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CHAPTER 1

Historical Background on the Chinese Cultural Revolution


Junhao Hong
A scholar summarizes the major events and legacies of the Cultural Revolution, a set of policies that roiled China from 1966 to 1976.

2. China’s Leaders Proclaim the Goals and Tactics of the Cultural Revolution 20

Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
In a 1966 statement, the leaders of China’s government sum up the major purposes of the Cultural Revolution, as well as the dangers to look out for.

3. The Main Purpose of the Cultural Revolution Is to Sweep Away Old Ideas 35

Jiefangjun Bao
A Chinese thinker explains how the Cultural Revolution, by bringing to life the thoughts of leader Mao Zedong, will end ideologies that have oppressed people for centuries.
4. Chinese High School Students Begin a New Era

*Beijing No. 26 Middle School Red Guards*

Using the teachings and statements of the Communist leader, teenagers list the adjustments that must be made so that their lives and communities are in accordance with “Mao Zedong Thought.”

5. China Declassifies Documents from the Cultural Revolution Era

*Xiyun Yang and Michael Wines*

Two journalists write about how, as documents of the era of the Cultural Revolution are being slowly released, both scholars and younger Chinese people are gaining a more well-rounded understanding of that era.

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**CHAPTER 2**

**Controversies Surrounding the Chinese Cultural Revolution**

1. Reverence for Mao Zedong Lay at the Heart of the Cultural Revolution

*Liu Xiaoqing*

A Chinese film actress and former member of the Red Brigade describes how the actions of “Cultural Revolutionaries” were often motivated by their strong feelings for China’s leader.

2. The Cult of Mao Zedong Persists

*Ian Buruma*

A British writer examines how the reverence for Mao Zedong has taken on new forms since the Cultural Revolution, including a focus on merchandising.
3. China’s Leaders Worry About the Cult of Mao

George Wehrfritz

An American magazine reports how, twenty years after his death, Mao is the object of traditional Chinese religious rituals and worship. On the eve of an anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, political leaders try to encourage different approaches to memorializing their history.

4. The Cultural Revolution Helped to Expand Educational Opportunities

Arthur W. Galston with Jean S. Savage

During a visit to China in 1971 and 1972, an American professor notes how the Cultural Revolution has helped to make school available to children who have never had such opportunities before, but that this education is oriented toward group loyalty rather than individual thought.

5. Political Conflict Led to the Removal of Chinese Leader Deng Xiaoping

Joshua Kurlantzick

A journalist explains how Deng was marginalized during the Cultural Revolution for being too open to free economic expansion. Deng returned to power in 1979 and helped China become the modern economic powerhouse of today.

6. Deng Xiaoping’s Unique Skills Led to His Reentrance into Chinese Politics

Uli Franz

A German biographer describes how, in the
atmosphere of chaos and political uncertainty left by the Cultural Revolution in the early 1970s, Mao Zedong’s old comrade Deng Xiaoping was brought back into China’s inner circle of leadership. Deng had spent 1966 to 1969 isolated and impoverished.

7. The US President’s Visit Improved Relations with China

China Daily

In the late 1960s, in the immediate aftermath of the most intense period of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese and US leaders began to improve the relationship between their two countries. Officials quoted in a recent newspaper article claim that one reason for the change was the “chaos” created by the Cultural Revolution.

8. China’s Turn Toward the United States Was the Result of Its Rejection of the Soviet Union

Stanley Karnow

For much of its history as a Communist nation, China maintained a close relationship with the Soviet Union, the world’s other great Communist power. But an American journalist writes that Chinese leaders turned away from the Soviets during the Cultural Revolution and began improving ties to the United States instead.

9. Suffering for Being Too Revolutionary or Not Revolutionary Enough

Howard W. French

An American reporter notes, in 2006, the varied memories of two women who sur-
vived the Cultural Revolution. One, Wang Rongfen, wrote a 1966 letter to Mao Zedong opposing the Revolution and suffered greatly for it. Another, Nie Yangzie, was one of the Revolution’s instigators.

CHAPTER 3

Personal Narratives

1. A Gifted Student Struggles to Raise His Young Family and Find Work 144
   Sheldon Lou
   A Chinese engineer remembers his 1967 wedding, where guests gave their blessings to Chairman Mao as well as the bridal couple. Soon after, the young man, having been blackballed from work due to his family ties, is forced to find work in a very remote province.

2. A Young Woman Asserts That Happiness Comes from Political Involvement 152
   Louis Barcata
   During a 1966 visit to China, an Austrian writer interviews a young woman dedicated to the Cultural Revolution. He is surprised by many of her answers.

3. A Former Red Guard Rejects Mao and the Cultural Revolution 157
   Zhai Zhenhua
   After enthusiastically serving as a teenaged Red Guard during the first months of the Cultural Revolution, an activist finds herself questioned and targeted as an antirevolutionary. She responds by deeply questioning what she has been taught.
4. An Educated, Urban Family Adjusts to Life on the Farm 167

Liang Heng

The Cultural Revolution’s “Down to the Countryside” movement required many educated city dwellers to live and work on China’s communal farms. A boy remembers how his father, a devoted Communist, tried to fit in in this new environment.

5. Life During the Cultural Revolution and Beyond 175

Chou Linlin, as told to Yarong Jiang and David Ashley

A woman from a wealthy Chinese family who was “sent down” to the countryside during the last years of the Cultural Revolution remembers those days. She also recounts the struggles and bitterness that came afterwards.

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