

### Textbook Critique:

Based on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade global history textbook, *World History: Patterns of Interaction*, Mao Zedong, and China in general, is mentioned quite briefly. The majority of the chapter on China is focused on the Chinese Civil War and the founding of the PRC. Mao is first mentioned in the context of Marx and the Communist Manifesto:

Published in 1848, *The Communist Manifesto* produced few short-term results. Though widespread revolts shook Europe during 1848 and 1849, Europe's leaders eventually put down the uprisings. Only after the turn of the century did the fiery Marxist pamphlets produce explosive results. In the 1900s, Marxism inspired revolutionaries such as Russia's Lenin, China's Mao Zedong, Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, and Cuba's Fidel Castro. These revolutionary leaders adapted Marx's beliefs and arguments to their own specific situations and needs. (p. 649)

I thought this little excerpt was interesting considering Mao is usually aligned with Stalin rather than Lenin in terms of their *execution* of communism (no pun intended), but here Mao is aligned with Lenin, Ho Chi Minh, and Castro ideologically. In the final sentence of the excerpt, it is made clear that these different leaders applied communism differently in their respective countries. I thought this was interesting because it seems to be distancing these leaders and their practices from communism – maybe hinting that there is indeed some merit in Marxist principles? I also thought it was interesting that Mao is defined as a “revolutionary,” that may have a positive connotation, which reminds me of Crane Brinton's, *Anatomy of a Revolution* and his examination of the different actors found in revolutions.

The next section Mao is mentioned in is in a section about Stalin and the Soviet Union. In this section, there is a table on totalitarianism:

| <b>Patterns of Change: Totalitarianism</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Key Traits</b>                          | <b>Description</b>  |
| Dictatorship and One-Party Rule            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercises absolute authority</li> <li>• Dominates the government</li> </ul>            |
| Dynamic Leader                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps unite people toward meeting shared goals or realizing a common vision</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages people to devote their unconditional loyalty and uncritical support to the regime</li> <li>• Becomes a symbol of the government</li> </ul>                    |
| Ideology (set of beliefs)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justifies government actions</li> <li>• Glorifies the aims of the state</li> </ul>   |
| State Control Over All Sectors of Society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Family life</li> <li>• Labor</li> <li>• Youth groups</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• The arts</li> </ul>      |
| State Control Over the Individual         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demands total obedience to authority and personal sacrifice for the good of the state</li> <li>• Denies basic liberties</li> </ul>                                       |
| Dependence on Modern Technology           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relies on mass communication, such as radios, newsreels, and loudspeakers, to spread propaganda</li> <li>• Builds up advanced military weapons</li> </ul>                |
| Organized Violence                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses force, such as police terror, to crush all opposition</li> <li>• Targets certain groups, such as national minorities and political opponents, as enemies</li> </ul> |

After this table, Mao is mentioned in the following excerpt:

Other totalitarian governments besides the Soviet Union emerged in the twentieth century. In the 1920s and 1930s, two other European dictators – Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy – were shaping their visions of a totalitarian state. After Communists formed the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Mao Zedong used tactics similar to Stalin’s to establish totalitarian control. The North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung ruled over a totalitarian Communist state from 1948 to 1994. (p. 776)

Although in the later section on the Cultural Revolution, the personality cult isn’t explicitly

mentioned, the section, “State Control Over the Individual,” could perhaps be comparing it.

However, as we know now, it isn’t as clear cut as merely stating that the state “demands total

obedience to authority and personal sacrifice for the good of the state.” As analyzed by scholars

such as Melissa Schrift and Daniel Leese, the Mao cult was a largely grassroots phenomenon that

surpassed the original expectations of party leadership. Here we see the more common

association with other totalitarian leaders.

The passage entirely devoted to the Cultural Revolution is very short – only two paragraphs long. The passage bolds “Red Guards” as a key word, which is quite important, and notes that the militia units comprised high school and college students. Perhaps it’d be interesting if they had noted that even middle school students were quite active in other youth leagues during the Cultural Revolution. The passage states: “The goal of the Cultural Revolution was to establish a society of peasants and workers in which all were equal. The new hero was the peasant who worked with his hands.” I thought this sentence was interesting since this is not how I would necessarily describe the goal of the Cultural Revolution. In much of the scholarship concerning the Cultural Revolution, it’s stated that the Cultural Revolution was both a political endeavor for Mao to purge non-radical comrades, as well as an effort to drum up popular support after the failures of the Great Leap Forward left many feeling disillusioned. The passage also states, “The life of the mind – intellectual and artistic activity – was considered useless and dangerous.” Although the Cultural Revolution was largely anti-intellectual, it was predominantly ambitious in purging “capitalist roaders,” and persecuting class enemies.

However, in regards to the peasantry, they could have mentioned the “Down to the Countryside Movement,” as a means to quell the violence of the youth. There is also no mention of how many turned their backs on not only communism but also government in general, and the events signaled a turning point for the Chinese Communist party that paved the way for China to become the global power it is today. In this passage, they also fail to mention the results of the Cultural Revolution. They could have cited how agricultural production stagnated, as well as the “Lost Generation,” who suffered from years of not having any formal education, or how ideas and different products spread throughout the countryside when Red Guards traveled around the country.

Interestingly enough, there is no mention of the Little Red Book, or Chairman Mao badges, or anyone other than Mao – squarely placing all the blame on Mao’s shoulders. No mention of the Gang of Four, or the Lin Biao incident, or Mao’s right-hand man, Liu Shaoqi. There is no mention of struggle sessions, as well. The sentence, “Civil war seemed possible,” is also pretty interesting considering many have defined the factionalism that ripped apart the country during the time as a civil war. There’s also no mention of factionalism at all, or of the infamous Tsinghua University incident.

Next to the section on the Cultural Revolution, there is a little excerpt titled “Daily Life: The Cultural Revolution.” This little excerpt is an anecdote of what a man named Chihua Wen witnessed when he was eight years old during the Cultural Revolution. Wen recounts his neighbors’ home being ransacked by Red Guards, who sacked books and lit them on fire, and insinuates that the couple and their child were killed by the Red Guards:

[The Red Guards] returned to the apartment and emerged carrying two heavy sacks. As they raced off with the sacks in the back of the truck, Wen heard sounds of gagging. “No one ever saw the couple or the child again,” he said. And Wen never forgot what he had seen.

Although I am not necessarily calling the authenticity of the passage into question, I think it would be important to have included a citation – who conducted this interview? When was it taken? Also, perhaps it would be interesting to have included an excerpt from a former Red Guard instead.

**New Textbook Entry:**

[Assuming section before is on the Great Leap Forward, the Sino-Soviet split, and the period of moderation in economic policies]

After the catastrophic failures of the **Great Leap Forward**, resulting in the greatest famine in history of the world, Mao Zedong stepped down as State Chairman of the People's Republic of China in 1959. Mao's successor, **Liu Shaoqi**, and senior official **Deng Xiaoping** began to move the government away from Mao's radical policies. As a result, Mao lost his prominence within the party.

This period of moderation troubled Mao, and fearing that he was losing power in the Chinese Communist Party, Mao proclaimed the beginning of the **Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution** in May 1966. In the "**May 16 Notification**," Mao called for an effort to purge the remnants of bourgeois and feudal elements in both the Chinese Communist Party and in society.

The Cultural Revolution quickly escalated after the publication of Mao's big-character poster "**Bombard the Headquarters**" in August 5, 1967. Mao's call for a purge within the Chinese Communist Party instigated the Cultural Revolution by accusing people within the party of being influenced by bourgeois elements, creating a "bourgeois dictatorship," and subverting the Chinese Revolution.

Millions of high school and college students responded to Mao's call, forming militia units called Red Guards. The radical youth rampaged throughout China, ransacking homes and pillaging libraries, terrorizing civilians, torturing, beating, and executing people, especially teachers, principals, intellectuals, and those with bourgeois backgrounds. Many "**class enemies**," including former President Liu Shaoqi and senior official Deng Xiaoping, were subjected to humiliating and painful "**struggle sessions**" – a form of public criticism, humiliation, and torture

to shape public opinion intended to persecute, sometimes execute, supposed class enemies who were forced to confess to a series of crimes in the guise of “self-criticism.”

The young Red Guards were swept up into the personality cult of Chairman Mao, and there was even violent rivalry between rival Red Guard groups who would fight over who was more “red,” and more loyal and faithful to Chairman Mao. The factionalism between Red Guard Groups, reached critical mass in the spring and summer of 1968 at **Qinhua University** in Beijing, when a “war” broke out between factions where they bombed rivals’ dormitories, burning several students alive.

While Chairman Mao initially supported the feverish violence enacted by the Red Guards, when the nation was ultimately threatened with the prospect of anarchy, Mao suppressed the widespread violence with the “Down the Countryside movement.” During the campaign, the rampant violence and anarchy was eventually calmed down when thousands of students were sent to the countryside in an effort to re-educate the intellectual youth through forced labor. These students were deprived of a college education and taken away from their homes and families, and as a result they became disillusioned and cynical, losing faith in both Mao’s leadership and the Chinese Communist Party.

The period of violence ended with the death of Mao Zedong on September 9, 1976. Soon after, the political group known as the **Gang of Four** was arrested, thus officially ending the Cultural Revolution. This political faction consisted of Chairman Mao’s wife, **Jiang Qing**, and her cronies, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen. The Gang of Four, threatened by the power struggle concerning who would become Mao’s successor, further radicalized the Cultural Revolution, censoring and defaming their enemies, such as Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai. Ultimately, they were arrested and put on trial, and were blamed for the excesses and

atrocities that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. Although Mao ushered in the revolution, the Gang of Four were condemned as responsible, serving as scapegoats.

In an effort to put the Cultural Revolution in the past and move forward, the Chinese Communist Party published the “**Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the PRC.**” The resolution was developed in the summer of 1981 by 4,000 party leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, who had been slandered and purged during the Cultural Revolution. The party felt it was important to preserve Chairman Mao as a symbol of both revolutionary and nationalist legacy, despite his failures. The resolution praised his success in the revolutionary struggle against the Guomindang and economic successes at the beginning of the creation of the PRC. However, the resolution criticized Mao extensively for the mistakes during the Great Leap Forward; his disregard for Leninist principles by supporting the Maoist cult; and the grave errors of the Cultural Revolution, which were condemned as largely his fault.

It would take decades for China to recover after the Cultural Revolution. The period of intense political mayhem affected every aspect of Chinese society – millions were persecuted, hurt and killed; schools and universities were shut down for students to criticize teachers; spouses reported each other; children spied on their parents; and the state halted many of its functions until 1969. During this tumultuous decade, Mao’s personality cult reached its climax, and thousands wreaked chaos in his name, resulting in a civil war that ravaged the nation, stunting the nation’s economic, educational, political, and artistic growth for years.