



# **THE ORIGINS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION**

## **3: THE COMING OF THE CATAclysm 1961–1966**

Winner of the 1999 Joseph Levenson Prize  
for Books on Twentieth Century China,  
Association for Asian Studies



**RODERICK MacFARQUHAR**

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## **3 THE COMING OF THE CATAclysm 1961-1966**

RODERICK MACFARQUHAR

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## **THE ORIGINS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION**

### **3 The Coming of the Cataclysm 1961–1966**

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The East Asian Institute is Columbia University's center for research, publication, and teaching on modern East Asia. The Studies of the East Asian Institute were inaugurated in 1962 to bring to a wider public the results of significant new research on modern and contemporary East Asia.

**For Benjamin Schwartz**

***The pioneer in the study of Chinese communism***

So many deeds cry out to be done,  
And always urgently;  
The world rolls on,  
Time presses.  
Ten thousand years are too long,  
Seize the day, seize the hour!  
The Four Seas are rising, clouds and waters raging,  
The Five Continents are rocking, wind and thunder roaring.  
Away with all pests!  
Our force is irresistible.

MAO ZEDONG, 9 Jan. 1963  
(*Chinese Literature*, No. 5, 1966)

## PREFACE

Scanning the shelves of the main Shanghai bookshop in the summer of 1990, I happily noted out of the corner of my eye that a new translation of the first two volumes of this work was prominently displayed on a table. A Chinese who was glancing through one of the volumes was approached by my escort from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and told that if he bought the book he could get it signed by the author. The reader replied: 'I'm waiting for volume three.' I have often thought of that canny consumer since I slunk mortified out of the shop, and I hope he, and all my kind colleagues and friends in China and the West who have questioned me about the imminence of this final volume, will be satisfied that it is at least, and at last, out.

I have persisted in my original purpose, formulated over a quarter-century ago, to examine the impact of the main events of the decade prior to the Cultural Revolution on the thinking, actions, and interaction of the Chinese leaders in order to understand why Mao decided to tear down and rebuild a regime he had done so much to create. Readers of the earlier volumes may remember that I have been particularly interested in the human tragedy represented by Mao's purge of his longtime comrades of the Long March and the base areas, his dissolution of the Yan'an 'Round Table'.

As in the case of Volume Two, a bonus from, and an important cause of, the delay in the production of this book has been the vast increase in the availability of Chinese sources. What was a rushing mountain torrent a decade ago is now the broad Yangtze River, and I am acutely conscious that in attempting to cover so wide a canvas, I will inevitably have missed important materials, perhaps ones that would have cleared up questions which still puzzle me; some issues, however, will be resolved only when the party archives are eventually opened up.

How has the new material affected this study? The argument still proceeds along the original path, but more easily, thanks to the light shed by Chinese documents and secondary works. Masochistic readers who sat down to read all three volumes in a sitting might find two shifts of perception. My image of Mao is now less the stern but unifying sovereign of the Round Table, more a suspicious Olympian



Jove, ready to strike down with lightning bolts. To some extent, this reflects the changing environment in which Mao found himself (and which he helped to create) in the decade covered by this work, but I am more inclined now to believe in his original sin. Secondly, while the countryside has been evidently a critical factor in the Chinese political process in the earlier volumes, here it emerges as fundamental to an understanding of the origins of the Cultural Revolution.

Another cause of delay in completing this volume, ironically, was my move to Harvard's ivy tower in 1984. As a visiting professor two years earlier, spared of all duties but teaching, I could not understand why scholars were not more productive. Now I know. The pleasures of contributing in various small ways to the running of the institution, and in particular the challenge of following Philip Kuhn to direct the Fairbank Center for six years, have meant that my research and writing have been confined mainly to that bourn from which no academic returns happily, the summer recess.

One great compensation for my change of career has been moving on to a new learning curve as a result of regularly interacting with China scholars and political scientists. Editing the PRC volumes of the *Cambridge History of China* with John Fairbank enabled me to tap into the knowledge and wisdom of many distinguished specialists, as my end-notes indicate. Fairbank Center seminars—too many to keep up with—have been a constant stimulation. The regular canteen lunches with Center familiars and visitors have been peculiarly valuable, a time when longtime colleagues probe each other's views free of the constraints of the seminar room, or maybe just bemoan the state of the world. In the past, working mainly alone, it was relatively easy for me to acknowledge my debts; today, my mind boggles at the thought of listing *everyone* from whom I have gleaned an idea or a fact or a reference.

But at the Center, Merle Goldman's pathbreaking works on some of the wretched of the earth—the 'stinking ninth category' of Chinese intellectuals—have informed mine. Stuart Schram's monumental edition of the revolutionary writings of Mao is enriching my understanding of where the Chairman was coming from. Lucian Pye's ever-sceptical vision of Mao has worn the test of time better than most. The works of Jean Oi and David Zweig have helped me perceive the Chinese countryside in new ways. Michael Schoenhals stimulated and enlightened me when he spent a year with us under a generous Luce Foundation grant for the Center's Cultural Revolution project, run by Andrew Walder; Michael and I are collaborating on a book (one volume!) on the Cultural Revolution. Farther afield,

Frederick Teiwes has continued to produce great vintages from a vineyard close to my own. Jonathan Mirsky's essays in the *New York Review of Books* and frequent conversations have forced me to keep re-examining assumptions.

Another great boon at the Fairbank Center has been the Library, absolutely critical to my gaining access to the mass of new Chinese documentation. My heartfelt thanks go to Nancy Hearst, its devoted Librarian. Since expanding the scope of the collection to include Chinese materials in the mid-1980s, she has built up a network of contacts within China and the West which enables her to learn of and obtain the best new books almost immediately. As so many scholars from all over the world know well, if you tell her your interests, she will seek high and low, only too successfully, to satisfy your needs. Her late summer safaris to China result in Christmas cornucopias, as book packages arrive off slow boats from China.

Since I wrote the previous volumes, all China specialists have gained enormously from much freer access to Chinese citizens. In the summers of 1984 and 1986, I paid two research visits to Beijing under the auspices of the British Academy-CASS exchange scheme, and was attached to the Institute for Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, under the aegis of its kindly director, Su Shaozhi, and had access to the Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Then and later, there and here, I have talked to and learned from a wide range of writers, scholars, and scholar/officials. For reasons best known in the higher reaches of CASS, my requests to interview even retired central committee cadres, prominent in the period I was studying, never bore fruit. (In 1980, I sat in on meetings between former Prime Minister James Callaghan and Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng, but somehow the origins of the Cultural Revolution did not crop up.) Caution begets caution, and I have thought it prudent to allude to all interview data by an alphabetic identification, e.g. Informant A, etc. In place of all those Chinese who were so generous with their time and knowledge, let me mention others who have increased my understanding of their country, our graduate students—Ding Xueliang, Fu Jun, Gong Xiaoxia, Gu Weiqun, Huang Jing, Huang Yasheng, Jing Jun, Pei Minxin, Tian Dongdong, Xiao Yanming, Xu Guoqi, Yang Bingzhang, Yang Jianli, Yin Xiaohuang, Zhang Wei, Zheng Shiping—half of whom are now professors and some of whom have produced their first books. I also owe a large debt of gratitude (even if OUP does not) to the teams who have translated the earlier volumes of this study and the *Cambridge*

*History of China*; their toil has resulted in my hearing from people all over China, offering information and advice.

In the final stages of preparing the manuscript I accumulated fresh obligations. I owe Nancy Hearst another great debt for proof-reading the manuscript with typically meticulous care, a considerable labour which involved matching up the bibliography and the notes, supplying missing references, and putting it all into OUP style. On receiving his copy, Michael Schoenhals opened up a fusillade of e-mail messages from Stockholm, correcting and supplementing my findings, particularly on Part Four; Nicholas Lardy read the chapters on the economy to try to keep me from gross error; Timothy Cheek shared with me the final draft of his manuscript on Deng Tuo, and commented perceptively on Chapter 11; Fu Jun checked the translations of Chinese works in the Bibliography and proof-read the manuscript; Huang Jing, whose dissertation on party factionalism has taught me much, examined Anhui newspapers and the output of Liao Mosha. The revised text was submitted to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, at Chatham House, where it was received by Margaret May, Chief Editor of Publications, with gratifying warmth, doubtless tinged with surprised relief. At OUP, the MS was carefully prepared for publication by Anna Illingworth, Michael Belson, and Jeff New. Anne Holmes brought professional and China skills to preparing a complex index.

Emily MacFarquhar, to whom the first volume was dedicated and who has lived patiently through the production of the second and third, read the whole manuscript with her customary sharp editorial pencil, and asked probing questions based on a store of China lore stretching back over her years as a correspondent for *The Economist* and *US News & World Report*; as usual her input added weeks to the work, but with the replacement of typewriters by computers, I have found that I can bear such spousal abuse with equanimity, responding to rewrite orders with sweetness and light, even if I still have to take sole responsibility for the final product.

I dedicate this volume to Benjamin Schwartz, teacher, colleague, and friend, who did so much to bring me to Harvard, and whose sceptical intelligence, broad knowledge, deep wisdom, and wry wit shine through his writings and conversation and continue to inform my understanding of China.

RODERICK MACFARQUHAR

Cambridge, Mass.  
October 1995

## ABBREVIATIONS\*

ACFTU	All-China Federation of Trade Unions
APC	Agricultural Producers' Co-operative
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CONEFO	Conference of the New Emerging Forces
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRG	Central Cultural Revolution Small Group
FYP	Five-Year Plan
GANFO	Games of the New Emerging Forces
GLF	Great Leap Forward
GPD	General Political Department
GZAR	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
KMT	Guomindang
MAC	Military Affairs Commission
NEFA	North-East Frontier Agency
NPC	National People's Congress
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSC	Politburo Standing Committee
SEM	Socialist Education Movement
SMC	Supply and Marketing Co-operative
SSC	Supreme State Conference
SSTC	State Science and Technology Commission
UFWD	United Front Work Department
YCL	Young Communist League

\* For abbreviations used in notes, see pp. 474–8 below.

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**NB:** Whilst every effort has been made to trace the source of these plates, it has not proved possible to establish their origins.