

Conclusion

It is no longer possible to dispute that the Cultural Revolution really was a revolution. It was led by Mao Tse-tung and a few of his close associates who were convinced that the Party could not be regenerated without action by the people.

The movement thus called into being was so strong that it almost became another revolution, sweeping away the Communist Party. From January to September 1967 revolutionary detachments overturned the policies of the people in power. Ambitions arose to seize control of the revolution. Passions went beyond the level the leaders had encouraged in their desire to arouse the masses. At any rate, in the cities the sudden surge of interest in politics won for a time complete freedom of the press, of association, and of the right to run one's own place of work.

The Centre achieved the victory of the Party spirit over anarchic tendencies, and in this operation the army played an indispensable part. So many new political positions did the army control as a result of this that there were fears of a military regime. But there was a special relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army.

The slogan that 'the working class should lead the way in everything' ensured that the army would have to hand over to others all the responsibilities that were not its own. But it proved easier to decentralize the state than to es-

Conclusion

331

tablish control over the political power that had to be centralized. The Cultural Revolution had been launched to bring about control through the Mass Line. In the last resort, the continued existence of the people's organizations was more important than the revolutionary committees.

Few revolutionary organizations were disbanded. In order that the reformed Party should have the popular critics it deserved, Mao Tse-tung went to great trouble to keep political enthusiasm alive wherever it had developed. For a long time the main difficulty had been to stimulate the activity needed to awaken political consciousness, while saving the revolutionaries from their besetting temptation to exploit the revolution for their own pleasure. 'It is too easy,' Chiang Ch'ing had said. 'When you want to bite a peach, you take a mouthful. But if you eat it all you lose it.' The leaders of the revolution were trying at the same time to give the Chinese the taste for peaches and to keep all the fruit on the tree.

The outbreaks of violence reported in the Western press often obscured the efforts that the revolution's propaganda made to urge the masses not to lose interest too quickly. The leaders' concern was to draw as many as possible into the struggle from which a new alliance was to be born. We saw it explained in these terms above:

Alliance and unity pass through struggle to division, and a new alliance is formed on the basis of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung. Such is the dialectic of the Cultural Revolution.

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Select Bibliography

333

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Index

- ADN (news agency), 155
Aeronautical Institute, 124, 310
Agence France Presse, 91, 309
Agricultural Institute, 148
Agriculture, 242, 246, 255, 259, 316;
 economic development, 14-19, 31-
 32; mechanization of, 16-19, 55-
 56; participation in local affairs,
 23-25; producers' co-operatives,
 14-15, 32; simplifying bureaucracy
 in, 317-18
Air Force Committee of the Party,
 294
Ajia Keizai Jumbo, 4, 24, 34, 38, 39,
 40, 41, 108, 131, 199, 206, 226, 233,
 240, 310, 315, 319, 320
Akahata, 56, 80, 268
Albania, 163
Anhui, 86
Anhui, 202, 250, 284, 288, 290, 299,
 306, 308, 321
Anhui Provincial Revolutionary
 Committee, 256, 307
Anhui Radio, 256
Anshan, 204
Anshan Steelworks Constitution, 199
Anting, 180
An Tse-jen, xiii
'Appeal to the People of Shanghai,'
 183
Army, the: after Korea, 66-70; Cen-
 tre control over, 294-300; extreme
 left and, 260-61, 263, 277, 278,
 282, 285-89, 294-300; first revolu-
 tionary committees and, 231-32;
 General Political Department, 81,
 83; insignia of rank abolished, 74;
 Lin Piao and, 68, 69, 70-79; Mao's
 reliance on, 64; Military Commis-
 sion (Central Committee), 48, 60,
 71, 77, 78-79, 87, 88, 136, 147, 149,
 167, 169-71, 192-93, 195, 273, 284,
 298, 302; modernization of, 67;
 peasant roots of, 66-67; period of
 neutrality, 64-92; political prior-
 ities, 74-75, 87; in the provinces,
 65, 85-87; purges, 68-69, 75, 76,
 79, 289, 297, 299; reforms of 1955,
 67; reorganized, 74-79; restoring
 authority over, 294-300; Socialist
 Education Movement, 72; Thought
 of Mao Tse-Tung and, 4-5, 69-70,
 71; training of, 66; unification of
 revolutionary command, 87-91;
 war preparedness, 74-79; weapons
 advocates, 70-74; Wuhan affair,
 89, 205, 219, 235, 249-50, 262, 263,
 269-74, 282, 285, 287. *See also*
 Red Guards
Asahi Evening News, 84, 114, 147,
 157
Asahi Jyanaru, 110, 117, 121, 151,
 163, 175, 283, 292, 323
Asahi Shimbun, 7, 84, 85, 90, 104,
 118, 124, 143, 149, 154, 155, 175,
 181, 182, 228, 235, 244, 246, 325
Associations, peasant, 37, 242, 254;
 revival of, 24-25
August 1st Campaign Army of the
 Production Corps, 148
August First Combat Group, 85
Autumn Harvest Rising (1927), 2-3,
 67
*Basic Experience of the Heilung-
 kiang Red Rebels in the Struggle
 to Seize Power*, 220
Baum, R., 24
'Beat the dog in the water' (slogan),
 274-79
British Legation, burning of, 251,
 262, 283
Buddhism, 279
Bulgarian News Agency, 154

- Calligraphy, 196
 Canton, 85, 134, 202, 210, 250, 260, 263, 277, 307; seizure of power in, 233-34
Canton Daily, 234
 Canton *Tahan Tachiao*, 150
 Capitalism, 21, 237
Cell Life, 206
 Central Committee, xiv, 12, 24, 28-30, 32, 33, 76-79, 87, 195, 200, 217, 244, 246, 311-12, 325, 326-27; average age of leaders, 29; Eleventh Plenum, 38, 79-80, 95, 102, 106, 110, 122, 143, 180, 220, 243, 274; Lushan meeting, 67-68; party polarization (after Tenth Plenum), 37-43; Propaganda Department, 45, 49; Sixteen Point decision, 81, 82, 107-8, 111; students and Red Guards, 94, 96, 102, 110, 111, 115-19; United Front Department, 229. *See also* Communist Party; Military Commission; Political Bureau; Standing Committee
 Central Committee Cultural Revolution Group, 57-58, 62-63, 180, 181, 188, 203-4, 205, 223, 224, 227, 230, 236, 301, 326; extreme left, 260, 262, 264, 266-67, 269, 272, 276, 279, 284-85, 297, 298; rebel leadership, 136, 143, 144, 146-47, 155, 157-58, 161-62, 169-71; students and, 104-6, 118, 120-21, 124, 127, 128, 130
 Centralism. *See* Democratic centralism
 Changchun, 86
 Chang Ch'un-ch'iao, 86, 110-11, 145, 147, 152, 153, 180, 183, 185, 187, 189, 193, 202, 205, 210, 217-18, 308
 Chang Hsiu-ch'uan, 287
 Chang Jih-ch'ing, 226
 Chang P'ing-hua, 147; poster criticism of, 120
 Ch'angsha Radio, 207
 Ch'angsha Workers' Alliance, 207
 Chang T'ing-fa, 77
Changpao, 126
 Chan Shu-chih, 231
 Chao Yi-ya, 283
 Chekiang, 86, 263, 278, 321
 Chekiang revolutionary committee, 307
 Cheng Chi-ch'iao, 147
 Chengchow University United Committee, 231
 Cheng, J. Chester, 71
 Cheng T'ien-hsiang, 52, 57, 84
 Chengtu, 269, 289
 Chengtu Conference of 1958, 16-17
 Chengtu Military Region, 235-36
 Chen Kung-po, 20
 Ch'en P'i-hsien, 189
 Ch'en Po-ta, 88, 106, 112, 120, 123, 134, 148, 155, 170, 181-82, 192, 194, 249, 254, 276, 278-79, 297, 298
 Ch'en Tsai-tao, 89, 232, 271, 272, 273
 Ch'en Yi, 123, 127, 147-48, 268, 281-82, 283, 298, 312
 Ch'en Yün, 36, 312
 Ch'en Yung-kuei, 322
 Chiang Ch'ing (Mme. Mao Tse-tung), 48, 50, 53, 59, 78, 84, 88, 90, 103, 124, 127, 147, 148, 170, 180-81, 216, 250, 308, 310, 311, 314, 331; extreme left and, 261, 262, 264, 265, 276, 283, 284, 287-88, 290, 297, 298
 Chiang Ch'ing Theses, 78
 Chiang Kai-shek, 233
 Chiao Ta University, 218
 Chiao Tung University, 50
 Chiao Yü-lu, 51-52
 Chiehfangchun Wenyi, 2
 Ch'ien Hsien, 45, 48, 97
 Chien Po-tsan, 60
China News Analysis, 42, 103, 127, 142, 154, 201, 207, 232, 299, 321
China Quarterly, 3, 182
China Reconstructs, 2, 103
China in the Year 2001 (Han Suyin), 72-73
China Youth, 97, 98
China Youth News, 97
 Chinese Academy of Sciences, 60, 262, 265-66, 281
 Chinese Theatrical Association, 44
 Chinghai, 85-86, 289, 295
 Chinghai Hotel (Peking), 91
Chinghsan (publication), 53, 59, 127, 133, 232, 309
 Chinghsan Combat Group, 124
 Chinghsan Land Law of 1928, 4
 Chinghsan Mountains, 1, 2, 3
 Chinghsan organization (Tsinghua University), 103
Chinhs Hsinwen, 273, 306
 Ch'i P'ai-shih, 108
 Ch'i Pen-yü, 53, 60, 130, 147, 159, 160-61, 170, 312; accusations against, 297; downfall of, 264, 266-68, 280, 283, 311; poster criticism of, 120
 Ch'ien Production Brigade, 239
 Ch'iu Hui-tso, 287
 Chou Ching-fang, 265, 281, 283
 Chou En-lai, xiii, 23-24, 30, 35, 56, 76, 77, 88, 89, 90, 97, 109-10, 112, 116, 118, 122, 123, 126, 127, 219, 227, 228, 231, 233-34, 235, 256, 305-6, 307, 308, 314; Communist Party, rebel leadership and, 135, 136, 138, 146, 147, 148, 153, 155, 167-68; criticism of, 155; extreme left and, 266-67, 270, 276, 281-82, 284, 287-88, 298; workers power

- seizure, 177, 182, 190, 191-94, 195, 199, 202
 Chou Yang, 49, 57; writings of, 142
Chigoka Kenkyū Geppō, 67, 68, 70, 160
Chungshieh Hungweiping, 57
 Chungnanhai, gates of, 106, 127, 139, 229, 261, 266, 275, 276
Chunking, 196, 269
Chün'uan Changpao, 228
 Chu Te, 149-50
 Civil Aviation Bureau, 192-93
 Class struggle: economic development and, 12-14; rejection of mechanistic materialism, 9-14; Thought of Mao Tse-tung and, 11-12
 Clausewitz, Karl von, 21
 Collective ownership, re-establishing, 37
 Collectivism, 238
 Communes, 98, 172, 186, 217, 239, 247, 248, 257, 292, 318; average age of leaders, 29; beginning of, 32-34; last draft rules for, 36; Liu Shao-ch'i revisionism, 17-18; Mao's Thought and, 14-25; organization of, 34; production system, 34. *See also* Agriculture; Peasants; names of communes
Communiqué of the Enlarged Twelfth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 157, 312, 325
 Communist Party: after Tenth Plenum (1962), 37-43; average age of leaders, 29; campaigns before Cultural Revolution, 30-37; Control Commission, 142; cultural politics, 43-54; decline of the Secretariat, 137-44; differences of opinion, 158-63; executive body, *see* Central Committee; February counter-current, 154-58; numerical strength, 27; organization and structure, 27-30; people, cadres, and army, 164-71; polarization of, 26-63; power seizures, 144-50; pre-1969 Constitution, 29; readjustment policy, 34, 35, 41, 44, 255; rebel leadership and, 135-71; rebuilding of, 322-29; revolutionary organizations and, 150-54; split into two centres, 40, 54-63; students versus authorities of, 117-22; suspension from, 29; unit committees, 28-29
 Communist Youth League, 94, 97, 323; membership, 97-98
 Contradictions, theory of, 30-31
 Co-operatives, agriculture, 14-15, 32
 Cotton Mill 24 (Sechiu), 181
 CTK news agency (Czechoslovakia), 157
 Cultural politics, 43-54
Cultural Revolution in China, The (Robinson), 53, 141, 187
 Cultural Revolution Group. *See* Central Committee Cultural Revolution Group
Current Scene, xiii, 182, 198, 199
 Decentralization, 238
 Dekkers, René, 34
 Democratic centralism, 27, 312; work conferences on, 41
 Dialectical materialism, Cultural Revolution and, 8, 10
Discours de la guerre, Le (Glucksmann), 21
Dismissal of Hat Jui, The (Wu Han), 44, 53
Documentation française, La, 141
 Earlier Ten Points, 38
 'East is Red, The' (song), 322
 Economic development, agriculture and, 14-19, 31-32; Mao's military thinking, 19-23; mechanization of, 16-19; participation in local affairs, 23-25; producers' co-operatives, 14-15
 Economic development, class struggle and, 12-14
 Economism, 186; workers and, 174
 Education, 293, 311; in the countryside, 258-59; reopening of schools, 232; role of full-time teachers, 317
 Eighth Party Congress, 30, 32, 35, 160, 311-12
 Eight-Point Charter for Agriculture, 259
 'Eight Points' (Thought of Mao Tse-tung), 69
 Electrical Laboratory (Ministry of Hydroelectric Power), 90
 Eleventh Plenary Session, 38, 79-80, 95, 102, 106, 110, 122, 143, 180, 220, 243, 274
 Engelborghs-Bertels, Marthe, 34
 Engels, Friedrich, 134
Enzan Yawa, 45, 48
 Etienne, Gilbert, 32
 Extreme left, the, 260-300, 302; army and, 260-61, 263, 277, 278, 282, 285-89, 294-300; Centre control over army, 294-300; Cultural Revolution Group, 260, 262, 264, 266-67, 269, 272, 276, 279, 284-85, 297, 298; Mao Tse-tung and, 272, 274, 275, 284, 285, 289, 291, 294, 297, 298; masses and, 261, 263, 290, 291, 300; polycentrism, 279-85, 291; Red Guards, 265, 266-67, 269, 274, 277, 279, 281, 288, 298;

- revolutionary committees, 289-94;
self-criticisms, 263, 273, 288; Wu-
han affair, 262, 263, 269-74
- Factory No. 31 (Shanghai), 179
Fangshu Wenpao, 247
Fangshan, 90-91
Far Eastern Economic Review, 84,
86, 102, 139, 198, 218, 223, 235,
248, 290
Faure, Edgar, 30
February counter-current, 154-58;
meaning of, 157
February *coup d'état*, 75-76
February Theses, 57-58, 78
Fedoseyev, 10
Festival of Peking Operas on Con-
temporary Themes, 45
First Peking Opera Company, 50
First Rebel Headquarters, 225-26
516 (May 16) (organization), 127,
280-81, 282, 283, 284
'Foolish Old Man Who Moved
Mountains, The,' 8, 52, 252
Foreign Languages Institute, 123
Four Clean-ups movement, 38-39,
98, 245
'Four Firsts' (Thought of Mao Tse-
tung), 69
Free criticism, movement for, 30, 31
Fu Ch'ung-pi, 297, 298
Fukien, 86, 92, 233, 307
Further Education College, 126-27,
133, 232, 281, 282
Fudan University, 86
- General Committee, censure of Mao
(1927), 3
General Political Department, 81, 83
Geological Institute, 128, 264, 297,
319
Geological Institute Red Guards, 125
Gigon, Fernand, 61
Gittings, John, 290
Glucksman, André, 21
Great Britain, 262
Great Leap Forward, 34-35, 49, 259;
failure of, 44; resistance to, 35
*Great Socialist Cultural Revolution
in China, The*, 48, 61, 107
Group of Five, 76
Guillain, Robert, 31, 94
Guillermaz, J., 2, 69
- Han Ai-chin, 126, 133
Hangchow, 78, 184, 277
Han Suyin, 72-73
Harbin, 221, 233
Harbin Palace of Friendship, 221
Harbin Polytechnic School, 50
Harbin Red Rebels United Head-
quarters, 221
Harbin Thunder, 291
- Heilungkiang, 152, 220-23, 295, 322
Heilungkiang Red Rebel Military
Committee, 221
Higher National Defence Institute,
296
Hikotary, Ando, 323
Histoire du parti communiste chinois
(Guillermaz), 2, 69
Hofheinz, Roy, Jr., 3
Ho Lung, 81, 89, 103, 104, 149-50,
157, 275, 312
Honan, 231-32, 263
Honan Commune of February 7th,
231
Honan Daily, 231
Honan Military District, 231
Honan Revolutionary Committee,
167, 307
Honan Security Commune, 232
Hong Kong, 262, 282, 283
Hopen, 320
Hopei Revolutionary Committee, 307
Ho P'eng-fei, 104
How to Be a Good Communist (Liu
Shao-ch'i), 40, 41, 159-60
Hsiao Hua, 61, 74-75, 78, 80, 89,
235-36, 287
Hsieh Fu-chih, 71, 72, 78, 80, 148,
227-28, 229, 230, 269, 290, 291,
292
Hsieh T'ang-chung, 88, 89, 147, 170
Hsinghua Chantoutui, 35
Hsingtao, 310
Hsinhua Printing Works, 198
Hsin Pao, 266
Hsinpeita (organization), 309
Hsin Peita (publication), 77, 83,
126, 133
Hsin Peita Red Guards, 77
Hsi Hsiang-ch'ien, 90, 298
Huang K'o-sheng, 71
Huang Yung-sheng, 234, 278
Hu Chih, 155
Huhehot, 289
Huhehot Third Headquarters, 124
Hu Luan-ch'uang 'Hu the Battler,'
291
Hunan Revolutionary Committee,
307
Hundred Flowers campaign, 30, 31,
41
Hungarian News Agency, 84
Hungch'i, 5, 229, 270, 308
Hung Ch'i Lienwei (commission),
151
Hungch'i Ping t'uan, 274, 281
Hung Erh-ch'i, 235
Hungse Tsaoan t'uan, 235
Hungwei Chanpao, 123, 148, 180, 281
Hunter, Neale, 86
Huo Shih-lien, 102
Hupei, 232-33

- Hupei Radio, 232
Hupei Revolutionary Committee, 307
- Income, wages and, 208-14
Income, equalizing of, 238
- India, 233
- Indonesia, anti-Chinese riots in, 282
- Industrial Army, 248
- Industrie sidérurgique chinoise, L'*,
35
- In Memory of Dr. Norman Beth-
une' (Mao Tse-tung), 52, 252
- Inner Mongolia, 92, 124, 202, 234,
289, 310-11, 322
- Inner Mongolian Revolutionary
Committee, 311
- Institute of Architecture, 266, 267,
274
- Institute of Aviation, 36, 125, 126-
27, 129, 179, 269, 270
- Institute of Higher Defence Studies,
309
- Institute of Philosophy and Social
Sciences (Academy of Sciences),
262, 265-66, 281
- Intellectuals, campaigns against, 43-
54
- Inner Administrative Region, 142
- Iwakawa, Professor, 175
- January Revolution, 173, 179-86
- Japan Economic Journal*, 198, 199
- Japanese Communist Party, 54, 56-
57, 80, 268-69
- Jenmin Jihpao*, 166
- Jen-ta. See Peking People's Univer-
sity
- Jenmin Ch'ugoku*, 67, 124, 322
- Joint Action Committee (Lien
Tung), 105, 127, 169, 277-78
- Joint Action Committee of Second-
ary School Red Guards, 127-28
- Journey to the West* (Wu Ch'eng-en),
59
- Jung Fu Chün*, 221
- K'ang Shang, 112
- K'ang Sheng, 57, 77, 147, 148, 156,
157, 166, 170, 280, 284, 298, 308
- K'angting, 85
- Kangtzuohou, 85
- Kansu Revolutionary Committee, 307
- Kao Kang, 149
- Kao Yang-wen, 167
- Kechi Chanpao*, 62
- Kehsuan Revolutionary Group, 10
- Kiangai, 86
- Kiangai Revolutionary Committee,
300, 307
- Kiangsu, 86, 307
- Kiangsu Revolutionary Committee,
307
- Kirin, 86
- Kirin Revolutionary Committee, 307
- K'o-chi Hung-ch'i*, 13, 52
- Konno, 53, 75, 77, 81, 91, 108, 112,
115, 121, 122, 139, 143, 147, 149,
168, 193, 194, 229, 268-69, 282
- Korean War, 66-67
- K'uai Ta-fu, 104-5, 126-27, 132, 133,
310
- Kuan Feng, 60, 90, 147, 170, 264,
280, 283, 297, 298
- Kuang Feng, 90
- Kuang-ming Jihpao, 96, 97, 127
- Kuang'ieh Tsungssu*, 210
- K'uang Ya-ming, 100
- Kung'an Chanpao*, 278
- Kuomintang, 20, 108, 160-61, 211-
26, 320
- Kuo Mo-jo, 60-61
- Kwangming Daily*, 287
- Kwangming Jinhpao*, 283
- Kwangai, 92, 202, 307
- Kwangtung, 233, 295, 307, 322
- Kwangtung Cultural Revolution Fed-
eration, 233-34
- Kwangtung Provincial Committee,
240
- Kwangtung Revolutionary Commit-
tee, 307
- Kweichow, 202
- Kweichow Commune, 152
- Kweichow Military District, 226
- Kweichow Revolutionary Commit-
tee, 225-26, 245-46, 292, 322
- Kweilin, 118
- Kyodo News Agency, 245
- Lanchow, 289
- Land clearance, private ownership
and, 238, 239
- Lank'ao, 251
- Leadership, Ninth Congress and,
327-28
- Lee Pat Lo, 84
- Lei Feng, 51, 72
- Lenin, Nikolai, 6, 21; criticism of,
134
- 'Letter to Revolutionary Workers
and Cadres' (Central Commit-
tee), 200
- Lhasa Radio, 87
- Liao Hang-sheng, 91
- Liao Mo-sha, 45, 48, 54, 60
- Liaoning Revolutionary Committee,
307
- Liberation Daily (Chiehjang Jih-
pao)*, 180, 186, 197, 206, 209, 210
- Li Ching-ch'ian, 104, 127, 142
- Lien Ssu (organization), 204
- Lien Tung. See Joint Action Com-
mittee
- Li Fu-ch'ün, 148, 212, 298
- Li Hsien-nien, 148, 155
- Li Hsin-kung, 68

- Li Hsiieh-feng, 102, 141, 243
 Li Li-feng, 104, 127
 Lin Chieh, 147, 159, 161-62, 204, 280, 283, 309
 Lin Piao, 30, 59-62, 80, 86, 111, 112, 122, 124, 127, 134, 135, 138, 148, 149, 153, 157-58, 182, 212, 218, 256, 268, 274, 275, 287, 294, 298, 310, 319, 322, 324, 326, 328, 329; army and, 68, 69, 70-79
 Lin Piao, Mme. *See* Yeh Ch'ün
 Lin Piao chuan chi, 143
 Lin Tou-tou, 124
 Lin Yutang, 188
 Literary and Artistic Review, 44
 Li Te-sheng, 256
 Li Tsai-han, 226
 Little Red Book, The, 189, 322
 Liu Chen, 77
 Liu Chien-hsün, 167
 Liu Chih-chien, 81, 83, 84, 89, 90; criticism of, 91
 Liu Feng, 273
 Liu Jen, 57, 61, 75, 77
 Liu Ko-p'ing, 226
 Liukouch'iao, electrification school at, 91
 Liu Ning-yi, 104, 199
 Liu Po-ch'eng, 298
 Liu Shao-ch'i, xiii, 7, 17-18, 21-23, 30-36, 49, 52, 56, 61, 70, 76, 81, 103, 104, 127, 147, 200, 203, 206, 223, 226, 263, 305, 307, 311-12; accusations against, 39; Communist Party, rebel leadership and, 135, 138, 152, 158-60, 163; criticisms of, 39, 40, 100, 119, 120-22, 124, 130, 136-37, 158-60, 266; expelled from the Party, 312; extreme left and, 261, 263, 266, 267, 268, 275, 276, 297; Mao's criticism of, 40; peasants and, 239, 240, 255, 256; self-criticism, 121-22, 143, 147, 158, 160; students and Red Guards, 96-97, 98, 100, 103, 104, 120-22; supporters of, 263; writings of, 40, 41, 52, 136, 267
 Liu Shao-ch'i, Mme. *See* Wang Kuang-mei
 Liu T'ao, 104
 Liu Wei-chen, 147
 Lo Jui-ch'ing, 21-22, 71, 72-74, 76, 77, 163, 171, 264, 286, 288, 297; condemnation of, 77, 78; dismissal of, 80, 141; rearrested, 83
 'Long Live the Victory of the People's War' (Lin Piao), 73
 Long March, 114
 Louis XVI, King, 136
 Lu Cho, 46-48
 Lu Hsun, 188
 Lu P'ing, 99
 Luting, 85
 Lu Ting-yi, 45, 50, 57, 76, 297; dismissal of, 141; writings of, 142
 Luxemburg, Rosa, 6-7
 Ma Cheng, 239
 Magnitogorsk Steelworks Constitution, 200
 Mainichi Shimbun, 83, 319
 Manchuria, 202
 Mao Tse-tung, xlii, 1-25, 28-31, 34, 35, 48, 49, 55-59, 93, 94 *passim*, 218, 229, 235, 330, 331; appeals to the masses, 144-45; censured (1927), 3; extreme left and, 272, 274, 275, 284, 285, 289, 291, 294, 295, 297, 298; on first *taiwupao*, 139-40; health of, 117; launching of Red Guard, 79-87; literature and arts policy, 49-50; May 7th directive (to Lin Piao), 61-62; rebel leadership, Communist Party and, 137, 138-39, 144, 146, 147, 150, 152-53, 156-58, 161-63, 170; reliance on army, 64; on self-criticism, 121; students and Red Guards, 93, 94, 96, 98-100, 102, 103, 105-7, 109-12, 115-18, 126, 130, 134; Thought, *see* Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung; victory of moderation, 301, 302-3, 304, 309, 310, 315, 316, 322, 324, 328; worker's power seizure and, 178, 182, 185, 199, 202, 203, 206, 207, 211, 212; at working party of Political Bureau (1965), 39-40
 Mao Tse-tung, Mme. *See* Chiang Ch'ing
 Marx, Karl, 21, 134
 'Marxism and Maoism' (Fedoseyev), 10
 Masses, the, 65, 82, 95, 144-45, 165, 216, 226, 246, 304; extreme left and, 261, 263, 290, 291, 300; power seizures by, 145-46; resistance to Red Guards, 118; Thought of Mao Tse-tung and, 6-7. *See also* Army; Peasants; Students; Workers
 May 16th Circular (Central Committee), 63, 102
 Mechanistic materialism, rejection of, 9-14
 Meeting in the Western Building (1962), 35-36, 41, 43
 Men Ho, 51
 Metropolitan 516 Red Guard Corps, 281
 Military Commission, 48, 60, 77, 78-79, 81-83, 87, 88, 136, 147, 149, 167, 169-71, 192-93, 195, 273, 284, 298, 302; reorganized, 71
 Million Heroes, the, 248, 270-71, 272, 273, 278
 Ming Pao, 127

- Ming Su, Dowager Empress, 41
 Minoru, Takeuchi, 292
 Miyamoto, Secretary-General, 56
 Moderation, victory of, 301-29; political solution, 305-12; provisional institutions and, 318-22; rebuilding the Party, 322-29; social change, 313-18
 Monde, Le, 31, 94
 Mōtakutō no Chōsen, 7, 35, 60, 78, 90, 101, 143, 144, 153, 164, 221, 246
 Muchengchien (mine), 315
 Mu Hsin, 147, 170, 280, 283
 Mukden. *See* Shenyang, city of
 Munthe-Kaas, Harald, 248
 Nanchang Revolutionary Committee, 306, 307
 Nanking, 85-86, 184, 295, 299, 307
 Nanking Institute of Engineering, 164
 Nanking University, 100
 National Defence Scientific and Technical Commission, 239
 National Festival of October 1st, 111
 New China, 285-86
 New China News Agency, 23, 39, 40, 51, 53, 72, 86, 155, 161, 163, 170, 206, 211, 212, 219, 225, 239, 247, 251, 252, 257, 268, 273, 276, 283, 286, 288, 293, 299, 306, 311, 322
 New Commune of the people of Shanghai, 217
 New Peita Commune, 124
 New Stories of Ai Tzu, 46-48
 New University of Hupei, 270
 Nieh Jung-chen, 148, 298
 Nieh Yuan-tzu, 99, 124, 127, 128, 133, 138-39, 309, 310
 Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 128, 173
 Ninghsia, 321
 Ninghsia Revolutionary Committee, 307
 Ninth Congress, 88, 110, 310, 319-20, 326-29; constitution adopted by, 327-28; delegates to, 326-27
 Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, 35, 44
 Nogami, 104, 105, 118, 157
 North China Bureau of the CCP Central Committee, 45
 Northern Expedition of 1927, 2-3
 North Korea, 56
 North Vietnam, bombing of, 72, 106
 Nuclear weapons, 21
 No. 1 Cotton Mill (Peking), 84
 No. 1 Machine-Tool Factory (Peking), 77, 198
 No. 21 Girls Middle School (Peking), 102
 Nung'sun Chanpao, 243
 Nungyeh chihsteh chishu, 16, 17, 19
 Nuns, harassment of, 108
 Oka, Professor, 175
 'On the correct handling of contradictions among the people' (Mao Tse-tung), 30-31
 Patwan Hsiung Shih, 270
 P'an Fu-sheng, 221, 222, 224
 Pang P'ing-chu, 155
 Paris Committee of Public Safety (1871), 137
 Paris Commune of 1871, 24, 140, 153, 184, 188
 'Patriotism or Treason?' (Ch'i Pen-yü), 160-61
 Peasants, 64, 93, 98, 133, 164, 219, 228, 237-59, 272, 278, 292, 315, 317-18; associations, 24-25, 37, 242, 254; Autumn Harvest Rising (1927), 2-3, 67; celebration of New Year, 247; December directive to, 240-41, 243, 255, 258; as factory workers, 174; hostility toward students, 95, 96, 112, 113; individual land ownership, 36; Maoist policy toward, 237; moderated revolution (in the countryside), 242-46; political role of, 238; rebel leadership and, 135, 164-65; Red Guard and, 242-45, 247, 252; revolutionary committees, 237-38; school education, 258-59; strengthening of socialist positions, 257-59
 Peiching Hungse Hsilanch'uanping, 45, 49, 142
 Peiching Jenta San-hung, 58
 Peiching Jihpao, 102
 Peiching K'ochi Hungch'i, 175
 Peiching Kungjen, 291
 Peita Red Guards, 142
 Peita University, 99, 101, 103, 106, 127, 128, 133, 138, 140, 309, 310
 Peking Automobile Factory, 184
 Peking Aviation Institute, 229
 Peking Daily, 248-49, 254, 259, 299
 Peking Evening News, 46
 Peking Film School, 124
 Peking Higher Education College, 102
 Peking Hosiery Factory, 207
 Peking Institute of Geology, 156, 157
 Peking Institute of Machinery, 309
 Peking Military Region, 75
 Peking Municipal Party Committee, 45, 52, 57, 61, 75, 78, 99, 119, 138, 243, 248, 265; overthrow of, 78, 79
 Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee, 127, 132-33, 165, 167, 168, 204, 207, 213, 229, 265-67, 280-81, 283, 284, 298, 309

- Peking News, 152, 242
 Peking Opera House, 45
 Peking People's Committee, 78
 Peking People's Commune, 227, 308
 Peking People's University, 58, 75, 78, 102, 112, 125, 167, 309
 Peking P'i-T'an Chanpao, 156
 Peking Proletarian Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters, 144
 Peking Red Guards, 116-17, 303
 Peking Review, 14, 19, 21, 33, 38, 41, 50, 63, 68, 78, 99, 143, 144, 145, 160, 161, 183, 200, 206, 216, 221, 222, 223, 239, 254, 256, 257, 259, 284, 286, 293, 310, 313, 314, 315, 316, 323, 325
 Peking Supports You (motion picture), 271-72
 Peking Workers' Congress, 213
 Peking Information, 76
 Peking Kono Ichinen, 53, 57, 75, 77, 81, 108, 139, 143, 236
 P'eng Chen, 29, 30, 39, 49, 53, 56, 57, 58, 61, 76-77, 102, 158, 163, 265, 297, 312; dismissal of, 141, 243; popularity of, 97; writings of, 142
 P'eng P'ei-yun, 99
 Pengpu Red Guard, 130
 P'eng Te-hual, 34, 44, 57, 67, 68, 74, 149, 286, 287; dismissal of, 70, 71; errors of, 68
 People's communes. *See* Communes
 People's Communes in China, 32
 People's Daily, xiii, 10-11, 19, 30, 32, 33, 39, 51, 60, 63, 70, 72, 79, 90, 93-94, 99, 102, 107, 127, 130, 133, 137-38, 141, 155, 161, 162, 165, 166, 168, 170, 182, 184-85, 186, 197, 198, 201, 211-12, 221-22, 226, 227, 235, 239, 242, 250-51, 254, 259, 267, 269, 273, 274, 277, 279, 284, 285, 287, 293, 297, 299, 311, 313, 314, 315, 323, 324
 P'ingku Revolutionary Committee, 23
 PLA Daily, 19, 48, 51, 61, 63, 70, 79, 86, 100, 107, 155, 163, 168, 250, 254, 264, 283, 286, 288, 293, 313, 315, 323, 324
 Political Bureau, 3, 28, 39-40, 57, 62, 79, 88, 110, 122, 127, 147, 157, 158, 161, 268, 284; working party session (1965), 39-40. *See also* Standing Committee
 Politics of the Chinese Red Army, The (ed. Cheng), 71
 Polycentrism, 279-85, 291; condemned, 280
 Posters. *See* Tatzupao
 Power: ideological reason for, 216, 219; unsuccessful revolutionary committees, 230-36

- Po Yi-po, 12-13, 36; accusation against, 13
 Preparatory Committee for the Peking People's Commune, 227
 Preparatory Group for the Revolutionary Committee, 232
 Private ownership of land, 238, 239
 Production, system of, 34, 315
 Production brigades, 34, 54-55, 238, 239, 243, 246, 253, 257
 Production Corps, 148-49, 278
 Production teams, 34, 36-37
 Propaganda Department (Central Committee), 45, 49
 Propaganda Team of Revolutionary Rebel Corps (United Front Department), 229
 Provincial Party Personnel in Mainland China 1956-1966 (Teiwes), 318, 321
 Provisional Preparatory Committee for the Tsinghua Provisional Red Guard Headquarters, 103, 104, 105
 Radio Kweichow, 169
 Radio Moscow, 198
 Radio stations, army's control of, 87
 Rapprochement, policy of, 74
 Readjustment, policy of, 34, 35, 41, 44, 255
 Rebel leadership, Communist Party and, 135-71; February counter-current, 154-58; decline of the Secretariat, 137-44; differences of opinion, 158-63; people, cadres, and army, 164-71; revolutionary committees, 150-54; seizures of power, 144-50
 Red Defence Army, 186
 Red Defence Brigades, 277-78
 Red Defence Teams, 179
 Red Flag, 19, 32, 33, 35, 38, 50, 51, 60, 61, 86, 99, 101, 106, 124, 138, 140, 143, 144-45, 155, 160, 161, 162, 163, 186, 222, 242, 254, 257, 259, 260, 262, 264, 283, 285, 286, 313, 314, 315, 316, 319, 323, 324
 Red Flag of the Aviation Institute, 125
 Red Flag Combat Brigade, 124
 Red Flag Commune, 255
 Red Flag Red Guards, 104
 Red Guard Exhibition of 1967, 108
 Red Guard Pickets, 105
 Red Guards, 1, 10, 11, 20, 36, 65, 136, 142-44, 213, 217, 223, 227, 228, 302-3, 323; army and, 79-87; brawls, 302-3; end of, 309-11; extreme left, 265, 266-67, 269, 274, 277, 279, 281, 288, 298; launching of, 79-87; meaning of, 96; newspapers and publications, 125-26,

- 228, 242, 291, 301, 308; Party authorities and, 117-22; peasant revolutionaries and (in the countryside), 242-45, 247, 252; rehabilitation of, 311; special student role, 131-34; students and, 93-134
 Red Guards of the Central Drama Academy, 124
 Red Guards of the Central Institute of Finance and Credit, 36
 Red Guards of the Institute of Agriculture, 156
 Red Guards of the Military Region of Huangpu, 205
 Red Guards of Peita, 78
 Red Guards of Peking University, 75
 Red Guards of the School of Applied Engineering, 150
 Red Guards of the Second Headquarters, 36, 142
 Red Guards of Third Headquarters, 124-25, 127, 132-33, 142, 183, 231, 266, 277-78
 Red Guards of Tsinghua University, 53
 Red Lantern, The (opera), 49
 Red Rebels of Heilungkiang, 220-23
 Reed, John, 2, 4
 Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Lin Piao), 319, 324, 328, 329
 République Populaire de Chine (Engelborgs-Bertels and Dekkers), 34
 Revolutionary committees, 215-36; army and, 231-32, 234; extreme left, 260-300; first six (in the provinces), 225-30; Heilungkiang case, 220-23; peasants and, 237-38; preparatory groups, 219-20, 224-25, 234; second group, 296; unsuccessful, 230-36; victory of moderation and, 301-29. *See also* names of cities
 Revolutionary Liaison Journal, 134
 Revolutionary Rebels of the Eighth Ministry of the Machine Industry, 16-17, 19
 Revolutionary Workers' Alliance, 277-78
 Robinson, Joan, 53, 119, 141, 187
 Russian Revolution, 2
 'Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman' (song), 116, 322
 Samejima, K., 198
 San tzu yi pao, period of, 36
 Sanwan Reorganization, 67
 Scarlet Guards, 179, 180-84, 185; number of, 184
 Schools, reopening of, 232
 Sechih, 181
 Second Corps of Northerners Back in Shanghai, 186-87
 Second Peking Opera Company, 50
 Second Plenary Session, 160
 Secretariat, 135, 190; decline of, 137-44
 Secret History of the Ch'ing Court, The (motion picture), 160
 Selected Works (Mao Tse-tung), 3, 6, 7, 8, 14, 28-29, 32, 41, 252
 Selected Works of Lu Hsun, 189
 Self-criticisms, 137, 167, 211, 227, 235, 263, 273; advantages of, 264; extreme left, 263, 273, 288; of Liu Shao-ch'i, 121-22, 143, 147, 158, 160; Wuhan affair, 273
 Serpent and the Tortoise, The (Faure), 30
 'Serve the People' (Mao Tse-tung), 252
 Seventh Ministry of the Mechanical Industry, 83
 Seventy Points, 199-200
 Shachlapang (opera), 49, 50
 Shanghai, 78, 85-86, 87, 88, 123, 129, 133, 144-46, 216-17, 219, 222, 223, 227, 233, 260, 306, 325-26; workers power seizure, 172-214
 Shanghai Commune, 152, 153-54, 186-90, 217; abandonment of, 154, 189; executive committee, 176; founded, 187; organization of, 186-90
 Shanghai Congress of Revolutionary Rebel Workers, 209-10
 Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering, 314
 Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, 86, 180, 184-85, 188, 189, 192
 Shanghai Radio, 83, 87
 Shanghai Railway Bureau, 184
 Shanghai Red Guard, 131
 Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, 53, 189, 213, 267, 284
 Shanghai Wenhui pao, 131, 133
 Shanghai Workers' Rebel Revolutionary Headquarters, 144, 179-80
 Shansi, 152, 241, 258, 322
 Shansi Military District, 226-27
 Shansi Party Committee, 33
 Shansi Rebel Headquarters, 152-53
 Shansi Revolutionary Committee, 226-27
 Shantung, 86, 178, 235, 295
 Shantung Revolutionary Committee, 225
 Shengwulien (organization), 290
 Shensi, 320
 Shensi Revolutionary Committee, 307
 Shenyang, city of, 108

- Shichingshan steel works, 84, 198, 229
 Shoden, Kosei, 50
Shoutu Fenglei, 169
Shoutu Hingweiping, 36, 121, 126, 227, 230
 Shran, Peter, 176
 Shuiyuan Commune, 259
 Sian, 118
 Sian Military School, 146
Singtao Jihpao, 128
 Sinkiang, 85-86, 92, 196, 263, 278, 289, 307
 Sinkiang Civil Aviation Administration, 150
 Sinkiang Production and Construction Corps, 148
 Six-Point Circular, 168
 Sixteen-Point Decision, 102, 107-8, 111, 118, 139-40
 Sixteen Points, the, 81, 82, 113, 194
 Sixth Congress, 3
Socialist Cultural Revolution in China, The, 53
 Socialist Education Movement, 8, 37-38, 71-72, 98-99, 100, 140, 143, 254
 Songs, 322-23
 Sotanzation, 22-23
South China Morning Post, 150
 Soviet Academy of Sciences, 10
Spark Among the Reeds (opera), 50
 Spring Festival, 246, 247
 Sputnik People's Commune, 32
Ssu-Ch'ing, The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966 (trans. Baum and Teiwes), 24
 Stalin, Joseph, 111, 134
 Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, 28, 52, 57, 63, 79, 88, 122, 129, 144, 147
 State Council, 87, 115, 136, 146-47, 193, 195, 199, 200, 212, 219, 224, 234, 244, 273, 284, 302
 State Economic Commission, 12, 35
 State Planning Commission, 35
 State Science and Technology Commission, 62
 Steel Industry Revolutionary Rebels' Commune, 282
 Steel Institute, 78
 Steel Institute Red Guards, 161
 Street names, changing of, 108
 Students, 98, 135, 257, 300, 304; Central Committee and, 94, 96, 102, 110, 111, 115-19; difference between workers, peasants and, 96; first political awakening, 96-106; free travel by, 113-15; leisure time of, 97; Party authorities and, 117-22; as a political force, 122-31; political role of, 215; privilege, 111-17; purpose of Red Guards and, 106-11; Red Guards and, 93-134; reopening of schools, 129-31; revolt against work teams, 103; special role of, 131-34; *Tatzipao* (posters), 99, 100, 101, 109, 122, 124; Thought of Mao and, 95, 97, 109; Work Teams, 95, 99-105, 121, 123
 Sunama, 268-69
 Sung Dynasty, 41
 Sung Jen-ch'ung, 265
 Szechuan, 85-86, 142, 164-65, 235, 236, 248, 269, 307
 Szechuan Railway Bureau, 165
 Szechuan Revolutionary Committee, 307
 Tachai, economic development of, 54
 Tachai Production Brigade, 241
 Tach'ing, 202; economic development of, 54
Tachung Jihpao, 279
 Taiyuan, 130
 Takou Production Brigade, 255
Takung Pao, 42-43, 60, 79
 T'an Chen-lin, 141, 143, 155-59, 175, 268, 297, 312
 T'an Hou-lan, 126, 127, 133
Tanjung News Agency, 82
 T'an Li-fu, 105, 133, 134
 T'ao Chu, 29, 86, 112, 120-22, 141-44, 147, 157, 240, 273, 275, 276, 284-85, 297, 312; dismissal of, 154-55
Tatzipao (posters), 99, 100, 101, 109, 122, 124, 143, 146, 149, 164, 208-9, 229, 245, 274, 287, 309; first to appear, 139, 140
 Teiwes, F. C., 24, 318, 321
 T'eng Hal-ch'ing, 311
 Teng Hsiao-p'ing, 29, 30, 31, 36, 49, 56, 76, 81, 122, 135, 138, 141, 144, 160, 227, 297, 305, 307, 311; poster criticism of, 119; self-criticism, 143
 Teng T'o, 45-46, 48, 54, 60, 79
 Ten Points, 38-40, 194; versions of, 38
 Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee, 37, 46, 58-59, 141
 Third Five-Year Plan, 19, 54
 Thirty-seven Instructions of Tientsin, 292
 Thought of Mao Tse-tung, 1-25, 42, 50-51, 58, 135, 137-38, 141, 182, 185, 193-94, 196, 206, 207, 213, 216, 218, 277, 278, 287, 295, 303, 308, 318, 319, 325, 331; basis of, 2; class struggle, 11-12; communes and defence, 14-25; criticism and self-criticism, 5-6; economic development, 12-14; lessons of history, 1-8; mechanistic materialism, 9-14; mechanization of agriculture, 16-19; military, 19-23; organized disturbances and, 9-11; participation in local affairs, 23-25; practice and progress, 7-8; producers' co-operatives, 14-15; roots of the Cultural Revolution and, 1-25; teaching in school, 259; unified control, 3-5
 'Three-Eight Working Style' (Mao Tse-tung), 69
 'Three Main Rules' (Mao Tse-tung), 69
 'Three Old Articles: Serve the People' (Mao Tse-tung), 52
 Tibet, 87, 92, 289, 307; revolutionary rebels in, 85-86
 T'ienanmen Gate (Peking), 115-16
 T'ien Han, 44
 Tientsin, 202, 289, 320
 Tientsin Municipal Committee, 110
 Tientsin Red Guards, 111
 TI Hsi, 133, 134
 Ting Kuo-Yü, 167
 T'iyü Chanhsien, 123
 Trade-unionism, 208-9
 Triple alliance, concept of, 152, 153, 220
 Trotskyism, 105, 133
 Ts'ai Ping-ch'en, 89
 Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu, 180, 183, 185
 Tsinghua, 104
Tsinghua Chinghsangshan, 153
 Tsinghua University, 53, 59, 101, 103-5, 124, 310
 Tsingtao, 86-87
 Tsingtao Commune, 152
 Tsingtao Revolutionary Rebel Committee, 225
 Tsungyi Conference, 149
Tull suuk'ao, concept of, 324
Tungfang-Hungch'i, 126
Tungfanghung, meaning of, 126
Tungfanghung, Wei-Jenmin Chantoutul of Peking Engineering University, 71
Tungfanghung Commune of Chinese Scientific and Technical Universities, 187, 309
Tungfanghung Defence Group, 90
Tungfanghung of the Geological Institute, 156, 157, 264, 297
Tungfanghung of the Second Red Guard Headquarters, 36
Tunnel Warfare (motion picture), 20
 Tuyun Military District Party Committee, 169
 Twelfth Plenum, 152, 157, 325, 328
 22nd Middle School (Peking), 129

- Ulanfu, 275
 Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), 54, 58, 73, 92, 233; *rapprochement* with, 74
 United Front Department, 45, 229
 Unit 8201 (army division), 270-71
 Units, the, 240, 292, 298, 315, 318; meaning of, 28
 University of Transport and Communications, 100
 Urgent Notice of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters, 145
 Urumchi, 184, 277
Ventures, 176
Vie et Mort de la Révolution Culturelle (Gigon), 61
 Vietnam, Democratic Republic of, 56, 233
 Vietnamese Communist Party, 56
 Vietnam War, 49, 52, 54, 78, 281; escalation of, 64, 65, 72, 73; sotanzation, 22-23
Voie Chinoise, La, 32
 Wang Chia-tao, 221
 Wang Ching-jui, 213
 Wang Ching-wei, 20
 Wang En-mao, 149
 Wang Hsiao-hu, 104
 Wang Hsiao-yü, 225
 Wang Hung-wen, 209
 Wang Jen-chung, 103-4, 112, 120-21, 273; poster criticism of, 120
 Wang Kuang-mei (Mme. Liu Shao-ch'i), xiii, 104, 122
 Wang Li, 147, 155, 159, 161, 170, 194, 227-28, 235, 264, 269, 270, 271, 272, 274, 280, 282, 283, 287, 297-98, 309
 Wangpingtung (mine), 84
 Wanhsien, 235
 Wan Li, 283
 Watson, Andrew, 102, 218, 223
 Weihsing (Sputnik) Commune, 32
Wenhui Pao, 15, 48, 53, 63, 144, 178, 181, 182, 183, 184, 186, 189, 197, 205, 206, 210, 212, 213, 244, 247-48, 268, 272, 288; staff purge, 214
 Workers, 64, 93, 135, 146, 164, 257, 292, 304, 310, 315; class divisions and, 201-8; and economism, 174; hostility toward students, 95, 96, 112, 113; January Revolution, 173, 179-86; new ideas and, 195-201; political role of, 215; seizure of power, 172-214; wages and ideology, 208-14
 Workers' Alliance, 204
 Workers' Congress, 204-5, 209-10, 290
Workers' Daily, 197

- Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters, 173, 184, 188, 205, 209
 Work Teams, 79, 81-82, 95, 99-105, 121, 123, 143, 190, 239, 243, 266; criticizing, 245; investigating methods of, 100-1; leadership of, 103-4; revolt against, 103; at Tsinghua University, 101; withdrawal of, 106
 Wu Ch'eng-en, 59
 Wu Fa-hsien, 287
 Wu Han, 44, 45, 53, 54, 57, 79
 Wuhan, China, 178, 204, 233, 289
 Wuhan affair, 89, 205, 219, 235, 249-50, 262, 263, 269-74, 287; casualties, 269; July 20th occupation, 270-71; self-criticisms, 273
Wuhan Kang Erhszu, 270
 Wuhan Military District, 270
 Wuhan Military Region, 232
 Wuhan Proletarian Revolutionary Headquarters, 274
 Wuhsi, 85-86
 Wu Leng-hsi, 51
 Wu Teh, 167
 Yang Ch'eng, 250
Yangch'eng Wanpao, 234
 Yang Ch'eng-wu, 80, 274, 287, 293, 296, 297, 298, 299, 309, 312, 325
 Yang Chih-lin, 147
 Yangchow, 118
 Yang Shang-k'un, 76
 Yangshup'u power station, 184
 Yang Yung, 89, 91
 Yao Teng-shan, 274
 Yao Wen-yüan, 46, 53, 57, 63, 145, 147, 153, 218, 242, 257, 258, 259, 284, 298, 324-25
 Yeh Chien-ying, 80, 150, 298
 Yeh Ch'ün (Mme. Lin Piao), 287
 Yeh Lin, 104
Yenan Talks, 50
 Yen Chang-kuei, 60
 Yi Lin, 133, 134
Yomiuri Shimbun, 119
 Yü Li-chin, 269, 273, 287, 297, 298
 Yu-lu, 251
 Yung Chung-tung, 315
 Yunnan, 269, 307
 Yunnan Provincial Party Committee, 227
Yutien Chanpao, 200
Yutien Fenglei, xiii, 146, 190, 191, 194
 Zenei, 80
 Zhdanov, 49

The Chinese Cultural Revolution

Jean Esmein

Translated from the French by W.J.F. Jenner

This lucid analysis is an attempt to determine whether or not there was, in fact, a "revolution" in Communist China in the late 1960's.

In order to clarify the overwhelming complexity of this era, Jean Esmein presents separately each participating group involved: the workers, the students, the soldiers. All based on first-hand observation and a thorough knowledge of China and Chinese history, what emerges from this amazing study is an informed, vivid account of Mao's famous Cultural Revolution.

Mr. Esmein concludes that a real revolution did take place, essentially because of Mao's great confidence in the masses. But, as is emphasized throughout the book, Mao's most difficult task was to check the power of the masses while spurring them on to action.

This is an exceptional work because it is an eye-witness account, supplemented by research of the unofficial press that flourished in China during the period.

The *London Times Literary Supplement* called *The Chinese Cultural Revolution* "one of the two western books on the subject that can be recommended."

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