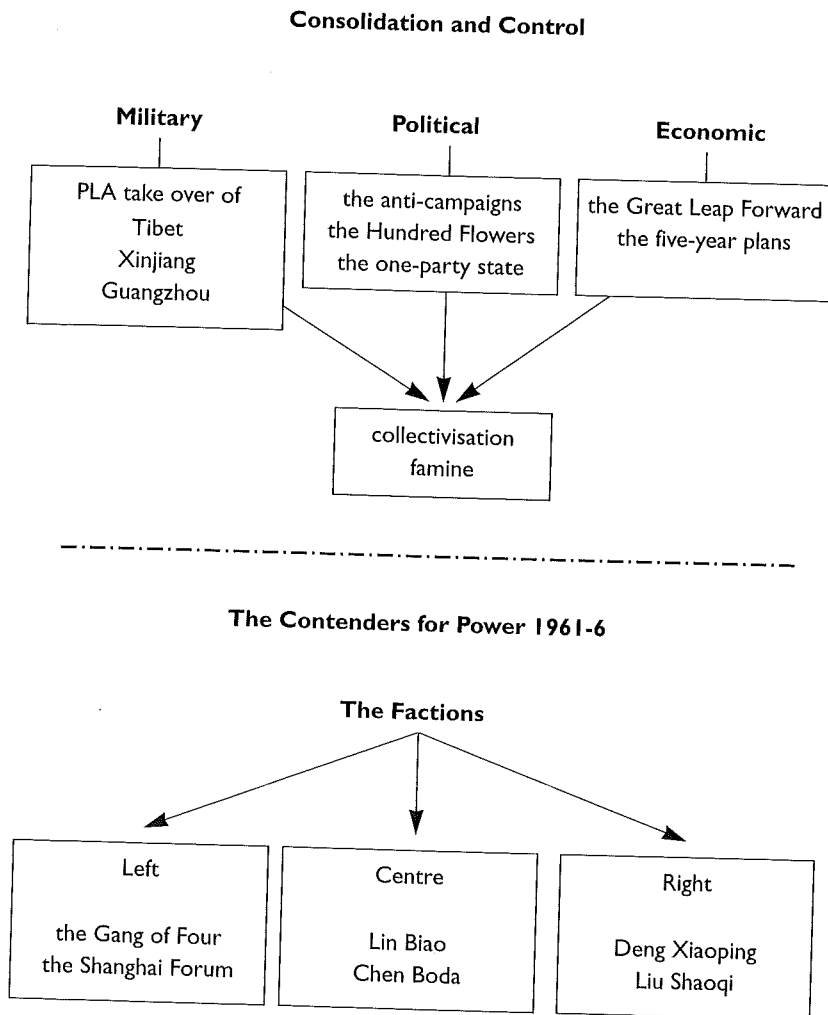


Summary Diagram
China Under Mao: Politics and Economics, 1949-66



3 China Under Mao: The Cultural Revolution, 1966-76

On 18 August 1966 an extraordinary event took place in Beijing. Over a million people, the majority of them in their teens or early twenties, packed into Tiananmen Square. Waving their Little Red Books, they screamed themselves hoarse in an impassioned outpouring of veneration for their idol, Chairman Mao. This massive demonstration was the first event in the Cultural Revolution, a movement that aimed at nothing less than the creation of a new type of Chinese society and which was to convulse the whole of China for the next decade. Mao had enlisted the youth of China as his instrument for reimposing his will upon the nation and reshaping it according to his vision.

Mao identified 'four olds' as targets for the young to attack - old culture, old thoughts, old customs and old habits. There is a striking irony in a man of seventy-three appealing to the young to overthrow the old, but at the time it went unnoticed by the youngsters. As 'Red Guards', they rushed to do his bidding with a terrifying intensity and ferocity. It is doubtful whether any other society has witnessed organised upheaval on such a scale. Hardly anywhere in China, even the remotest regions, remained untouched. There was scarcely a family unaffected by what happened. Millions died; many more millions had their lives irreparably damaged.

1 Mao's Purpose in Launching the Cultural Revolution

An obvious question arises. Why was Mao Zedong willing to plunge into renewed turmoil a nation which had only just emerged from decades of foreign occupation, civil war and famine? At its simplest, the answer is that the Cultural Revolution was to be the means by which Mao would reassert his authority over China and the CCP. He had two principal objectives: to preserve himself in power for the rest of his life and to ensure that his concept of revolution would continue after his death. Mao believed that the revolution was in danger of being betrayed from within; he was convinced that many in the upper echelons of the CCP were infected by 'neo-capitalism' and a desire for personal power that robbed them of their revolutionary purpose.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, to give it its full title, has, therefore, to be seen as an extension of Mao's belief in permanent revolution, his conviction that revolution was not a historical event but a continuing process. He believed that if the Chinese revolution stood still it would cease to be a genuine revolution, and he

feared that after him the CCP would simply become a self-justifying bureaucracy which would destroy all that had been achieved by the PRC since 1949. To prevent this he planned to circumvent the party bureaucracy and appeal directly to the Chinese people. In a great populist gesture he would enlist them in a campaign to save and consolidate the revolution. Mao used a memorable paradox to describe his policy; he spoke of 'great disorder across the land leading to great order'; only by a policy of deliberate disruption could the forces of reaction be exposed and destroyed.

Mao had also been disturbed by developments in the USSR, China's great Communist rival. In the late 1950s he had interpreted the retrospective Soviet attack upon Stalin's 'cult of personality' as a criticism of his own leadership of China. The news in 1964 of the fall from power of the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, gave Mao further concern. The official reason given by the Soviet authorities for their dismissal of Khrushchev was that he had engaged in 'harebrained' economic schemes. Nobody in China had openly dared to use such a term in regard to Mao's policies, but the parallel between the political situations in the USSR and China was too close for comfort.

Mao's anxieties went beyond the purely personal. What he observed in the Soviet Union was a party, originally pure in revolutionary spirit, corrupted by its own exercise of power into a self-perpetuating elite. Despite his many personal differences with Stalin, Mao had never been willing to accept the lengths to which de-Stalinisation and liberalising had gone in the USSR. He viewed Khrushchev and his successors as guilty of betraying the revolution by encouraging revisionism and by detente with the West. Mao was determined that such developments would not happen in China after him. He judged that CCP and government officials were already being seduced by the privileges of power. He had convinced himself that the older revolutionaries who had defeated the Nationalists and established the People's Republic had lost their revolutionary fervour. Consequently, the only way to save his revolution was by waging war against the Communist Party hierarchy itself. It was a time for a new generation of Party members to replace the old guard.

However, Mao also judged that the younger members of the Party had yet to be tested. They had not undergone the legendary experiences of the CCP - the White Terror, the Long March, the anti-Japanese war, and the struggle against the GMD. They needed hardening in the crucible of revolutionary struggle. Only then would it be certain that they were strong enough to withstand a concerted military attack from the West, an eventuality in which Mao continued to believe throughout the 1960s. Here another striking parallel between Mao and Stalin presents itself. The most powerful motivating influence on Stalin in foreign affairs had been his conviction that the capitalist powers were intent on attacking the USSR. Mao had a similar fear of a Western strike against China. The perceived threat was used

by both leaders in their respective countries to justify the imposition of the strictest political and social control.

A complementary aim was Mao's determination to preserve the Chinese Revolution as an essentially peasant movement. He did not want affairs to be run by the bureaucrats and intellectuals in the cities. A tension had developed between Mao and the urban intelligentsia. It was they who had criticised the Great Leap Forward. As a practical revolutionary Mao had always distrusted intellectuals as being more interested in theory than in action. Some historians have interpreted his assault on them in the Cultural Revolution as an act of revenge on a class which had continued to despise him ever since his days as an assistant librarian at Beijing University. Roderick MacFarquhar argued that while Mao did not originally intend the Cultural Revolution as an anti-intellectual vendetta, circumstances turned it into one:

- 1 I don't know that he was deliberately trying to destroy the intellectual class, so much as trying to transform them and to make them less elitist, more aware of the trials and tribulations of ordinary workers and peasants. Very few Chinese at that time had a higher education and very few
- 5 people could be considered intellectuals and there was a sort of disdain on the part of intellectuals towards workers and peasants and I think there still is today, but I think what he was really attempting to do was to bring those disparate groups closer together, but the price of course was the terrible destruction of the intellectuals.

2 The Course of the Cultural Revolution - The First Phase

The Cultural Revolution broadened from an internal party purge to a public movement with a poster campaign in the summer of 1966. Mao encouraged students and radical teachers in the universities to put up wall posters attacking the education system for its divergence from the revolutionary path. The enthusiasm with which the students abandoned their classes and attacked their teachers caused such unrest that Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi sent special work teams to the campuses in an attempt to contain the trouble. Zhou Enlai, ever the diplomat, tried to keep the peace between the party factions, between those who wanted to restore order and the Maoist elements who were eager for the disruption to spread. But in an atmosphere of increasing violence even his best efforts were in vain. The work teams were attacked by the students who, in a particularly ominous development, began to take to the streets. Wearing red arm bands, supplied to them by Maoist officials, these 'Red Guards' began a reign of terror.

It was at this critical stage that Mao Zedong made a dramatic public

reappearance. In July 1966 in a stage-managed extravaganza, he was seen swimming in the Yangzi River at Wuhan (Wu Chang), the scene of the 1911 Revolution. Photos of this feat filled the Chinese newspapers and television and cinema newsreels carried the pictures into every village. Whether it was really Mao in the water is uncertain. There have been suggestions that the swimmer was a Mao look-alike or that Mao was standing on a submerged platform or being supported by aqua-divers. But the truth was unimportant. What mattered was that Mao had made a great symbolic gesture that excited the whole of China. The seventy-three-year-old Chairman had proved that he was very much alive and, therefore, still in control of events. John King Fairbank has suggested that to understand the impact of the incident on the Chinese imagination one needs to think of the reaction there would be in Britain to 'the news that Queen Elizabeth II had swum the Channel'.

Mao exploited the adulation aroused by his spectacular return to tighten his grip on government and party. In August he summoned a special meeting of the Central Committee, at which he condemned the revisionist tendencies in the Party and called upon members to rededicate themselves to unwavering class struggle. Mao also announced the downgrading of Liu Shaoqi in the party ranking and the elevation of Lin Biao to second in command. This was in effect to nominate Lin as his successor. Lin responded by addressing the great Red Guard rallies held in Tiananmen Square in the same month. He called upon the massed crowds to honour Mao Zedong as the outstanding revolutionary genius of the age who was 'remoulding the souls of the people'. It was this attempt to remould the people of China that was to give the Cultural Revolution its chilling and deadly character.

At the August meeting of the Central Committee Chen Boda accused Deng and Liu of being 'the spearheads of the erroneous line'. But no immediate action was taken against them since it was reported that Mao was willing to give them the opportunity 'to correct their mistakes'. However, two months later, following a Red Guard demonstration in Beijing aimed specifically against them, Deng and Liu were both formally dismissed from their positions in government and party on the grounds that they had adopted 'a bourgeois reactionary line' and had become 'Soviet revisionists'. Mao let it be known that he had been offended by the way in which Deng and Liu had previously tried to bypass him. He complained that they had treated him 'like their dead parent at a funeral'.

Wall posters were displayed denouncing both men for their betrayal of Maoist thought. Liu was dragged from his government residence and subjected to a series of brutal 'struggle sessions' before being imprisoned in foul conditions which were deliberately intended to break his health. He eventually died in 1973 in solitary confinement, lying in his own excreta and denied any form of medical treat-

ment. Deng Xiaoping's son, Pufang, was thrown from an upstairs window by Red Guards, an act of gratuitous violence that broke his spine and left him permanently paralysed. Deng himself suffered less harshly but he was forced to undergo public humiliation which involved his being ranted at by 3,000 Red Guards. He then disappeared into solitary confinement before being sent to perform 'corrective labour' in Jiangxi province in 1969.

The acquiescence by the CCP and the PLA in the dismissal of such prominent figures testified to the power that Lin Biao and Jiang Qing were able to exert in Mao's name. This authority was increased by the appointment of Kang Sheng as head of China's special security forces, the PRC's secret police. Kang, who had a reputation for ruthlessness dating back to the Yanan years, was a member of the Shanghai Forum and a devotee of Jiang Qing. He became a principal organiser of the purges that continued, ostensibly at Mao's bidding, to decimate the upper echelons of the CCP throughout 1966 and 1967.

Once it was underway, Mao played little part in directing the Cultural Revolution. He withdrew from Beijing to Hangzhou (Hangchow) in central China, leaving the officials at Zhongnanhai, the government complex off Tiananmen Square, to the mercy of the Red Guards. Camped outside in the Square for months on end, the Guards kept up a constant loudspeaker barrage of insults directed at ministers and officials deemed to be 'rightists'. Anyone trying to break cover and leave the blockaded offices had to run the gauntlet of jeering youngsters who were eager to turn their insults into blows if given the slightest pretext. Jiang Qing and Lin Biao made sure that the besiegers were kept informed by going down in person to identify the ministers and officials who were to be abused and intimidated.

3 The Red Guard Terror

The Red Guard movement grew out of prepared soil. Since the Sino-Soviet divide in the 1950s, pupils and students had been encouraged to regard themselves as pioneers under Mao Zedong in the advancement of international proletarian revolution. Mass rallies had been used in the Hundred Flowers and anti-rightist campaigns in the 1950s. A student recalled:

- 1 The revolutionary fervour was definitely very strong, I think, in the educational system starting from the split between the Russian and Chinese Communist Party. I think the students and learning classes became much more politicised, and the competition I won with my
- 5 essay was how to be successful in the revolution. I remember I had all the big rhetoric and empty slogans and everybody loved it. Some people cried and I was very proud. That was 1965, so the education was already gearing up to a very charged class struggle and preparation.

In choosing China's youth to be the instruments of the Cultural

Revolution Mao showed an astute grasp of mass psychology. The young were made to feel that they had a special role to play not only in the regeneration of the nation but in the creation of a new socialist world order:

- 1 Now it was our generation's turn to defend China. China was the only
country which wasn't revisionist, capitalist or colonialist. We felt that we
were defending China's revolution and liberating the world. All the big
slogans made a generation of us feel that the Cultural Revolution really
5 was a war, a war to defend Chairman Mao and the new China.

The reminiscences of those who had been Red Guards illustrate the extraordinary hold Mao had over them:

- 1 When Chairman Mao waved his hand at Tiananmen, a million Red
Guards wept their hearts out as if by some hormonal reaction. Later on
we were all conditioned to burst into tears the moment he appeared
on the screen. He was divine, and the revolutionary tides of the world
5 rose and fell at his command.

I believed in Mao with every cell in my body. You felt you would give
Chairman Mao your everything - your body, your mind, your spirit, your
soul, your fate. Whatever Chairman Mao wanted you to do you were
ready to do it. So we were all there crying and jumping up and down
10 and shouting ourselves hoarse.

When you see the red flags and when you see how emotional every-
body was you get carried away with that sort of feeling as well. You just
think I should be part of that, I should belong to that because there are
millions of people there and everybody loved and worshipped Mao so
15 much that you would question yourself if you didn't feel like that.

I cut a small hole in my chest with a penknife and pinned my Mao
badge there. That way I thought that when I put my clothes on no one
would be able to see it and I would have Chairman Mao literally
engraved on my heart.

The awe in which Mao was held by the young was extreme but it was not wholly irrational. It was a recognition of what he had achieved for China. The young persons who ecstatically chanted Mao's name saw him as the great hero who had freed China from a century of humiliation at the hands of the foreigner. One of the most popular titles given to him was 'the red sun rising in the east', an apt metaphor for the man who had made China a great world power, possessing its own nuclear weapons and capable of displacing the Soviet Union as leader of the international socialist movement. In a shrewd analysis, Anthony Grey, a British correspondent who was imprisoned by the Chinese during the Cultural Revolution, suggested that the veneration of Mao illustrated the persistence of two remarkable features of Chinese society - emperor worship and the power of conformity.

- 1 The most extravagant and ridiculous language was used all the time
about him in the official press and in the Red Guard newspapers. I
remember I saw him once on May Day just by the merest chance; I was
in a crowd in the park and I was talking to members of the crowd and
5 I was saying, 'What were you hoping to see?' they said 'Chairman Mao,
we love Chairman Mao'. And they really did say it in a way that made
me think of the tendency of young people who want something to
idolise, be it pop singers or film stars or in their case the only one
charismatic individual in a nation. He had managed to work a great spell
10 over the people. I think he used the old admiration for China's
emperors and the son of heaven idea which was very strong - inculcated
almost into the Chinese nature. He was an extraordinarily charismatic
figure and he exploited this for all it was worth.

Mao knew that the need to conform to the standards of their peers is very powerful among the young and that this makes them particularly susceptible to suggestion. The more idealistic they are, the more easily led they are. As Anthony Grey hinted, this phenomenon is not restricted to China. There are many examples in the West of the herd instinct taking over from individualism. Peer-group conformity is the explanation for the hold that fashion, in such areas as clothing and music, has over many impressionable young people. Nor should simple perversity be left out of the account. Marching through the streets chanting slogans is a softer option than working at one's studies.

Yet it was more serious than that. There was a terrifying and deadly side to the Red Guard movement. The young were deliberately brutalised. Mao's presentation of chaos as more virtuous than order was tantamount to declaring that there was no moral restriction on what could be done in the name of the revolution. Students, trained in the Chinese tradition of obedience to parents and teachers, were suddenly told to insult and abuse them. For children to denounce their elders had enormous significance in a society where respect was ingrained. In a reversal of their traditional deference they behaved with a particular vehemence. They were, of course, still being obedient, but this time to a new master.

Anything that represented the corrupt past was labelled under the blanket term, 'Confucius and Co', and was liable to be smashed or torn up. Temples, shrines, works of art and ornamental gardens became obvious targets; many priceless and irreplaceable treasures of Chinese civilisation were destroyed in this wave of organised vandalism. In the words of a Western correspondent: 'Mao told the Red Guards: "To rebel is justified!". They repaid him by crushing almost every semblance of tradition, decency and intellectual endeavour in China, save that of a few protected institutes, where scientific and military-related work continued fitfully in dangerous circumstances.'

Given free reign, the Red Guards seized public transport and took over radio and television networks. Anyone showing signs of 'decadent tendencies' - the most obvious examples being the wearing of Western clothes, jewellery or make up - was likely to be manhandled and publicly humiliated. An especially vulnerable group were the 'intellectuals' a term used loosely to denote all those whose way of life or work was deemed to detach them from the people. School teachers, university staff, writers, and even doctors were prey to the Red Guard squads who denounced them as 'bad elements' and made them publicly confess their class crimes. Those judged to be particularly culpable were forced to undergo 'struggle sessions'.

These ordeals, which became a dominant feature of the Cultural Revolution, were in essence an assault on the individual's sense of self and were aimed at provoking and stimulating guilt. 'Brainwashing' is an appropriate term to describe the terror tactics. To induce guilt the victims were made to study Maoist documents followed by periods of intense self-criticism and confession. The first confession was never accepted; the accused had to dig deeper and deeper into their memory to recall all their errors and sins against the Party and the people. A common practice was for the Guards to force the accused to adopt the 'aeroplane' posture; with head thrust down, knees bent and arms pulled high behind the back. Those who maintained their innocence were systematically punched and kicked. After days of torment and constant denunciation as 'imperialist dogs', 'lick-spittle capitalists', 'lackeys of the USA' and 'betrayers of the people', few had the physical or mental strength to continue resisting.

Although it often appeared that Red Guard action was spontaneous, it was not only officially sanctioned but was also officially directed. Xie Fuzhi (Hsieh Fu-chi), the Minister for Public Security, in addressing the police forces revealed both why it was that the Red Guards had such a free hand in their terror campaign and how they were able to target their victims so easily:

- 1 I am not for beating people to death. But when the masses hate the bad elements so deeply that we are unable to stop them, then don't try. The police should stand on the side of the Red Guards and establish contact with them, develop bonds with them and provide them with information
- 5 about the people of the five categories, landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, and rightists.

The names and locations of those listed in the 'five categories' were passed on to the Red Guard detachments who then descended upon their victims. In 1996 Ze Rong recalled his behaviour as a thirteen-year-old Red Guard:

- 1 I was a leader of one of the city-wide Red Guard organisations and our job was to attack the homes of class enemies. We noticed the Red Guards in Beijing did it and instead of being punished were praised by

the Communist leaders. So, we followed their lead. We found out the names and addresses of the Rightists, landlords and 'bad elements' and drove to their homes in our school truck. When we found the heads of each household, we read out quotations from Mao's little red book.

Then, we loaded all their valuables, especially gold, into the lorry and carted them off for storage in the local Catholic Church. There were mountains of stuff there: furniture, cases, pianos, and many Western things that I had never seen before. Some of those whose homes we ransacked were also beaten to death.

On a trip to the Babaoshan cemetery, I remember asking the man in charge of the furnaces how many bodies had been burned as the Red Guard terror got under way. It came to a figure of more than 2,000 people tortured to death in a period of just two weeks.

As had happened during the Stalinist purges in the USSR in the 1930s, so, too, in China's Cultural Revolution, the victimisers became in turn the victims. Revolutionaries struggled to prove their proletarian integrity by becoming ever more extreme. Those who faltered or showed signs of being sickened by the horrors were condemned as reactionaries and found themselves subjected to the savagery that they had recently meted out. Genuine idealism was swiftly corrupted into unthinking brutishness. A young female student recorded:

- 1 One time on my way home I saw some Red Guards arresting a young girl. They said she was a bad element. Whether she was or not was beside the point. There was no investigation or legal process. Someone said she was a baddie and that was enough. So they were using their
- 5 belts to beat her up. I was a Red Guard, too, and my first thought was that I must express my revolutionary spirit. I took off my belt and lifted it high as if I too was taking part in the beating. I couldn't actually bring myself to hit her but I knew I had to look as if I was. Beating people was a symbol of revolutionary fervour. If you didn't beat people you weren't
- 10 showing a proper hatred for the enemy or a proper love for the people.

The sheer zealotry of the Red Guards soon led the movement to turn in on itself. Regional groups began to clash with one another. Factory workers formed their own detachments and challenged the claim of the student units to be the true leaders of the movement. The various groups began to go to ever greater lengths to prove the purity of their ideology and the depth of their loyalty to Mao. Most significant of all was the role of the PLA. Initially the army had supported the students and workers in hunting down class enemies but it was unwilling to share its prestige as the creator and defender of China's revolution. The PLA claimed a special relationship with Chairman Mao and with the Chinese people, which entitled it to take over the Cultural Revolution. Army units travelled throughout China in a campaign to impress upon the people the intensity of PLA loyalty to Mao Zedong.

There is a strong case for suggesting that the anarchy associated

with the Cultural Revolution was more apparent than real. The Red Guards were allowed to run wild only because Mao knew that at any time he could use the PLA to pull them back into line. In all its essentials the Cultural Revolution was directed from the top by Mao and his associates. It may often have had the air of spontaneity and it is true that once started it seemed to generate a dynamic of its own. But there were guiding hands behind the marches and the thuggery. The Maoists were prepared to let things run to extremes but always seemed able to call a halt when it suited them. The idealistic youngsters who appeared to lead the Cultural Revolution were in fact pawns in the power struggle within the CCP.

4 Mao's Attempt to Reshape Chinese Culture

It has been a characteristic of totalitarian regimes that they have tried to consolidate their hold not simply by modifying the culture they inherit but by totally changing it. Lenin, Stalin, Hitler and Mao each claimed in their different ways that what they intended was the establishment not merely of a new political order but of a new society.

The role of creator-in-chief of the new Chinese culture was taken by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing. It was she who became directly responsible for turning Mao's general denunciation of China's 'four olds' into a definite programme for the suppression of traditional Chinese society. Jiang applied a rigid system of censorship which denied a public showing or performance to any work which did not meet her criteria of revolutionary purity. Only those writings, art works, broadcast programmes and films which had directly relevant contemporary Chinese themes were permitted. This drastically reduced the number of acceptable works. The whole canon of Western classical music was banned. Traditional Chinese opera was ruled out and replaced by a repertoire of eight grindingly tedious contemporary works, concerned in the most naive fashion with the triumph of the workers over their class enemies. Taste and quality were sacrificed to the demand that culture must serve the people by having as its only theme the struggle of the heroic masses. Frances Wood, who was living in Beijing at the time of the Cultural Revolution recorded:

- 1 It doesn't matter whether you are talking about opera, theatre, novels or even poetry, people had to be either black or white. You couldn't take anything from the past and discover that it fitted in to these incredibly strict rules. I mean any work of art of any subtlety has got characters in it, so it was essential to sweep everything away. It's true also that, for example, a lot of things to do with the past are politically incorrect because history had to be reinterpreted, so you couldn't use something that talked about the Dowager Empress [the notorious Qing matriarch who died in 1908] in any terms other than absolute condemnation.
- 10 History had been re-written as cowboys and indians, so you had nothing

to lean on, you had to start again with this new pure drama and pure opera and pure fiction.

Underlying this sweeping form of thought control was Jiang's development of the Marxist-Leninist notion that culture is essentially an expression of the political and social circumstances in which it is created. No form of art can be neutral or detached. Nor can it possess an intrinsic value separate from its class origins. Every culture is a direct product of the society from which it springs. A feudal society can produce only a feudal culture, a bourgeois society only a bourgeois one. Therefore, in the socialist society of the PRC the feudal arts of imperial China and the bourgeois arts of the West had no place. They must be wholly eradicated and their place taken by the truly proletarian arts, representing the glorious struggle of the workers against class oppression. Jiang Qing's rejection of all non-proletarian culture was political correctness in its most extreme form. It was an intellectually and emotionally destructive process that aimed at the systematic undermining of all sense of tradition. The prevailing slogan was 'the more brutal, the more revolutionary'. Children were made to trample grass and knock the heads off flowers in order to show their resolve not to be seduced by decadent bourgeois concepts of beauty. It was laid down that to allow love or family affection to dictate one's behaviour was to give in to bourgeois sentimentality. A Beijing student recalled:

- 1 From the first day of my schooling, at seven years old, I learned 'I love you Chairman Mao', not 'I love you Mamma or Papa'. I was brainwashed for eight years and looking back I realise that the Party was doing everything to keep us pure, purifying us so we would live for Mao's idealism,
- 5 Mao's power, instead of discovering our own humanity.

Zhou Guanrun (Chou Kwan-run), a professor of music, recalled how Jiang's edicts against bourgeois culture terrorised the staff at the Beijing Conservatoire into silence.

- 1 No music sounded any more. The Conservatoire was silent. Everybody was just learning and doing self-criticism or accepting criticism from students. So we had to come every day, every morning at the time of office hours and sit there and read books and then do criticism. We had
- 5 to analyse our mistakes in our work, our teaching or performing, because we performed a lot of classical or Chinese traditional music. We thought that we popularised the bad things to the young generation.

By the early 1970s Jiang Qing's assault on traditional culture had begun to produce an artistic wasteland. Musicians, painters and writers who showed reluctance to conform to the new rigidities were denounced and sent to 're-educational' labour camps. Zhou Guanrun was one such victim:

- 1 We were working in the rice fields and we had to scrape our own fingers into the ground to loosen it. We thought perhaps it would be quite clever if we had some tools to do that but the soldiers said 'no way - you have to be educated to do everything with your fingers'. That
- 5 was very painful to us because for a pianist like me scraping all the time into the ground hurt my fingers. I just thought that I would never play again, because during the Cultural Revolution I thought I will never do music again, never play piano again.

Before his fall from grace Deng Xiaoping dared to suggest that culture was about entertainment as well as indoctrination. He remarked sardonically, 'After a hard week's work people want to go to the theatre to relax and you go to the theatre and watch Jiang Qing's pieces and you are on a battle field'. But with the exception of Deng none of the leading politicians was prepared to challenge Jiang's policy of cultural barbarism. They, like the majority of artists, opted publicly to approve her great cultural experiment while privately hoping that its excesses would soon be over once the rapidly ageing Mao had died and Jiang's power had been broken. It is true that some of the restrictions were lifted in the early 1970s. The visit of President Nixon to China in 1972 coincided with some softening of the artistic hardline. In 1973 the London Philharmonic Orchestra was invited to Beijing where its performances were greeted with massive public enthusiasm. But in the following year the Chinese were firmly told that such re-opening of contacts with the West was not to be interpreted as a weakening of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese orchestras were still forbidden to perform Western works. The *Peking Review* gave its readers a sharp reminder of where their cultural loyalties lay:

- 1 Some people talk about bourgeois classical music with great relish, are mesmerized by it and prostrate themselves before it, showing their slavish mentality for all things foreign. They are nihilists with regard to national art. Their reverence for foreign things is actually reverence for
- 5 the bourgeoisie. If this erroneous thinking of extolling foreign things and belittling Chinese things is not criticized and repudiated, then proletarian art and literature will not be able to develop and Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in art and literature cannot be implemented.

Jiang's stranglehold on the arts remained for the whole of the decade between 1966 and Mao's death ten years later. By then it was clear that the result of this artistic persecution had not been the creation of a new culture but merely the destruction of the old one. Writers and artists had been frightened either into inaction or into producing dross that would not fall foul of the censors. Yan Yen, a poet, reflected on the profound damage done to China: 'As a result of the Cultural Revolution you could say the cultural trademark of my generation is that we have no culture.'

5 The Cultural Revolution - The Final Phase

By the late 1960s things appeared to be out of hand in the country at large. What amounted to civil war was raging in China. Rival Red Guard factions were in open conflict with each other and with the PLA. The widespread disruption, which had brought industrial production to a halt and closed the schools and universities, seemed to be pushing China towards economic and social collapse. Mao and his supporters decided that matters had gone far enough. Orders were given that the work of the Red Guards should be taken over by the PLA. This did not mean a weakening of the campaign against the anti-Maoists. Indeed, the PLA squads who replaced the Red Guards were, if anything, even more vicious in their persecution of 'counter-revolutionaries'.

The government decided to redirect the energy and idealism of the young people who had made up the Red Guard movement. Another great campaign was announced which called on the youngsters 'to go up to the mountains and down to the villages'. They were urged to go into the countryside and live among the peasants; in this way they would experience the dignity of labour and deepen their understanding of revolution. But the real motive was to rid the urban areas of the gangs of delinquent youths who had threatened to become uncontrollable in the general turmoil. The campaign may also be seen as an extension of Mao's policy for making city intellectuals experience the harsh realities of life that were the common lot of the ordinary Chinese.

Yet whatever the ulterior motives underlying the campaign, there was no doubting that it did arouse a genuine response. Between 1967 and 1972 over twelve million young people moved from the towns into the countryside. The idealism of those who made up this great experiment rarely survived the grim conditions and appallingly low standards of living that they met; it is doubtful that more than a small minority felt they had gained from the experience.

As the 1970s wore on there were signs that many Chinese were becoming disenchanted with the Cultural Revolution. Despite this, there was little overt opposition to Mao. Mistakes were blamed on those responsible for implementing Mao's policies, never on Mao himself. The cult of Mao Zedong was by now so well established that while he lived there was no realistic possibility of undermining his authority. What happened, therefore, was that the power seekers in the CCP declared their unalloyed loyalty to the Great Helmsman and jockeyed for position and influence while awaiting his death which, judging from the rumours that leaked out about his declining health, could not be long delayed.

a) The Fall of Lin Biao

There was one major exception to the practice of wait and see. In an extraordinary set of events, Lin Biao, the nominated successor to Mao, became a victim of the Cultural Revolution that he had done so much to engineer. As is so often the case with internal Chinese politics, the exact details are difficult to determine. However, in outline what appears to have happened is that by 1971 Mao or those closest to him had become disturbed by the growing influence that Lin Biao and the PLA were acquiring under the Cultural Revolution. Lin and other PLA leaders were told, therefore, that they must submit themselves to self-criticism. Interpreting this as the first step in a strategy to remove him from power, Lin became a conspirator in a desperate plot to assassinate Mao. When the plot was discovered Lin attempted to escape to the USSR. On 13 September 1971 the jet plane carrying him and his family crashed in Inner Mongolia, killing all on board. Whether it was an accident or sabotage remains a mystery. Mao insisted that he had not ordered the shooting down of the plane. Nonetheless, his most dangerous rival had been removed.

The news of the scandal surrounding Lin's fall was not publicly released until a year later in 1972. When it was announced it was as the basis of a 'criticise Lin Biao and Confucius' campaign. The name of Lin Biao 'the great traitor and Soviet spy' was linked with the great reactionary figure of Chinese history. It was this public denunciation of Lin, a man who only a short while before had been second only to Mao in popular estimation, that led many to question privately whether they could any longer believe the official pronouncements issued by the PRC authorities. The sudden and baffling changes in the reputation of political leaders created the gravest doubts as to whether any government statement was trustworthy. A Chen villager later admitted:

- 1 When Liu Shaoqi was dragged down we'd been very supportive. At that time Mao Zedong was raised very high: he was the red sun and what not. But the Lin Biao affair provided us with a major lesson. We came to see that the leaders up there could say today that something is round; 5 tomorrow, that it's flat. We lost faith in the system.

b) The Re-Emergence of Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping

One important consequence of Lin Biao's dramatic exit was the enhancement of Zhou Enlai's position in the government and party. Zhou was one of the great survivors of Chinese politics. His shrewd sense of political judgement and genuine popularity enabled him to evade the attempts made to isolate him during the Cultural Revolution. It was Zhou who had worked to prevent the fracturing of the Party during the power struggles of the 1960s and it was he who

became recognised as an outstanding international statesman in the 1970s. Concerned to improve China's economy by increasing its world trade and inward investment, Zhou was the major negotiator in the talks that led to the re-establishing of commercial and cultural links with the West, symbolised by the visit of President Nixon to China in 1972. (See page 93.)

This lifting of the 'bamboo curtain' also benefited Deng Xiaoping, another great survivor in the maelstrom of PRC politics. His earlier dismissal for having been a 'capitalist roader', a reference to his wish to see the economy modernised, now worked to his advantage. In 1973 Zhou Enlai, who had great respect for Deng's detailed knowledge of the workings of the CCP, invited him to re-enter the government. By 1975 Deng had regained his place as Party Secretary. But his rehabilitation did not go unchallenged. Jiang Qing and the Maoists, disturbed by the grip that the moderates appeared to be regaining, turned the 'criticise Lin Biao and Confucius' campaign into an attack upon 'the pragmatist clique', a reference to Zhou and Deng.

The influence that Jiang and the Maoists still exercised was evident in the crisis that followed the death of Zhou Enlai in January 1976. With his moderating influence now removed, the power struggle took another turn. In April, the memorial service for Zhou, held in the Great Hall of the People facing Tiananmen Square, became the occasion for a large-scale demonstration in favour of the policies that he had advocated. A crowd numbering tens of thousands flocked into the Square to lay wreaths and pictures of Zhou around the Heroes Monument. This was a spontaneous gathering which defied the official order that there should be no public displays of mourning. Speeches were made that became increasingly bolder in tone, graduating from praise of Zhou Enlai for his wise statesmanship to attacks upon the government for its corruption. Fearing that the demonstration was becoming unmanageable, the Mayor of Beijing ordered riot police to remove the flowers and tributes and disperse the crowds. When some of the demonstrators resisted the police used force. Scattered but violent and bloody confrontations took place before the police managed to clear the Square.

The Politburo condemned this 'Tiananmen Incident' as the work of rightist agitators and laid a large part of the blame on Deng Xiaoping whom they dismissed from his position as Party Secretary. Although he had not been present at the demonstration, Deng chose not to risk defending himself; instead he removed himself from the political scene by hastily leaving Beijing for Guangdong province, there to wait on events.

c) The Death of Mao Zedong

No clear lead came from Mao Zedong for the simple reason that during the last year of his life he was rarely capable of giving one. His

doctor, Li Zhisui, subsequently revealed that, during the last three years of his life, Mao was sustained only by massive injections of drugs which left him comatose for much of the time. The term 'helmsman' has a particular irony, for Mao now was quite unable to govern. It was this situation that gave such influence to his close attendants. They became the interpreters of his barely coherent utterances.

Yet even though Mao was incapacitated his power remained. In an odd way it was actually increased. Since he was so often enfeebled, it became increasingly difficult to know exactly what his ideas and instructions actually were. This had two conflicting consequences: it paralysed the fearful into inaction since they were frightened of taking steps that Mao might later condemn in one of his rational moments and it encouraged those who believed that Mao would never recover to try to manoeuvre themselves into a position from which they could subsequently seize power. This left Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four in effective control. However, their authority depended wholly on their closeness to Mao. Once he had died everything would be at hazard.

Given Mao's god-like status, it was somehow fitting that his death in September 1976 should have been preceded six weeks earlier by what many saw as an omen - a massive earthquake which wiped out the industrial city of Tangshan in Hebei province. This tragedy, one of the greatest natural disasters in Chinese history, claimed 800,000 casualties, a third of them fatalities. People recalled that in Chinese lore earthquakes, 'the speaking of the dragon', denoted the advent of great changes in the state. Mao had been deified in his own lifetime and when gods die the succession - as events were to show - becomes a troubled affair.

6 The Legacy of Mao's Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution's purpose was nothing less than the creation of a new type of human being. As in the Soviet Union, where the ideologues who served Stalin had spoken of creating a new species, *homo sovieticus*, so in Mao's China the Cultural Revolution was an attempt to change human nature. But, in both countries, it proved far easier to destroy than to create. Few societies have undergone such an extraordinarily destructive phenomenon as the Cultural Revolution in China. Its economic consequences were disastrous. The turmoil in the schools and universities meant that education and training simply ceased. This created an industrial and agricultural torpor, the effects of which were to last for decades. Yet this was the least of the evils in this 'period of madness'. As one participant put it simply but tellingly, 'China lost its humanity'. The organised terror created a horrifying atmosphere of callousness and brutality.

The examples are legion. In Beijing itself, in addition to the daily scenes of beatings in the street, theatres and sports grounds became

the venues of systematic killings of bound victims. During a two-day period in Daxing (Tsa-hsing) County, north of Beijing, 300 people were clubbed to death in the public square. In Guangxi (Kwangsi) province there were an estimated 67,000 deaths in the decade after 1966, while in Mongolia, Tibet and Sichuan the figures ran into hundreds of thousands. At the trial in 1980 of the Gang of Four, it was charged that the purges they had sanctioned had resulted in the killing of over half a million CCP officials. In the late 1970s, the social historian, Yan Jiaqi (Yan Chao-chi), calculated that the overall death figures for China amounted to several million.

Twenty years after the events, Deng Xiaoping's son, Pufang, reflected: 'The Cultural Revolution was not just a disaster for the Party, for the country, but for the whole people. We were all victims, people of several generations. One hundred million people were its victims'. Harry Wu, the noted Chinese dissident, who spent nineteen years as a political prisoner in the Laogai, China's equivalent of the USSR's Gulag, asserted that there were more than 1,000 labour camps in China, scattered across the country. He described them as:

- 1 The biggest concentration camp system in human history ... Everybody in China has suffered, or knows somebody who suffered. When the Red Guards were running around like madmen in the middle 1960s it was not really a case of us-against-them. It was us-against-us. Everybody
- 5 suffered.

But appalling though the physical brutality was, many Chinese now testify that it was the assault on the human spirit that was the most deadly. An atmosphere of violence prevailed throughout China. Language and thought was corrupted by it. In the words of a Chinese poet:

- 1 The Cultural Revolution abused rhetoric in a way that no one has ever done before or since. During the Cultural Revolution the propaganda run on the state media always described Chinese life in the most glowing language. It was only when I went to the countryside that I
- 5 suddenly discovered the conflict between language and reality and this gave me a profound distrust of the language of all this state propaganda.

Truth itself was a victim. The most extreme terms had been used to condemn those identified as opponents of the revolution. They were 'monsters', 'animals', 'freaks', who deserved no mercy. To be accused was to be guilty; ordered discussion and debate were impossible. Even now it is difficult for the Chinese to bring themselves to study the Cultural Revolution in detail. Most prefer to ignore altogether this period of collective madness. The memories are too painful. A representative voice of this sense of individual and collective shame is that of Lo Yiren, a poet's daughter, who had been a Red Guard in her youth: 'We became beasts. There was not a human being left in China.

We were worse than beasts. At least beasts do not slaughter their own kind.'

Much remains to be researched concerning the Cultural Revolution. Mao, of course, initiated it, but it needed countless others to carry it out. What were the motives of such people? Perhaps the enthusiasm and extremism with which the policy was implemented is explained by long-existing local rivalries and personal vendettas. It is known that Stalin's purges in the USSR could not have been carried out without the willingness of so many to engage in exploitation and terror. So much of the Cultural Revolution was organised hate. This began with Mao himself. Chen Hansheng who knew Mao personally defined him as 'a person of hatred'. Mao often spoke of the ruthlessness with which China's revolution had to be pursued. He drew parallels between his own position and that of the Emperor Qin Shi Huang (Shih Huang-ti) whose huge terra cotta army has been unearthed at Xian (Sian). It was Qin (221-210 BC) who presided over the enforced unification of the Han state, often regarded as the birth of China as a nation. The comparison was apt; Qin had traditionally been described as one of the bloodiest rulers in Chinese history. Li Rui, who had been a personal secretary to Mao in the early years of the PRC, defined the Cultural Revolution as 'Marx plus Emperor Qin'.

Other historical parallels help to explain the character of the Cultural Revolution. Manifest in the history of China after 1949 are the oppressive tendencies, discernible in all totalitarian regimes, that culminate in purges and blood letting. Deliberately-ordered mass destruction and extermination took place in Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, and Pol Pot's Cambodia. But nothing has ever occurred on the scale of the Chinese experience. Taken together, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution resulted in the deaths of over thirty million people. The scale was so staggering that for a long time neither Chinese nor Western scholars could bring themselves to accept it. What made the horror so difficult to contemplate, let alone understand, was that it had been perpetrated in the name of a philosophy that claimed to have found the scientific means to end human exploitation and misery.

Studying 'China Under Mao'

The chapters on Mao's China can be conveniently broken down into three main sections: 1. The consolidation of Communist power; 2. Mao's economic policies; 3. The Cultural Revolution. Each of these themes raises questions which are central to an examination of Mao's exercise of power in China.

1. The consolidation of Communist power

Key Question: How effectively had the CCP established its authority over China by 1966?

Sections 1 and 2 of this chapter are the obvious required reading but added perspective will be gained by consulting Sections 1 to 3 of the Introduction and Section 1 of Chapter 2.

Points to Consider: 'Effectively' is the critical term. It is best approached by listing the problems confronting the CCP after its victory in 1949 and then assessing how closely the government came to resolving them. The problems can be broken down into a number of categories, such as military, economic and political. Under military difficulties reference might well be made to the presence on the mainland of remnants of the GMD who still represented a threat to the new regime, and the CCP's need to consolidate its hold over the outlying areas of China. The outstanding economic problems were acute food shortages and lack of industrial development, while the demanding political problem was that of establishing the governmental authority of the CCP in a country that had known only instability and impermanence during the preceding forty years. You could argue that the CCP's military achievements were wholly successful since by the end of the 1950s no part of China offered a serious challenge to the control of the PLA. On the economic front, a provocative line of thought you might examine is whether Mao used collectivisation and the five-year plans primarily as a means of solving agricultural and industrial problems or as a way of increasing the CCP's grip on the nation. The social upheaval and widespread famine were glaring economic failures, but were they intended to be part of the process by which the government extended its authority? You may wish to consider whether collectivisation belongs with the anti-campaigns, the creation of the one-party state, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as forms of political and social control that crushed all vestiges of opposition and left the CCP with absolute authority over China.

2. Mao's Economic Policies

Key Question: Consider the view that 'the PRC's economic policies under Mao were fundamentally flawed'.

Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 2 are the most relevant reading but it would also be helpful to refer to Sections 1 to 3 of the Introduction.

Points to Consider: The key term to be defined is 'fundamentally flawed'. It invites you to distinguish between the conception and the execution of the policies. You might well note that Mao never acknowledged that his policies had failed. When eventually told of the scale of the famine which collectivisation had helped to create, his response was to blame it on administrative mistakes. As was said in relation to the previous question the line between Mao's economic and political strategies was often a thin one. The point is highly relevant here. In ideological terms it was essential that the peasants be brought under control. It would be worth discussing whether Mao was therefore less concerned with advancing China economically than with using economic means to establish authority over China. Some

space in your answer should be given to examining the policies themselves. If you consider they were based on the false notion that collectivisation of itself would lead to greater food production and that mass labour rather than advanced technology would lead to industrial growth you have strong grounds for arguing that Mao's policies were indeed fundamentally flawed. On the other hand it would add balance to your answer if you were to stress the sheer scale of the economic problems that China faced in 1949 and to add that, whatever the shortcomings of the CCP's economic planning, the fact was that Communist China did survive.

3. The Cultural Revolution

Key Question: How far did China's Cultural Revolution fulfil the dictum that 'in order to create it is first necessary to destroy'?

All sections of Chapter 3 are relevant here; reference should also be made to Section 2c of Chapter 1.

Points to Consider: The quoted words take you straight to the heart of the problem as Mao saw it in his declining years. You should ask yourself what was he trying to create and what did he think needed to be destroyed. List the weakness that he perceived. These might include his notion that the CCP had become stultified by the 1960s and that the party and government had lost their revolutionary edge and so were in danger of destroying all that had been achieved since 1949. His wish to leave Maoism permanently entrenched in China deserves consideration, as does his concept of 'continuing revolution'. His apparent willingness to unleash anarchy in China in 1966 certainly seems to fit the idea of destroying in order to create. But the 'how far' part of the questions invites you to apply some subtlety. While it is easy to see what was being destroyed it is more difficult to see what was being created. You would be entitled to point out that the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution, far from creating a new China, was essentially a reactionary enterprise aimed at leaving Mao's CCP in still tighter control. Even Jiang Qing's attempts to destroy Chinese culture are best understood not as a cultural phenomenon but as a process for removing all traces of political opposition within Maoist China.

Source analysis - 'China Under Mao'

There is a recommended formula for analysing documentary sources that guards against omitting any essential points. Extracts are examined under three main headings: 1 - context, 2 - meaning, 3 - significance. 1 locates the piece, describing where and when it was written or appeared. 2 explains the meaning and, where appropriate, the purpose of the text. It is in this section that particularly important or difficult terms are defined. Heading 3 provides the opportunity to expand upon the meaning of the source and relate it to wider themes.

The source analysis in the study guides in this book follows this three line approach.

The following is an analysis of three related documents central to the theme of 'the Cultural Revolution'. These appear on pages 45, 46 and 49-50.

1 - Context

The first extract comes from an account by the resident British journalist, Anthony Grey, of the extraordinary atmosphere in Beijing in 1966 at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. The second is drawn from the reminiscences of a thirteen-year-old Red Guard in 1966. The third comes the reflections of a professor of music in 1966 who became a victim of the Red Guards.

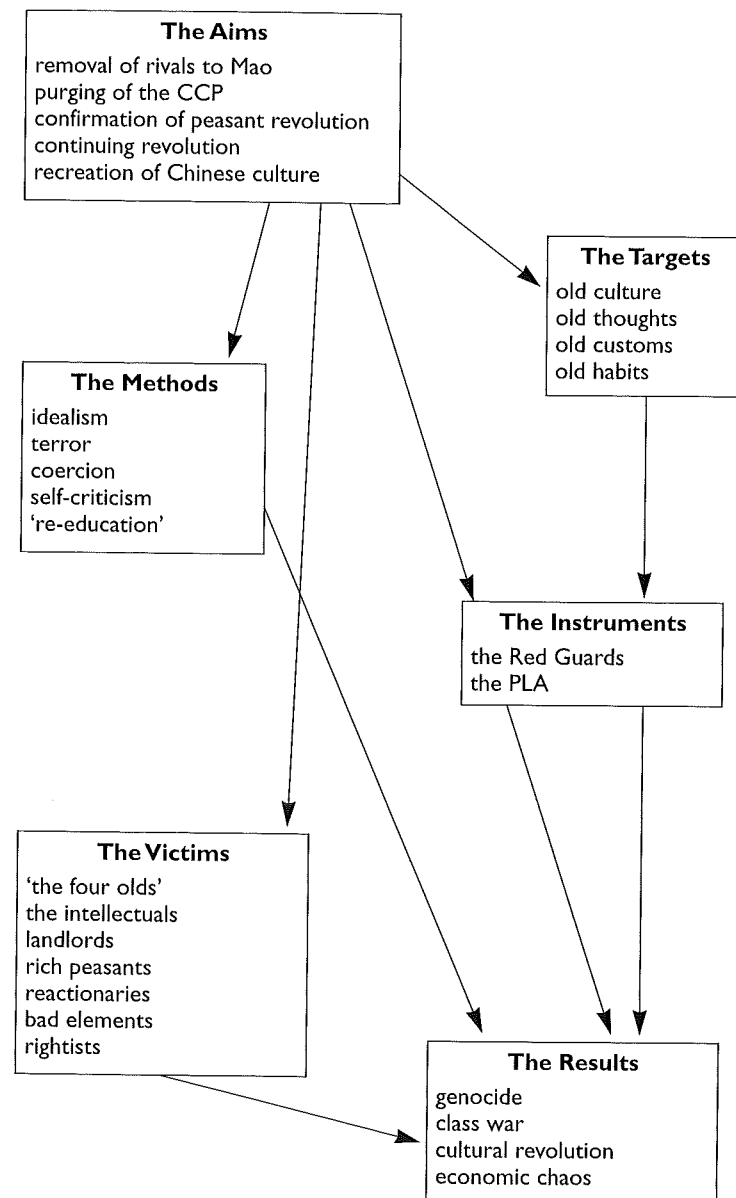
2 - Meaning

Anthony Grey describes the veneration in which Mao was held by the ordinary Chinese and likens it to the emperor worship that had existed in classical China. He also sees it as an illustration of the power of social conformity in China which Mao had chosen to exploit. Ze Rong recalls the extremism which the authorities encouraged among the young Red Guards; brutality became the norm. Under their Maoist slogans the youngsters launched terrifying attacks on the property and person of those accused of being 'bad elements'. The campaign against China's intellectuals is illustrated by Zhou Guanrun who describes how it became impossible to study and perform classical or Chinese traditional music. He then relates how in the camp where he had been sent for 're-education' the conditions were deliberately intended to break the spirit as well as the body.

3 - Significance

The value of the sources collectively is that they offer a set of highly graphic eye-witness accounts of the atmosphere and impact of the Cultural Revolution. Grey, who was soon to catch the world's headlines after being subjected to a particularly inhuman form of house arrest by the Chinese, provides an outsider's view. We learn from him that the love of the ordinary Chinese for Mao Zedong was originally a genuinely-felt if unthinking emotion. It belonged to the Chinese tradition of respect for authority. How effectively it was exploited is clear from the Ze Rong's recollections. The reactions of a thirteen year-old when told by authority that he could abandon all former restraints were explosive. The savage behaviour in which he engaged can be taken as typical of the whole Red Guard movement whose destructive impact was experienced in individual terms by Zhou Guanrun. The humiliation he suffered illustrates the anti-intellectual character of a movement dedicated to the destruction of traditional Chinese culture. The sources provide complementary insights into the great formative experience of modern China.

Summary Diagram
China Under Mao: The Cultural Revolution, 1966-76



4 China After Mao: The Deng Era

Mao Zedong's hold over China had been so powerful that his death left a large political vacuum. How that vacuum should be filled has been the dominant issue in Chinese politics ever since.

The immediate problem for the Party after Mao's death was the practical one of what to do with his body. Should it be cremated, as Mao seemed to have wished, or should it be preserved for posterity in the way that Lenin's had been in the Soviet Union, embalmed and placed in a tomb that could then become a place of pilgrimage? Considerable debate went on before the latter choice was eventually agreed upon. Yet even then things went bizarrely wrong. The delay in reaching a decision meant that the corpse had begun to decompose. In the desperate attempt to make it presentable, at least until the funeral, a wild overestimate was made of the amount of preserving fluid that needed to be injected; more than four gallons of formaldehyde were pumped in. The corpse became so grossly swollen that it resembled a small barrage balloon. In the words of his doctor: 'Mao's face was bloated, as round as a ball, and his neck was now the width of his head ... His ears were swollen, too, sticking out from his head at right angles'. So, for twenty-four hours teams of attendants took turns to squeeze out the excess fluid through the skin and pummel the head and trunk back into something approaching a recognisable form. This macabre cosmetic exercise worked well enough to convince the grieving mourners who filed past the body as it lay in state.

The problem of the disposal of Mao's mortal remains provides an apt metaphor for the deeper problem of what to do with Mao's political legacy. What that legacy was and who should succeed to it were the questions that now had to be answered.

1 The Power Struggle After Mao's Death

a) Hua Guofeng and the Gang of Four

At Mao's funeral, which was accompanied by displays of mass lamentation, there were indications that the jockeying for position among the Party leaders had already begun. Appearances matter greatly in Chinese politics. How prominent a role individuals played in the funeral ceremonies was a good indication of their place in the Party hierarchy. That Hua Guofeng delivered the main funeral eulogy was a clear sign of his precedence. He had stolen a march on Jiang Qing, whose unseemly behaviour at the lying in state, when she had fought with one of her cousins over the right to lay a wreath, had led the organisers of the ceremony to entrust her with only a minor role in the proceedings.