – the old private sector, such as family-owned industries, the

6 Mao Zedong's main political platforms: party leadership, the Great Leap Forward and the People's Commune Movement.

7 Jack Chen, *A Year in Upper Felicity: Life in a Chinese Village During the Cultural Revolution* (London: Harrop, 1973), p. 101.

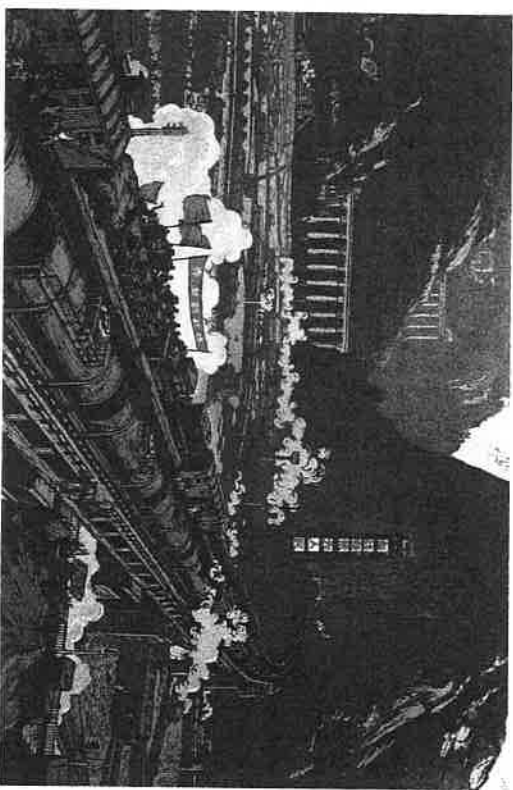


Figure 7.1 'Steam Whistles Echo in 10,000 Layers of Mountains'

handicraft sector, private enterprises and businesses. This presented challenges to the CCP. A good illustration is provided by the various provincial import and export companies now on the labels of many Chinese products, such as tea, sold all over the world. The regime took over small-scale family or village-run tea plantations and local tea guilds and replaced them with modern large factories. These factories chopped up the tea leaves rather than using the traditional method of hand-rolling them, which retains the flavour. Worse, the state takeover denied peasants the opportunity to make supplementary incomes, and these extra funds had often been a matter of life and death at times of disaster. Tea was only one of many traditional household or village-based industries that sustained people. A centrally planned economy replaced the free market; it destroyed traditional livelihoods, the consequences of which would soon become manifest.

The takeover of foreign and private enterprises and businesses was vital and the regime encouraged, or even forced, owners to hand over their assets and operations. This was done through the Joint State-Private Ownership scheme. A good example is the Tangshan Coalmine, a joint British and Chinese enterprise established in the late 1870s as part of the late Qing reforms (mentioned in Lesson 3). It changed hands with different treaties and with the change of warlord regimes. The British owner/partner withdrew in 1951 and its Chinese manager allegedly asked the government to take over in 1952. This was the fate of all foreign companies that did not withdraw from China. Party leaders rather than

owners and managers took over control of their assets. Moreover, these businesses would now need to plan and produce according to state planning – the Tangshan Coalmine lost its autonomy. State takeovers constrained production and sale, and so reduced profits, which were crucial not only to the coalminers but also to the state economy itself, explaining the economic hardship of the Mao era.

The First Five-Year Plan was concluded in 1957. The CCP deemed it a big success since it had no precedents to be compared with. In a meeting in May 1958, the leadership decided that they could build on this great momentum to speed up socialist construction, which they fittingly titled the 'Great Leap Forward'. They would aim to double, triple or even quadruple production, and they would catch up with the advanced capitalist countries like Britain and America in 10–15 years, with two or three more Five-Year Plans. They were naive and could not wait; journalist Gerald Clark called China the 'Impatient Giant'.⁸ To increase the production of steel, ordinary people were expected to contribute; many households built furnaces in their backyards in order to melt iron appliances such as pots and knives. To keep the furnaces burning, peasants were sent to cut trees rather than grow foodstuffs. The result was disastrous as the steel produced was of low quality, there was no foodstuff to harvest and the destruction of trees destroyed the ecological balance.

To complete the Communist Revolution and control food production in the countryside, the regime launched the People's Commune Movement in 1958, an agricultural collectivisation programme. To modernise the agricultural sector meant the widespread introduction of machines such as tractors and fertilisers. Small holdings made it difficult for peasants to buy tractors on their own, which would, in any case, be inefficient on their small strips of land. Hence collectivising the land and the work was the way forward. This was not all the People's Commune had to offer. The government built infrastructure such as reservoirs; it also built nurseries, schools, shops and hospitals for the communes. This was meant to be paradise for peasants, and such agricultural modernisation was in line with the CCP's ideological opposition to private ownership. The result, though, was a decline in morale, as no one had any incentive to work on land that was not their own and for profit that was shared regardless of the work put in. Not only that, their right to supplement their incomes by cultivating domestic animals, tea or cotton, fruit and vegetables was limited since that constituted private ownership and profit seeking.

To make this situation worse, local officials set goals which were impossible to achieve and then lied about the results. CCP leaders realised the problem by the end of 1958. The Politburo held an expanded meeting in Lushan at which Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Peng Dehuai wrote privately to Mao detailing the party's mistakes and pointed out the problems with the Great Leap

8 Gerald Clark, *Impatient Giant – Red China Today* (London: W. H. Allen, 1960).

Forward (GLF). To his surprise, Mao distributed his letter to Politburo members and asked them to discuss it. Peng had supporters and sympathisers. But for Mao, this was proof of Peng's rightist stance and it constituted an attack on the party. Instead of discussing the problems caused by the GLF and how to solve them, the Lushan meeting became an indictment against Peng, who was labelled the head of an anti-party clique. Those who supported him were made to confess to the existence of their clique. Zhang Wentian was one; he had supported Mao during the Long March and had enabled Mao's rise. Mao had become skilled in diverting attention from the real issue and turning it into a question of politics; he blew an internal matter out of proportion and used the concerns of his close colleagues, without whom the revolution would not have been a success, as evidence to indict them.

The Lushan meeting silenced dissent at the top – among those who could have halted the destruction. The Anti-Rightist Movement had already silenced intellectuals who dared to speak up. No one dared to challenge Mao and the result was that the disasters went on. Manmade disasters became even worse as natural disasters followed from 1959 to 1961; this was called the Three-Year Natural Disaster period, when the country was plagued by catastrophes of all kinds, which led to poor or no harvests. The destruction of forests to make fuel for the backyard furnaces had damaged the environment and contributed to this calamity. The lack of food had forced some people to eat trees and grass; many starved to death. Historians and journalists have continued to debate the number of casualties resulting from the GLF; their estimations have ranged between 20 and 50 million. The leading scholar Cao Shuji put the number at 32.5 million in 2005.⁹ Mao's close colleagues went along with his political campaigns, even though they did not agree with him, but it was over economic policies that they really differed. This exploded during the GLF; the battle between the idealistic and dogmatic Mao and his more pragmatic colleagues like Liu Shaoyi and Deng Xiaoping would intensify and lead to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966.

'Mao's Last Revolution'¹⁰

The battle between Mao and the pragmatists came to a head at the Second National People's Congress, in April 1959. It was at this meeting that Liu Shaoyi replaced Mao to become the Chairman of the People's Republic, a position Mao had held since September 1949. With the help of other colleagues like Deng Xiaoping and new policies, Liu managed not just to restore the economy by 1962, but also to

stimulate growth, at least until the eve of the Cultural Revolution. One wonders at the possibilities for China had Mao retired then and there. As a matter of fact, the more Liu and his colleagues were able to restore and grow the economy, the more convinced Mao became that revisionism, capitalism to be more precise, was growing. While his colleagues worked hard to correct his mistakes, Mao was still fixated with ideological issues and launched the Four Cleanse Movement in 1962, just as the country was recovering from the turmoil of the GLF and the three years of natural disasters that followed.

The Four Cleanse Movement set out to check on the division of work, to audit accounts, and to take inventory of warehouses and assets in order to root out theft and corruption in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward and People's Commune Movement. It began in the countryside but was later extended to checking political thought and management in urban areas. Large numbers were drafted into the campaign as they went around the country to cleanse the party structure and bureaucracy. Jiangsu province alone sent nearly 60,000 cadres to the countryside and 20,000 to cities. They held public meetings where many old cadres were put on stage, accused of wrong-doing, humiliated and beaten. The Cultural Revolution had begun. Liu Shaoyi tried to balance economic recovery and the dictates of the Four Cleanse Movement; he succeeded despite his disagreements with Mao. But Mao's dissatisfaction grew. He saw that capitalist elements were becoming stronger as the economy recovered; he attacked Liu verbally in Politburo meetings in December 1964.

Mao believed that Liu was representative of capitalist elements within the party; they may have been Communists before, but they had now taken a different and old road. For Mao, regimes might come and go, but old values and cultures did not die easily. What China needed was a complete break from the past, a revolution in culture where people would throw away old thoughts, habits and customs and embrace new ones. Back in April 1959, in the wake of officials exaggerating production figures during the Great Leap Forward, Mao had called for officials to learn from Hai Rui, an upright official during the Ming dynasty who dared to tell the truth to the Emperor. Mao seemed to have forgotten that Hai Rui resigned when the Emperor could not take his criticism. Soon Wu Han, a renowned historian of Ming China, wrote an article titled 'Hai Rui Criticises the Emperor' and a play based on the story called *Hai Rui Resigns from Office*. It seems that the politically unsavvy historian had not learnt any lessons from the Anti-Rightist Movement; he would die a miserable death.

The world might have forgotten about this small episode but for the events of November 1965, when major newspapers like *Wenhui Bao* and magazines like *Red Flag* carried critiques of the play. They linked Hai Rui's historic resignation with current politics and specifically with what had happened during the Lushan meeting, where Peng criticised Mao and was as a result demoted and sidelined. This campaign was led by Jiang Qing, Mao's wife. Why did she suddenly appear

9 Cao Shuji, 1959–1961 Nian Zhongguo de Renkou Siwang Jiqi Chengyin, *Zhongguo Renkou Xue*, 1 (2005), 14–28, at http://www.ncssd.org/articles/article_detail.aspx?id=12180294, accessed 17 July 2017, and *Da Jihuang: 1959–1960 Nian de Zhongguo Renkou* (Hong Kong: Guoji Shidai Chubanshixian Gongsi, 2005).

10 Rodrick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

on the political stage at this particular juncture? Jiang had been an actress in Shanghai before she went to Yan'an in 1937. She became involved with Mao after the departure of Mao's third wife. He Zizhen, who had gone to the Soviet Union. She began to hold minor posts from 1951 and cultivated allies in the party, and later formed the so-called Gang of Four. As Mao aged, she began to think she could succeed him. Knowing that Mao held grudges against Peng and Liu, Jiang Qing used this play to kill two birds with one stone: to shore up support for Mao's extremist view and thereby to orchestrate her own rise. But she had rivals.

Lin Biao had replaced Peng Dehuai to become Minister of Defence; this was far from what he desired. A Huangpu Military Academy graduate and one of the PRC's 10 marshals, Lin was an excellent strategist who had time and again surprised and defeated his enemies on the battlefield since the 1920s. Lin would team up with Jiang at this juncture, even though they both eyed the top position. Lin had what Jiang did not – the military. In May 1966, the Party Secretary and a few teachers from the Philosophy Department at Beijing University created a poster and posted it in the public dining hall. It criticised the leaders of the university. Mao called it the 'first Marxist-Leninist big character poster' and echoed this action with his own, titled 'To bomb the headquarters – my first big character poster'; it directly criticised Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. This was the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Soon the Cultural Revolution Group was formed, made up of Lin's and Jiang's allies. It became a political unit outside of the Politburo and directed the campaigns.

'Mao's last revolution' targeted the bourgeoisie – in CCP terms, those who walked the road of capitalism, fittingly labelled 'capitalist roaders'. Mao and the Cultural Revolution Group needed foot soldiers, so they mobilised young people. Mao told them that they were 'like the sun at eight and nine in the morning'. Their job, as one of the slogans said, was to 'smash the old world and create a new world'. Was this part of his fixation with the May Fourth era, when intellectual revolutionaries pinned their hopes on the youth? Like an Emperor, Mao received thousands of them, now organised into the so-called 'Red Guards', on Tiananmen Square, as many as eight times. They shouted 'Chairman Mao Ten Thousand Years', a phrase reserved for Emperors, and they held copies of Mao's Little Red Book in their hands. Compiled by Lin Biao, who had replaced Liu Shaoqi to be the number two figure in the CCP, the Little Red Book was titled *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. This bred an industry, a cultural and social phenomenon which Daniel Leese has called the 'Mao cult': as youngsters collected everything about Mao, some pinning badges on their clothes to show their loyalty and others have their photos taken holding the Little Red Book.¹¹ These youths were encouraged to take the revolution into their own hands: to go and smash the 'four olds' – old

thoughts, culture, customs and habits – and to guard China against the return of capitalism.

Many of the Red Guards were born after 1949 and were indoctrinated in the Maoist ideology. Directed by the Cultural Revolution Group, they went out to expose the capitalist roaders within their schools and local communities, and to criticise and battle them. Yuan Gao recalled this experience in his memoir. Born in 1952, Yuan was the son of a PLA soldier. In his school, pupils criticised their vice-principal so wrongly and severely that he committed suicide; this was the case with many who could not bear the false accusations and humiliation. After this, Yuan's classmates turned their attention and energy to the local Party Secretary:

Secretary Ding put up his own poster, headlined 'Sincerely Welcoming Criticism from Revolutionary Students and Teachers'. Immediately, [rebel] students began filling up the margins, warning that Ding Yi was playing tricks. Other students defended him with posters urging us to have faith in the party's leadership. The rebel students responded by calling the defenders 'royalist clowns'.¹²

'Rebels' and 'Royalists' would become the two political factions that confronted each other on both the national and the local stage. This was only the beginning of anarchy. The Red Guards searched and ransacked homes, private and public institutions like ancestral halls, temples and museums. They sought out those who they believed to be living examples of the 'four olds', Buddhist monks being a perfect example, and capitalist roaders. These people were paraded on the streets, beaten and humiliated in public meetings. Many of them were leaders of government departments, some were foreign-educated intellectuals and scientists, while others were descendants of those who had worked for the GMD or those who had relatives overseas – all were bourgeois elements or class enemies. Some were persecuted to death; some were thrown into makeshift prisons, where many died. The majority were sent to be 're-educated' by peasants in the countryside, doing hard labour and living in very poor conditions, often literally in cowsheds, as a punishment. Ji Xianlin detailed his experience in *Cowshed Miscellaneous*:

The next evening, after lights were switched off and just when I was about to go to bed, suddenly like thunder out of the bright sky, I heard a loud call 'Ji Xianlin'. Using speed faster than the night before, I rushed to the prison door and saw Mr Zhang standing not in the courtyard but around the corner of the two rows of cells, full of anger. He shouted: Why don't you come out when I called your name? Are you deaf? I knew things were bad. Before I could think more, my face and head suddenly became hot, a whip made from bicycle chain with a rubber skin landed like heavy rain in a storm on my body, not the lower part but the most critical part, the head.

¹¹ Daniel Leese, *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹² Yuan Gao, *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 69.

I can hear the sound of whipping on my head, my eyes full of stars. I could not run away but stood there, straight. In the beginning it was painful, but soon it became numb. I could only feel heat all over my eyes, my nose, my mouth and my ears.¹³

The Cultural Revolution Group and the Red Guards invented many names and scholars like Ji were called *chou laojiu* (臭老九), or 'stinking number nine' when translated literally, to indicate their disdain for intellectuals. Born in 1911 and educated in Germany, Ji was a distinguished linguist, historian, literary and Buddhist scholar skilled in many different languages. He was a Fellow of the Chinese Academy and a professor at Beijing University, one of many thousands who were persecuted like this. The Cultural Revolution had destroyed traditional culture and the country's old intellectual and artistic elite educated in the Republican era or abroad. The ranks of the persecuted included many scholars like Wu Han, Jian Bozhan and Xiong Shili, many writers like Lao She, many performers like actress Shangong Yunzhu, table-tennis player Rong Guotuan, pianist Gu Shengying and tens of thousands more.

To spread the revolution across the entire country, the Red Guards organised themselves under the name of *chuan lian* (串联), or 'string connect' when translated literally, and travelled around the country in groups in order to link up with others. They visited Communist 'holy' places like Yenan to reinforce their revolutionary zeal; they shouted revolutionary slogans, performed revolutionary songs and dances in public; they took violence and lawlessness to the entire country. In some places, they even took power from the local government; Shanghai was an example. This brought the economy and daily life to a standstill, and sent the country into civil strife as 'Rebels' and 'Royals' among workers and city residents began to fight each other. At one point it looked as though this violence would spread to the army, which worried old marshals like Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian and Nie Rongzhen. They intervened and clashed with the Cultural Revolution Group in a meeting in January 1967. Soon, more old leaders joined them, in what was labelled by Jiang Qing as the February Counter-Current. The intervention did not work at all, as Jiang and her allies proposed to 'smash public security, the public prosecution department, and the law courts' as the country disintegrated into complete chaos.

This was not enough as the Jiang–Lin coalition worked hard to get rid of Liu Shaoyi to pave the way for the next battle – succeeding Mao. They called Liu a traitor, internal foe and workers' enemy. In October 1968, Liu was expelled from the CCP, stripped of all his positions, beaten by the Red Guards, denied both medical treatment and human dignity, and died in extremely inhumane conditions. The Red Guards caused huge damage and spread chaos throughout the country; they were out of control. Mao realised this and decided to put the brake on; his solution was *shang shan xia xiang* (上山下乡), or 'climb up the mountain and go down to

13 Ji Xianlin, *Niupeng Zaji* (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1998), p. 17.



Figure 7.2 'Hope Is Entrusted in Your Hands'

the countryside' when translated literally. High-school students from the years of 1966, 1967 and 1968 were sent to remote and poor rural areas. They were called the 'Sent-Down Youth'. Still intoxicated with what they had accomplished, many gladly took the opportunity (Figure 7.2). More than 16 million were sent from big cities like Shanghai to Manchuria, Muslim Xinjiang, Yunnan, Hainan Island and many other places to labour in the mountains, on the grasslands, in the forests and on the seas, under conditions that they were not used to.

They have been called the 'Lost Generation' – lost to Mao's indoctrination and the Cultural Revolution, casualties of Mao's political campaigns and manipulation. In the post-Mao era, they would rise again to petition for their return to the cities they came from. Some managed but many were left behind. As they have aged in the post-Mao era, some have begun to reflect their 'lost' years. Li Zhengquan has produced an honest memoir. He confessed that he committed five crimes from the age of 17, when he joined the Red Guards: he fired 10 shots, threw a grenade, fired a canon 6 times, ransacked someone's home and nearly killed someone.¹⁴ But there are many thousands who avoid the topic at any cost as they have not come to terms with their own past. Survival or the pursuit of money has kept many of the old Red Guards or Sent-Down Youth busy in the post-Mao era. The country as a whole has done very little in the way of reflection and soul-searching about this era.¹⁵ Many aggressors and victims continue to live side by side in the same neighbourhood. But let us return to the main story.

14 Li Zhengquan, *Wenge Huiyilu Gongshi: Qinchun Cong Wenge Zhianhua Zhong Zouguo* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo Wenhua Chubanshe, 2014), pp. 11–13.

15 Alexander C. Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial: Mao and the Gang of Four* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

At the CCP's Ninth Congress, in April 1969, Lin Biao rose to replace Liu Shaoqi as 'Mao's intimate comrade and successor' and more than half of the Politburo was now members of the Lin-Jiang coalition. But they were uneasy allies. After Liu's death, the plot to succeed Mao thickened. Lin's clique had control of the military. They tried to assassinate Mao and when that failed, Lin allegedly hijacked a plane and flew to Russia with his wife and son on 13 September 1971. But the plane crashed in Mongolia. The Lin Biao Incident exposed Jiang Qing, who responded by blaming all the excesses of the Cultural Revolution on Lin; it also gave Mao an opportunity to correct some of his mistakes. Some of the old leaders who had been persecuted and disgraced by Lin were then restored to honour, including Deng Xiaoping, who was brought back to work in 1973. The party held its Tenth Congress in 1973, where it acknowledged some of its mistakes. But this did not mean Mao would divorce himself from his politics; he launched the Criticise Lin and Criticise Confucius Movement. This was not due to Lin Biao's affinity for Confucius. Mao wished to portray Confucianism as a barrier to real cultural change, just as many intellectual revolutionaries had done in the May Fourth era.

Once again, this was spearheaded by the Gang of Four, who used the campaign to attack Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping for being contemporary Confucians. As the main beneficiaries of the Lin Biao Incident, the Gang of Four prepared to make their final push now that Mao's health was failing. Although Mao voiced his desire for peace and stability, the Gang continued to promote the Cultural Revolution to amass more power. By 1975, Zhou Enlai's health was failing rapidly. Deng Xiaoping managed the day-to-day work of government and was able to put forward the idea of 'four modernisations'. Deng tried to restore the economy and bring life back to normalcy, but the Gang used this to argue that the wind of the rightists and capitalism was blowing again. Mao launched his final political campaign – Criticise Deng and Anti-Rightist Overturn – and just when the country was beginning to recover from nearly a decade of social unrest, Deng was once again, for the third time, purged and disgraced.

But things were about to get worse. The year 1976 was one to be remembered. Premier Zhou died on 8 January 1976 and Marshal Zhu De on 6 July. Shortly after these deaths, the city of Tangshan was hit by the worst earthquake in its history, on 28 July, claiming 1,640,000 lives. This was followed by Mao's death on 9 September. The People's Republic was shaken to its core with the passing of its three founding leaders, who had begun their partnership in 1927. This only encouraged the Gang of Four, who speeded up their operation. Mao had isolated himself over the years and had chosen Hua Guofeng to be his successor. Born in 1921, Hua had joined guerrilla forces during the Anti-Japanese War and the CCP in 1938. From a soldier and county-level Party Secretary in Hunan province, he had worked his way up since 1949. He had caught Mao's attention and was fast-tracked to the State Department in 1971, working with Zhou Enlai. Although he

made it into the Politburo in 1973 and became one of the deputy prime ministers, Hua was junior in the top leadership and had no control over the military. China had stood at such a crossroads many times before. Was Hua strong and smart enough to face the Gang of Four?

Third World to Ping-Pong Diplomacy

China might have driven out the imperialists and 'stood up', as Mao declared on 1 October 1949, but few nations recognised the People's Republic. China had very few friends: the Soviet Union, North Korea and Vietnam. This was not just a diplomatic matter, but a question of legitimacy. How to solve this dilemma became a major agenda of the CCP, and of Zhou Enlai in particular as he was not just Prime Minister from 1954 to 1976 when he died, but also the first Foreign Minister. He started with the old 'Big Brother', the Soviet Union. The PRC and the USSR signed a Friendship Act in 1950. Soviet aid and loans had helped modernise China. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was an invited guest at the PRC's five-year anniversary celebrations in 1954. He was friendlier towards China than Stalin had been, and his aid brought to fruition the 156 projects mentioned above. But by 1956, Eastern Europe was rebelling. Although these rebellions were eventually suppressed, Khrushchev needed allies and the CCP used this opportunity. Mao went to Moscow in November 1957 to attend the Meeting of the Representatives of Sixty-Four Communist and Workers' Parties; he supported Khrushchev, but asked for nuclear technology. Khrushchev promised to help, despite protests from his military. Problems soon emerged in the summer of 1958, when the two sides quarrelled about their collaboration. Khrushchev decided to postpone the nuclear project.

By 1960, the Soviet Union had recalled all its experts serving in China and had withdrawn its financial support, leaving China at a loss and in debt. Although aid was resumed under Leonid Brezhnev, relations soured again when the Soviet Union did not honour its promises of aid. By this time, Mao's anti-Soviet and anti-revisionist campaign was underway as China had repaid its debt and was ready to go its own way. Sino-Soviet relations would further deteriorate in 1969, with the Zhenbao or Damansky Island Incident. The island sits in the middle of the Ussuri River, which divides the two countries; there had been conflicts before, but this time it escalated into clashes involving the use of heavy weaponry. The conflict was eventually resolved when the Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin stopped in Beijing after the funeral in September 1969 of Hu Zhiming (Ho Chi Minh, President of Vietnam) in Hanoi. It was not until 1991 that Russia acknowledged China's right to the island. Sino-Soviet relations were not ideologically bound but were subject to political necessities. The CCP had suffered from the meddling of Comintern agents in the Jiangxi Soviet. Mao was very weary of them and had tried to shake off the yoke of the 'Big Brother'.

China had other issues to deal with. To solve the Tibet and Sino-Indian border issues in 1953, the Indian and Chinese Prime Ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai, agreed on the so-called 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence':

- mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
- mutual non-aggression;
- mutual non-interference in domestic affairs;
- equality and mutual benefit;
- peaceful coexistence.

These became the guide for all of the PRC's foreign policy and it was promoted and sealed at the Bandung Conference in April 1955. This was a gathering of 29 Asian and African countries to promote cooperation, as many of them had just gained their independence from the Western colonial powers. The meeting became the foundation of the later Non-Aligned Movement. It was China's first international engagement outside of the shadow of the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union was put on the same footing as the Western imperial powers, and this offered a great opportunity for China to chart its own diplomatic course. Zhou Enlai led the Chinese delegation. The history of suffering at the hands of colonialists helped China to find a common voice and identify itself with what were later referred to as Third World countries. While the United States and the Soviet Union were busy competing with each other, China was quickly making friends.

Despite its own economic problems, China supported other Communist countries, including North Korea, Mongolia and Albania. China also supported some of its newly made friends. For instance, it helped Pakistan to build the Pakistan-China road in 1966; this was an extremely challenging project as the road passed through some of the highest and most treacherous mountains in the world. China supported Communist Vietnam, but also monarchist Cambodia as King Norodom Sihanouk was a frequent guest-exile. China welcomed a whole host of intellectual-activists like W. E. B. Du Bois, Vicki Garvin and Robert Williams. Central and Latin America was also important as a large number of the guerrilla movements there embraced Maoism. China trained many professionals, from doctors to engineers, from Third World countries. Africa was a most important place for China's diplomacy as it undertook infrastructure building projects, such as the Tanzania-Zambia railway. China also sent doctors to Africa to battle diseases and epidemics.

But these acts of solidarity were not for nothing, as China had been working hard to replace Taiwan at the United Nations. The Third World friends it had made would come to help when the time came to vote for such a motion in October 1971 during the Twenty-Sixth General Assembly. The result was 76 in favour and 35 against, with 17 abstentions. In the words of Mao, China was 'carried into the UN

by our African brothers'.¹⁶ This was a tremendous victory for the PRC, as it not only replaced the Republic of China but also entered the Security Council. This also paved the way for the normalisation of Sino-US relations. The Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s had pushed China to navigate its own way, whereas Soviet-US rivalry presented an opportunity. China's decision over who to side with could tip the overall balance of the Cold War. But the United States had never been a friend of the Communists, and the PRC considered America its arch enemy as the US continued to support the GMD regime in Taiwan after 1949. Where to start with Sino-American rapprochement? The answer came from an unlikely event.

The PRC sent a delegation to the Thirty-First World Table Tennis Championship held in Nagoya, Japan, from 28 March to 7 April 1971, at which China would go on to win the men's competition. During an outing on 2 April, a group of American players exchanged greetings with Chinese players, asking them when China would invite the Americans to their country, given that they had already invited the Canadians and the British. Two days later, on 4 April, Glenn Cowan had finished his warm-up and hopped on a bus bound for the stadium when he realised that the bus carried Chinese players. One of them, Zhuang Zedong, greeted him and gave him a gift, a silk painting: the famous Yellow Mountain with its guest-greeting pine tree. The picture of Cowan descending from a Chinese bus with the silk painting made news in America. Cowan felt he had to return the kindness, so he waited on the route Zhuang would pass and gave him a shirt with a sign of peace and the words 'Let It Be', and a hug, the next day. This did not escape journalists, who asked Cowan if he would like to visit China; his answer was affirmative. This was reported back to Premier Zhou and the final decision rested in Mao's hands.

Soon a Chinese invitation was sent to the American State Department which landed on the desk of President Nixon, who likewise endorsed the trip. America itself had been trying to find a way to approach China. On 10 April, nine American table tennis players, including Cowan, and a small team of journalists became the first Americans to visit China since 1949. They spent a week there, not just playing but also touring the country – climbing the Great Wall, for example. Premier Zhou told them that 'they had opened a new page in the relations of the American and Chinese peoples'. A few hours later, President Nixon lifted several sanctions against China. Ping-pong diplomacy had worked. This trip laid the foundations for Henry Kissinger to visit China in July 1971, which led to President Nixon's visit in February 1972. Nixon's visit normalised US-China relations and opened a new era in geopolitics; it also paved the way for post-Mao reform. This

¹⁶ A recent documentary made by CCTV detailed China's return to the United Nation. It interviewed old diplomats and staff who had worked on the project, especially Tang Wensheng, the American (born) Chinese translator who served Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Qiao Guanhua, China's Foreign Minister at the time. See <http://tv.cctv.com/v2/index.shtml?videoid=VIDE19qHoQDfrUKRPSAI> X5r161020, accessed 17 July 2017.

signalled a change to the world, but more importantly a change to the people of China. This was noticed by Canadian journalist John Burns, who wrote for the *Globe and Mail* while stationed in Beijing from 1971 to 1975:

A group of Red Guards gave a measure of the distance China has travelled in the past year by sitting down with a group of correspondents yesterday and chanting about President Nixon's visit to China. The Red Guards, teenage zealots who gained a reputation for hostility toward foreigners during the Cultural Revolution, intercepted us during a May Day tour of the Temple of Heaven in suburban Peking. Beaming, they insisted that we take a rest at the refreshment centre they had set up on the forecourt of the pavilion that stands guard at the entrance to the Altar of Prayer for Good Harvests, once a place of meditation for China's emperors. After pouring tea and fruit juice and offering cigarettes all round, half a dozen of the guards pulled up chairs and opened up a lively exchange about school life, the duties of Red Guards and their career ambitions. It was an astonishing performance, something that could never have happened a year ago, nor even as late as last fall when all contacts between foreigners and young people in China were still being closely supervised by officials.¹⁷

Terrifying Red Guards had become foreigner-welcoming hosts. What had happened? Waves of political campaigns and the Cultural Revolution had torn the country, even families, apart and destroyed its economy. Most of the Red Guards and Sent-Down Youth had no education, no skills and no jobs. What did the future hold for them as they approached their thirties? Perhaps enjoying tea, fruit juice and cigarettes was more interesting than reading Mao's quotations and catching capitalist roaders, after all. The CCP regime might have failed the Chinese people, but it seems that it did not fail in diplomacy. Despite the political and economic disasters at home, the young PRC managed to establish itself in the post-war new world order; it learnt to navigate in international politics and made new friends. This had laid the foundations for China's easy return to the world in the post-Mao era. Perhaps China had never really succumbed to the imperialists, despite war and humiliation, as Robert Bickers has argued in his latest book¹⁸

Mapping the Scholarship

The study of the Mao era is a growing and thriving field and the scholarship is diversifying. There are a wide range of private accounts of the period, the Cultural Revolution in particular. Many foreigners went to or remained in China and they have left a good number of memoirs.¹⁹ Some of them were journalists, like the

17 Charles Taylor, ed., *China Hands: The Globe and Mail in Peking* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1984), pp. 157–158.

18 Robert Bickers, *Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination* (London: Allen Lane, 2017).

19 Michael Croft, *Red Carpet to China* (London: Travel Book Club, 1958); Gerald Clark, *Impatient Giant – Red China Today* (London: W. H. Allen, 1960); Charles Taylor, *Reporter in Red China* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1967); Marie Antoniette Maciocchi, *Daily Life in Revolutionary China* (New York: Monthly

Canadian reporters for the *Globe and Mail*, some were POWs from the Korean War, while others were Marxists like William H. Hinton.²⁰ This group also includes overseas Chinese who were caught in the turmoil.²¹ Survivors, such as Yuan Gao as quoted above, have also produced memoirs. The most notable ones include *Life and Death in Shanghai* and *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*.²² There are others, written in Chinese, which can help us see the turmoil from the perspective of the ordinary people. This Chinese effort has been further strengthened by translation initiatives.²³ Recent years have seen more translations with the rise of translation studies in academia.²⁴ Nearly all the memoirs and translations are focused on violence and suffering, 'scar literature' in essence. Although no one denies the tremendous damage and suffering endured by these memoirists, and such research will continue, there is also a need to move beyond narratives of victimisation.

When thinking about the 1950s, scholars have focused on the Great Leap Forward, its disasters and casualties.²⁵ Timothy Cheek has recently revisited intellectuals in the history of modern China.²⁶ But more needs to be done on the 1950s in particular, as that decade tested the limits of the CCP's rule as the young

Review Press, 1973); Emmett Dedmon, *China Journal* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1973); Rewi Alley, *Travels in China 1966–71* (Beijing: New World Press, 1973) and *You Banful* (Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1976); Beverley Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao: Western Lives in China, 1949–1976* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016).

20 William Howard Hinton authored many books, including *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966) and *The Great Reversal: The Privatization of China, 1978–1989* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989).

21 James R. Ross, *Caught in a Tornado: A Chinese American Woman Survives the Cultural Revolution* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994).

22 Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (London: Grafton, 1986); Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991); Ji Li Jiang, *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

23 Lu Xinhua (translated by Geremie Barne and Bennett Lee), *The Wounded: New Stories of the Cultural Revolution 77–78* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1986); Jiang Yang (translated by Geremie Barne), *A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters* (New York: Readers International, 1984) and *Lost in the Crowd: A Cultural Revolution Memoir* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1989). See also Bo Ma (translated by Howard Glodhart), *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995); Chen Ruoxi (translated by Nancy Ing and Howard Glodhart), *The Execution of Major Yin, and Other Stories from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

24 Xianlin Ji (translated by Chenxin Jiang), *The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: New York Review Books, 2016); Hecheng Tan (translated by Stacy Mosher and Guo Jian), *The Killing Wind: A Chinese County's Descent into Madness During the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

25 J. Ansley Coale, *Rapid Population Change in China, 1952–1982* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1982); Michael Schoenhals, *Solutionist Socialism: Mao Zedong and the Great Leap Forward, 1958* (Stockholm: JINAB, 1987); Judith Banister, *China's Momentous Population Changes* (New York: Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population Development, 1989); Jean-Luc Domenach (translated by A. M. Berrett), *The Origins of the Great Leap Forward: The Case of One Chinese Province* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (London: J. Murray, 1996); Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–62* (New York: Walker and Co., 2010); Kimberley Ems Manning and Felix Wenheuer, eds, *Editing Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Xun Zhou, *Forgotten Voices of Mao's Great Famine, 1958–1962: An Oral History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

26 Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

regime took its first faltering steps in statecraft. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution has attracted the most attention: Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals have devoted much of their careers to studying its origins and political theatres.²⁷ A major discussion concerns Maoist politics; while some believe it was ideological extremism that drove Mao, others argue it was power that defined his endless campaigns.²⁸ But there are more important things for us to ponder than the motives of one man. Brian DeMare has recently studied the production of culture, while Daniel Leese has examined the Mao cult, which defined the culture of the 'Lost Generation'.²⁹ Helena Rene has studied the 'Sent-Down' generation.³⁰ They wreaked havoc but they were also casualties, as they came out of the period with neither education nor skills.³¹ Sigrid Schnalzer has recently studied scientific farming in the Mao era.³² Unfortunately, few have written about the industrial and military aspects of the period. Some have written about what happened in the provinces.³³ This is very important, as the far-flung provinces tell local stories which expose national politics; they deserve more study.

Mao himself has been the subject of many studies, some by popular writers.³⁴ Mao has so far been portrayed as a monster, like Stalin and Hitler; this line of argument, without denying its weight, is problematic, as it overemphasises one aspect of the man. Other players on the political stage, Liu Shaogqi and Lin Biao for example, have interested Lowell Dittmer and Frederick C. Teiwes.³⁵ Characters

like Jiang Qing and her cronies, and those who collaborated with them, have also been studied, and Alexander Cook has looked at the Cultural Revolution on trial.³⁶ Blaming Mao and high politics is not enough. Obviously, much more needs to be done in order to understand the ordinary people who carried out the Cultural Revolution. Robert Jay Lifton wrote an excellent book in the 1960s about Maoist brainwashing.³⁷ Why were some more eager to embrace violence than others? Would Maoism alone have turned people against their teachers, parents, leaders, neighbours, colleagues, friends, and even husbands and wives? Perhaps collective and individual soul-searching will begin as the Lost Generation ages and as the nostalgia for a bygone era sets in.

Maoist diplomacy has interested many. The Sino-Soviet alliance, rivalry and split have generated an increasing number of works.³⁸ Even more so have Sino-American relations, just when this relationship faces new challenges in the post-Mao era.³⁹ Some have written about overseas Chinese, and Taiwan and Hong Kong as well, in the Cold War.⁴⁰ Some have examined China's relationship with other Communist countries, some its diplomacy in Africa, while Matthew Rothwell has studied the export of Maoism to Latin America.⁴¹ The Mao era coincided with the Cold War, a field of its own, and recent years have seen a surge in scholarship on Asia, where the conflict never ended – and continues today.⁴²

27 Roderick MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: Contradictions Among the People, 1956–57* (Oxford: University Press, 1974); Robert Jay Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Michael Schoenhals, ed., *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966–1969: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk, 1996); Frank Dikotter, *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History, 1962–1976* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016); Sherman Cochran, ed., *The Capitalist Dilemma in China's Cultural Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2016).

28 Jack Gray, *Chinese Communism in Crisis: Maoism and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pali Mall Press, 1968); Lowell Dittmer and Chen Rouxi, *Ethics and Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1981); Michael Schoenhals, *Spying for the People: Mao's Secret Agents, 1949–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

29 Daniel Leese, *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Brian James DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

30 Helena K. Rene, *China's Sent-Down Generation: Public Administration and the Legacies of Mao's Rustication Program* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013).

31 Martin Singer, *Educated Youth and the Cultural Revolution in China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978); Stanley Rosen, *The Role of Sent-Down Youth in the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Case of Guangzhou* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1981); Andrew G. Walder, *The Beijing Red Guard Movement: Fractured Rebellion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

32 Sigrid Schnalzer, *Red Revolution: Scientific Farming in Socialist China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

33 Keith Foster, *Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province: Zhejiang, 1966–1976* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

34 Hans Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Thomas Kampen, *Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the Evolution of the Chinese Communist Leadership* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 1999); Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Dalia Davila, *Mao Zedong* (Stroud: History Press, 2009); Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

35 Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shao-chi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) and *Liu Shaogqi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Armonk: M.

E. Sharpe, 1998); Frederick C. Teiwes, *The Tragedy of Lin Biao: Riding the Tiger During the Cultural Revolution, 1966–71* (London: Hurst, 1996).

36 Alexander C. Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial: Justice in the Post-Mao Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

37 Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

38 Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1963–1967* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

39 Robert S. Ross, *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954–1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); James Peck, *Washington's China: The National Security World, the Cold War, and the Origins of Globalism* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006); Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks During the Cold War, 1949–1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Chris Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China, 1969–1972* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2012); Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Gregg Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

40 John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Michael Szonyi, *Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Chi-Rwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S.-Chinese Relations in the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017).

41 Bruce D. Larkin, *China and Africa 1949–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Priscilla Roberts, *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Matthew Rothwell, *Transpacific Revolutionaries: The Chinese Revolution in Latin American* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

42 John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2007); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

China-born scholars like Chen Jian, Zhai Qiang and Shen Zhihua have led the way to fill the gap and argue for China's central place in the Cold War, something which Western scholars had overlooked.⁴³ The 'cultural turn' of Cold War studies has also inspired scholars of China and Asia; they have advocated moving the study beyond politics and diplomacy to examine what the conflict meant to ordinary people and how it shaped high and popular cultures.⁴⁴

Despite what has been produced, the study of the Mao era has only just begun. There is a lot to do in the years to come as more sources become available, as anniversaries like 2019 and 2021 and 2027 are dawning on the country. As highlighted earlier, there is a need to move forward because violence and victimisation were only part of the story. We need to know what happened on the individual, work unit and local level. We especially need to know why people participated in the violence. But there are also the humane stories, the good that people did in hard times. The good news is that revisionist perspectives have already emerged. Gregor Benton has questioned the demonisation of Mao while others have challenged the master narrative.⁴⁵ *Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination* has shown us another way.⁴⁶ Despite foreign intrusions, rebellions, revolutions, world wars, natural and manmade disasters, and continued social upheaval in the Mao era, China has pulled through as a whole and is now thriving. This raises many questions and they should inspire future generations of China scholars.

What have we learnt from the Mao era? History provides great examples of peasant warriors transformed into great rulers, notably the founders of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang, and of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang. Like them, Mao was authoritarian; but he never made the transition. Despite reform in the post-Mao era, 'all under the party' continues to define the CCP and history is still subjected to the whip of the party line. Lack of intellectual freedom has prevented scholars in the humanities and social sciences from pursuing alternative ways to understand China's recent past. Intellectual freedom is a barometer of political change. Is there

anything positive we can say about the Mao era without denying the disasters? The Cultural Revolution did wash away many traditions. It came at a huge human cost, but many rose from illiteracy, peasantry and poverty to become 'masters', as Mao labelled them, and they joined the elite of a more egalitarian country. The CCP successfully cultivated links with foreign friends; this earned the party and the PRC legitimacy. The Cold War might have ended in 1989, but it continues with new ferocity in the Taiwan Strait, in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula in the twenty-first century.

2003); Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann, eds, *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat, *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). For more, see the work of Matthew Foley, Patrick Hagopian, Albert Lan and Robert J. McMahon, for example.

43 Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Zhihua Shen and Dantui Li, *After Learning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Zhihua Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

44 Rana Mitter and Patrick Major, eds, *Across the Blot: Exploring Comparative Cold War Cultural and Social History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); Zheng Yangwen, Hong Liu and Michael Szonyi, eds, *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Boston: Brill, 2011).

45 Woei Lien Chong, ed., *China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counter-narratives* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Gregor Benton and Lin Chun, eds, *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday's Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Routledge, 2009).

46 Bickers, *Out of China*.