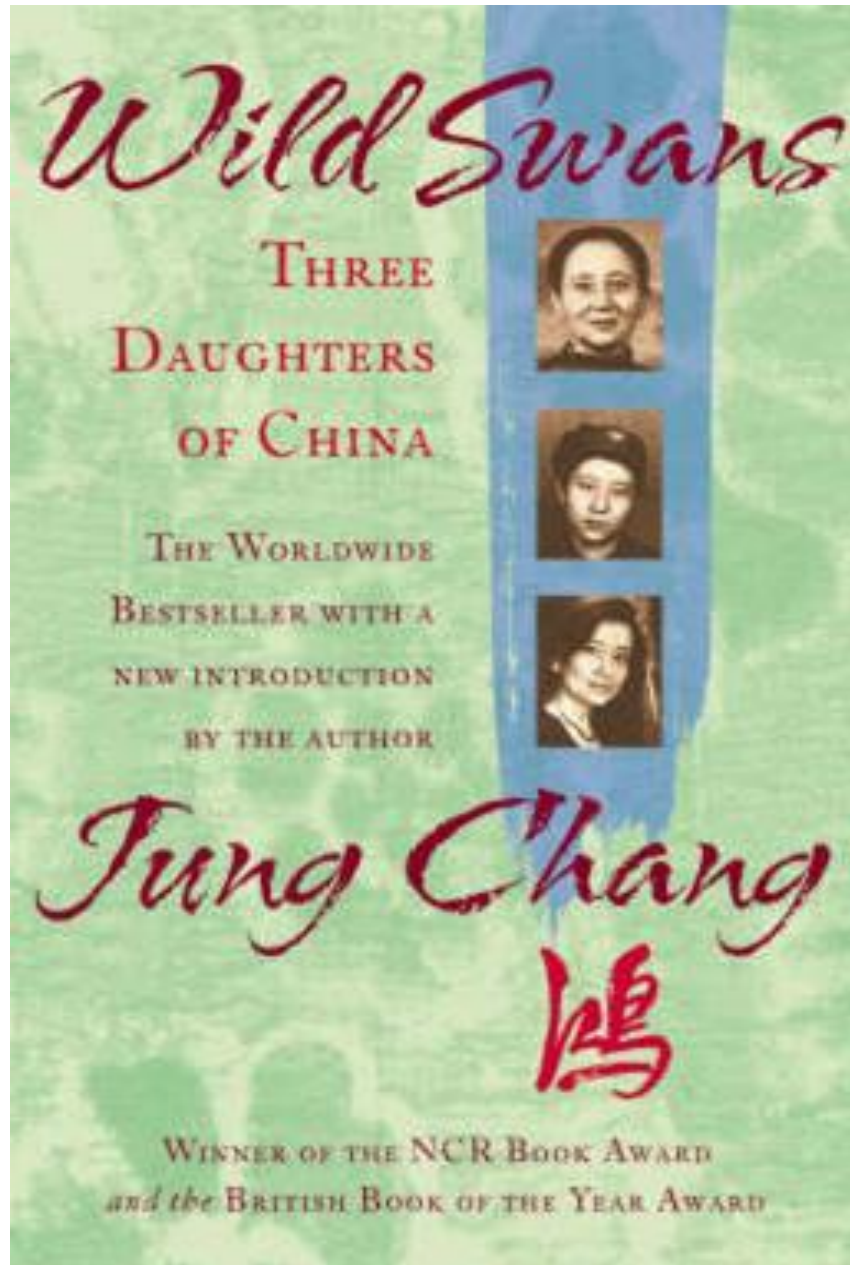


## Suggested Reading Mao's China (History A Level)

The first 2 books on the list (Wild Swans & Mao's Last Dancer) are both great reads and are a great introduction to the history of 20th Century China.

Try to read at least one of them before the course starts.

**Strongly recommended**

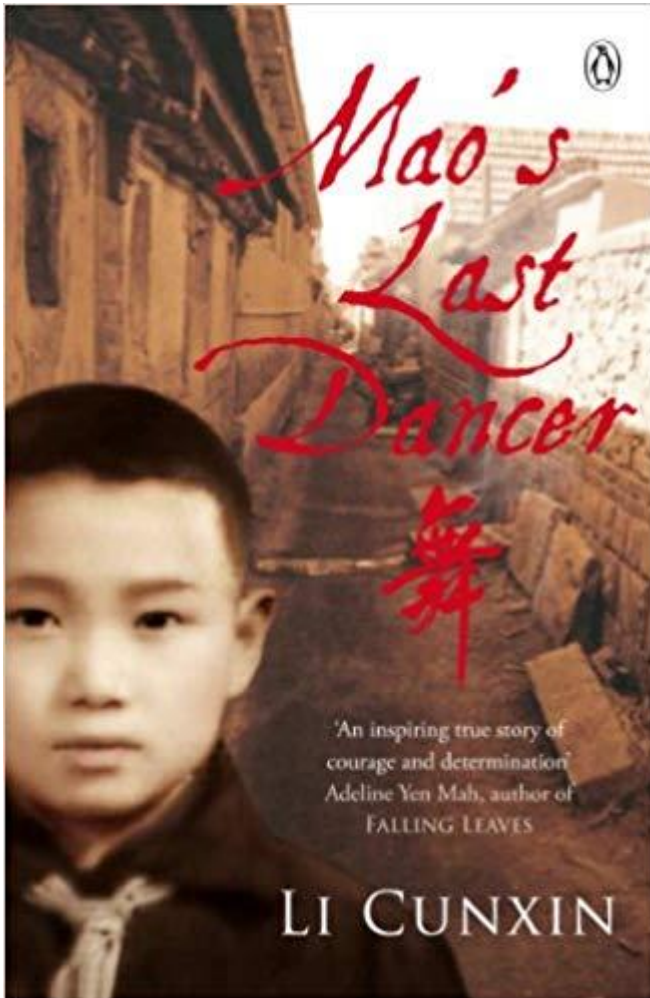


**Bursting with drama, heartbreak and horror, this extraordinary family portrait mirrors China's century of turbulence. Chang's meticulous, transparent prose radiates an inner strength. If there's one historical book to read to gain an understanding of modern China, this is the one.**

On the first night, he did not want to go into the wedding chamber. He went to bed in his mother's room and had to be carried in to his bride after he fell asleep. But, although he was a spoiled child and still needed help to get dressed, he knew how to 'plant children,' according to his wife. My grandmother was born within a year of the wedding, on the fifth day of the fifth moon, in early summer 1900....

When he asked my grandmother if she would mind being poor, she said she would be happy just to have her daughter and himself: 'If you have love, even plain water is sweet.'

## Strongly recommended



Raised in a desperately poor village during the height of China's Cultural Revolution, Li Cunxin's childhood revolved around the commune, his family and Chairman Mao's Little Red Book.

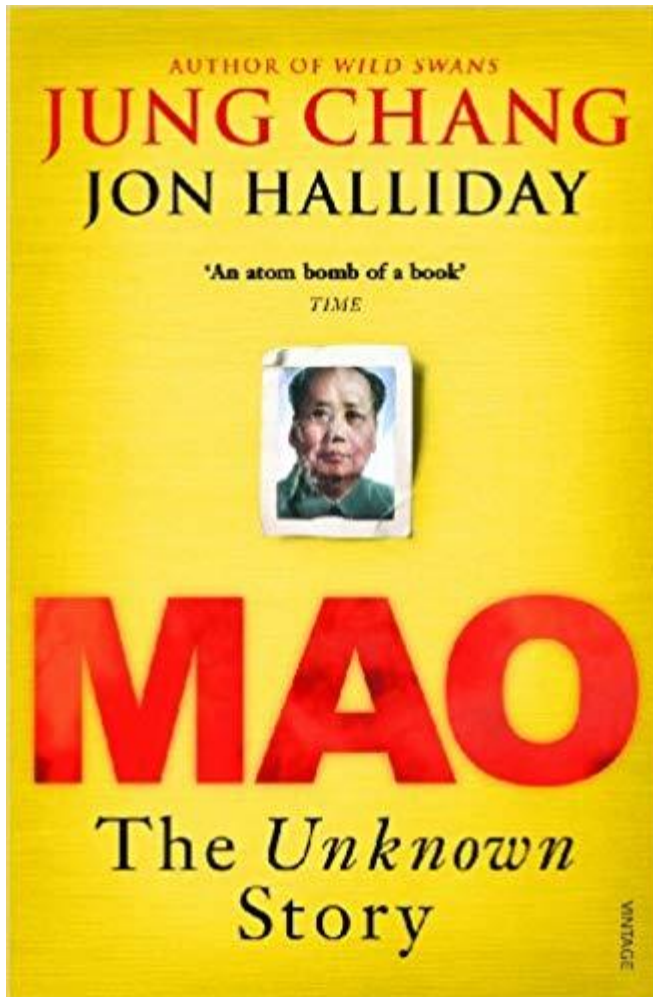
Until, that is, Madame Mao's cultural delegates came in search of young peasants to study ballet at the academy in Beijing and he was thrust into a completely unfamiliar world.

When a trip to Texas as part of a rare cultural exchange opened his eyes to life and love beyond China's borders, he defected to the United States in an extraordinary and dramatic tale of Cold War intrigue.

Told in his own distinctive voice, this is Li's inspirational story of how he came to be Mao's last dancer, and one of the world's greatest ballet dancers.

The following books are all written by historians.

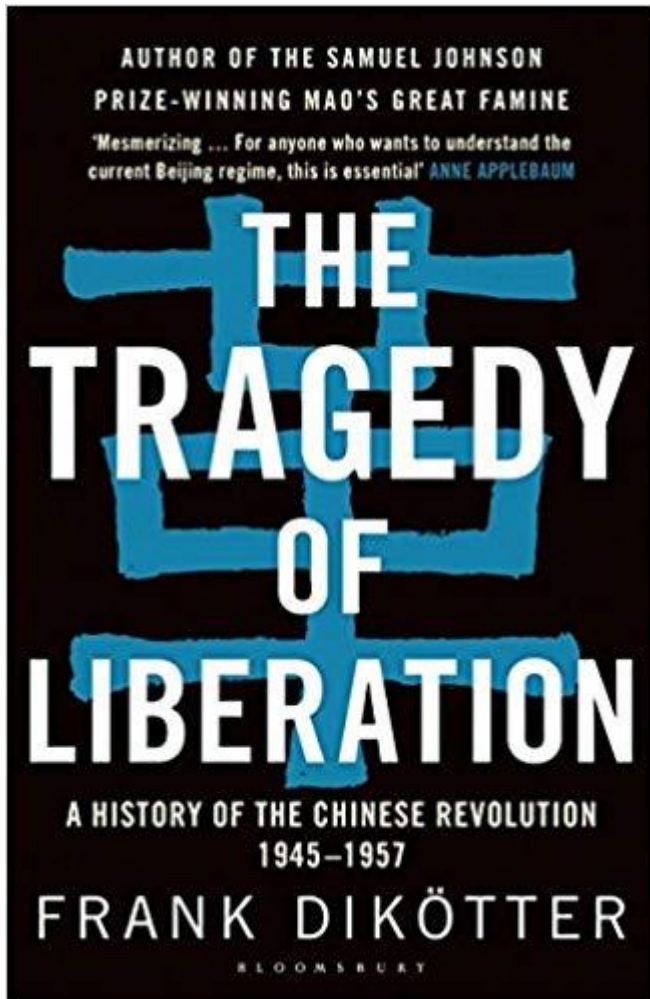
They are good to dip into even if you only read one or two chapters.



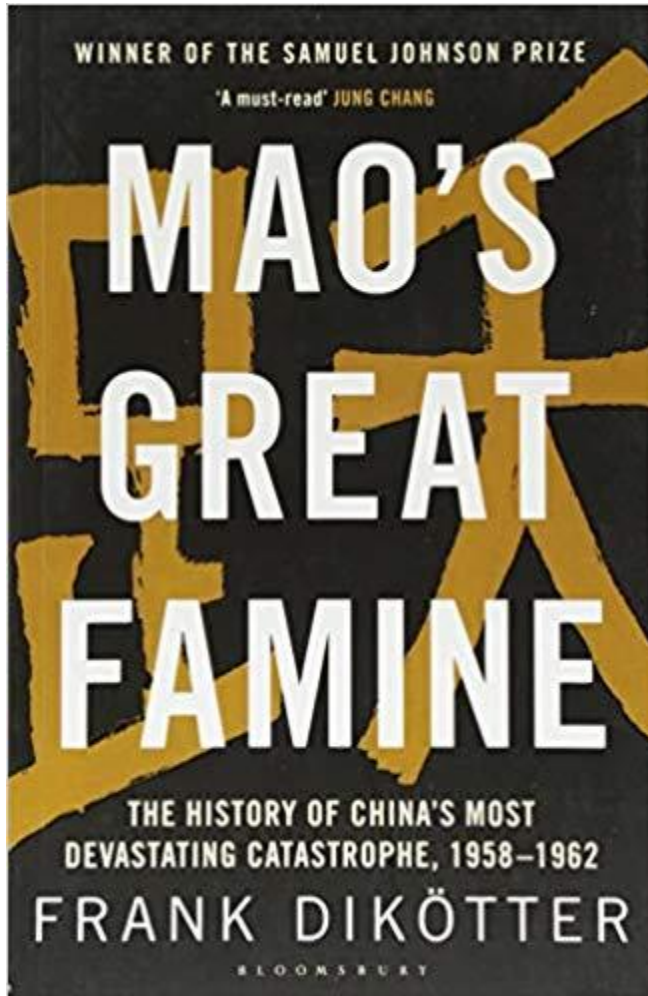
Based on a decade of research, and on interviews with many of Mao's close circle in China who have never talked before, and with virtually everyone outside China who had significant dealings with him, this is the most authoritative life of Mao ever written. It is full of startling revelations, exploding the myth of the Long March, and showing a completely unknown Mao: he was not driven by idealism or ideology; his intimate and intricate relationship with Stalin went back to the 1920s, ultimately bringing him to power; he welcomed Japanese occupation of much of China; and he schemed, poisoned and blackmailed to get his way.

After Mao conquered China in 1949, his secret goal was to dominate the world. In chasing this dream he caused the deaths of 38 million people in the greatest famine in history. In all, well over 70 million Chinese perished under Mao's rule, in peacetime.

Combining meticulous history with the story-telling style of Wild Swans, this biography makes immediate Mao's roller-coaster life, as he intrigued and fought every step of the way to force through his unpopular decisions. Mao's character and the enormity of his behaviour towards his wives, mistresses and children are unveiled for the first time.



In 1949 Mao Zedong hoisted the red flag over Beijing's Forbidden City. Instead of liberating the country, the communists destroyed the old order and replaced it with a repressive system that would dominate every aspect of Chinese life. In an epic of revolution and violence which draws on newly opened party archives, interviews and memoirs, Frank Dikötter interweaves the stories of millions of ordinary people with the brutal politics of Mao's court. A gripping account of how people from all walks of life were caught up in a tragedy that sent at least five million civilians to their deaths.

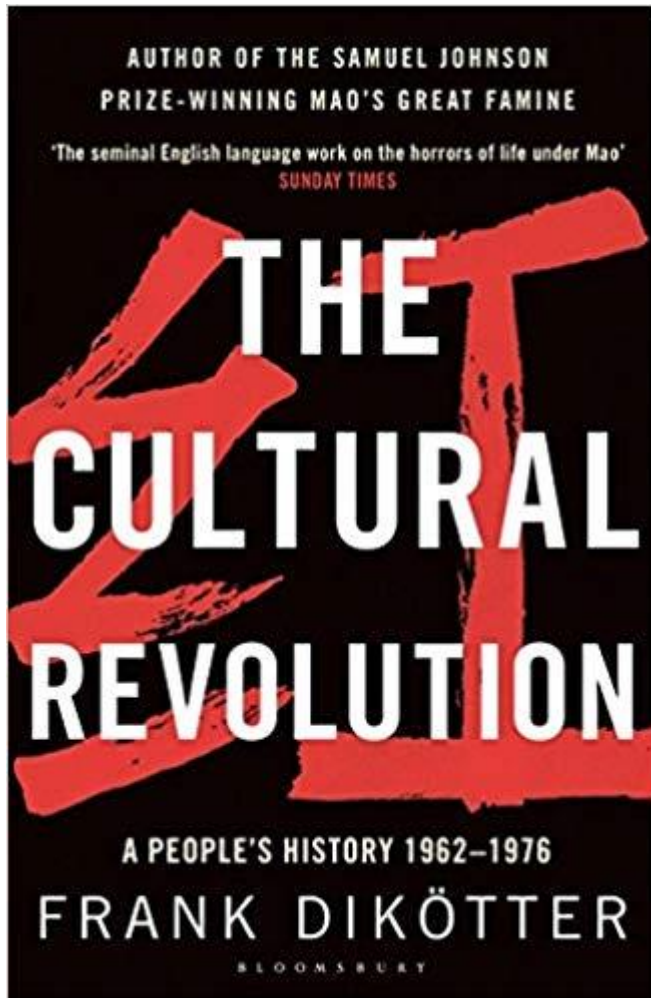


Between 1958 and 1962, 45 million Chinese people were worked, starved or beaten to death.

Mao Zedong threw his country into a frenzy with the Great Leap Forward, an attempt to catch up with and overtake the Western world in less than fifteen years. It led to one of the greatest catastrophes the world has ever known.

Dikötter's extraordinary research within Chinese archives brings together for the first time what happened in the corridors of power with the everyday experiences of ordinary people, giving voice to the dead and disenfranchised.

This groundbreaking account definitively recasts the history of the People's Republic of China.



After the economic disaster of the Great Leap Forward that claimed tens of millions of lives between 1958 and 1962, an ageing Mao launched an ambitious scheme to shore up his reputation and eliminate those he viewed as a threat to his legacy. The stated goal of the Cultural Revolution was to purge the country of bourgeois, capitalist elements he claimed were threatening genuine communist ideology. But the Chairman also used the Cultural Revolution to turn on his colleagues, some of them longstanding comrades-in-arms, subjecting them to public humiliation, imprisonment and torture.

Young students formed Red Guards, vowing to defend the Chairman to the death, but soon rival factions started fighting each other in the streets with semi-automatic weapons in the name of revolutionary purity. As the country descended into chaos, the military intervened, turning China into a garrison state marked by bloody purges that crushed as many as one in fifty people.

When the army itself fell victim to the Cultural Revolution, ordinary people used the political chaos to resurrect the marked and hollow out the party's ideology. In short, they buried Maoism. In-depth interviews and archival research at last give voice to the people and the complex choices they faced, undermining the picture of conformity that is often understood to have characterised the last years of Mao's regime. By demonstrating that decollectivisation from below was an unintended consequence of a decade of violent purges and entrenched fear, Frank Dikötter casts China's most tumultuous era in a wholly new light.



Other reads

NATIONAL  
BESTSELLER

# LIFE AND DEATH IN SHANGHAI



"The extraordinary story of an extraordinary woman who, despite 6½ years of imprisonment and torment in Communist China not only survived but endured and even prevailed"—*Time*

## NIEN CHENG



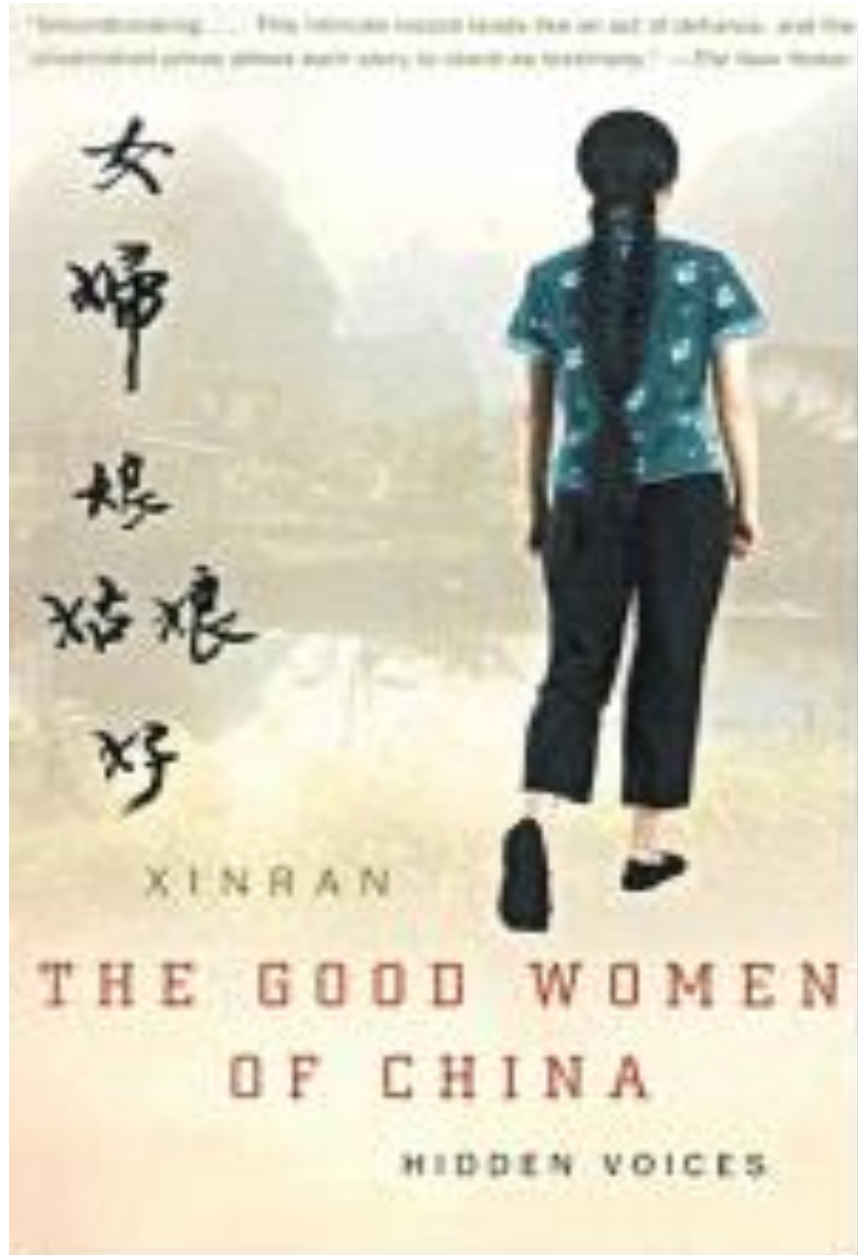
**Personal Account (1988):**  
**Recounting a terrifying chapter in twentieth-century history, this book is also an astounding portrait of one woman's courage.**

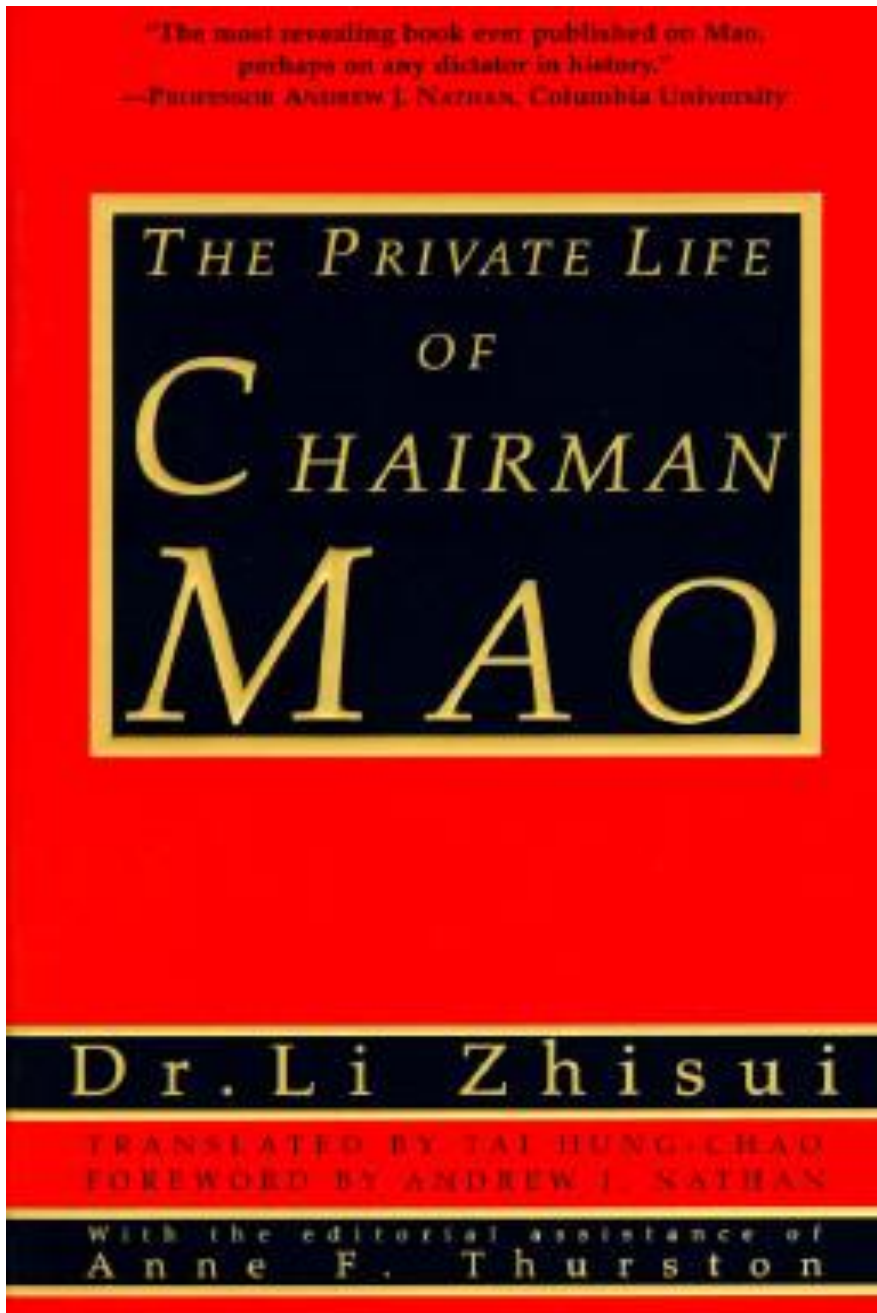
By the middle of December 1966, winter came in earnest. A penetrating north wind swept the city with icy blasts. The window and door of my unheated cell rattled with each gust. I had on both my sweaters and a padded jacket, but still spasms of shivering shook my body. In the icy room, my breath made white, cloudy puffs, and I had to stamp my feet and rub my hands to bring blood to my toes and fingers. Something mysterious was happening outside. As winter turned to spring, I learned that Shanghai was in a constant state of upheaval. One day the newspaper ran a statement attributed to Defense Minister Lin Biao: "Let us not exaggerate the seriousness of this situation. Many people have committed suicide or been killed. But these deaths are fewer than

## Women's Studies (2002):

**The stories cover many aspects of women's lives in China, from marriage and children to rape and sexual abuse, from religion to mental illness, from love to suicide. Xinran's writing is always engaging, and the stories are gripping even when they are tragic.**

Chinese women had always thought their lives should be full of misery. Many had no idea what happiness was, other than having a son for the family... You have to understand that emotions and ideals such as happiness or equality are luxuries for the poor. First they want clean water and electricity; then washing machines and fridges; after that it's time for happiness. Listening to me, they discovered the possibility of another kind of life and began to question themselves, 'Why don't I have that?'



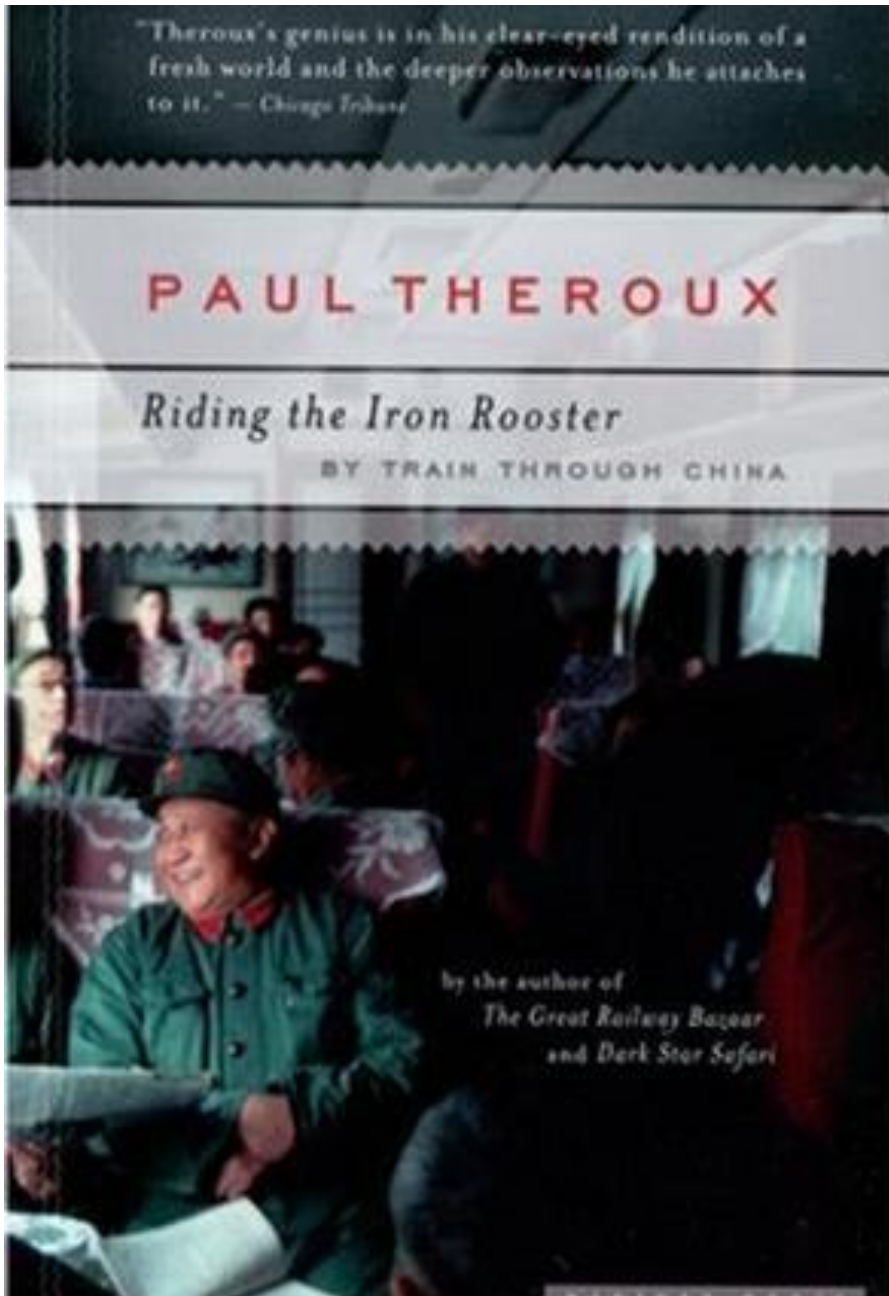


An account of the political intrigue within [Communist Party](#) leadership, excessive use of propaganda (like putting rice fields near railroad tracks), as well as Mao's excitement after President [Nixon](#)'s visit to China, around the time his health started to deteriorate. It also details Mao's alleged personal depravity and sexual politics.

‘Chairman, you called for me?’ Mao struggled to open his eyes and move his lips. The oxygen mask had slipped from his face, and he was struggling for breath. I leaned over. "Ah ... ah ... ah" was all I could hear. As Mao's personal physician, I was in charge of the medical team--16 of China's best doctors and 24 excellent nurses--trying to save his life. For more than two months, since his second heart attack, we had been on duty around the clock. Shortly before midnight on Sept. 8, 1976, the doctors administered an injection of a traditional Chinese herbal concoction, consisting

## Travel (1988):

**Part history book, travel guide, and part adventure memoir, here is China by rail, as seen and heard through the eyes and ears of one of the most intrepid and insightful travel writers of our time.**



The rare quality of the terra-cotta warriors is that, unlike anything else on the tourist route in China, they are exactly as they were made. They were vandalized by the rebellious peasants in the year 200 B.C., when these people invaded the tomb to steal the weapons -- crossbows, spears, arrows, and pikestaffs (they were all real) -- that the clay warriors were holding.... The warriors are the one masterpiece in China that has not been repainted, faked, and further vandalized. If they had been found before the Cultural Revolution instead of after it, they would undoubtedly have been pulverized by Red Guards, along with all the