


# Mao: The Unknown Story

*By Jung Chang, Jon Halliday*

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**Mao: The Unknown Story** By Jung Chang, Jon Halliday

“Ever since the spectacular success of Chang’s *Wild Swans* we have waited impatiently for her to complete with her husband this monumental study of China’s most notorious modern leader. The expectation has been that she would rewrite modern Chinese history. The wait has been worthwhile and the expectation justified. This is a bombshell of a book.”
–Chris Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, in *The Times* (London)

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 research with the story-telling style of *Wild Swans*, this biography offers a harrowing portrait of Mao’s ruthless accumulation of power through the exercise of terror: his first victims were the peasants, then the intellectuals and, finally, the inner circle of his own advisors. The reader enters the shadowy chambers of Mao’s court and eavesdrops on the drama in its hidden recesses. Mao’s character and the enormity of his behavior toward his wives, mistresses and children are unveiled for the first time.

This is an entirely fresh look at Mao in both content and approach. It will astonish historians and the general reader alike.

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## Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
In the epilogue to her biography of Mao Tse-tung, Jung Chang and her husband and cowriter Jon Halliday lament that, "Today, Mao's portrait and his corpse still dominate Tiananmen Square in the heart of the Chinese capital." For Chang, author of *Wild Swans*, this fact is an affront, not just to history, but to decency. *Mao: The Unknown Story* does not contain a formal dedication, but it is clear that Chang is writing to honor the millions of Chinese who fell victim to Mao's drive for absolute power in his 50-plus-year struggle to dominate China and the 20th-century political landscape. From the outset, Chang and Halliday are determined to shatter the "myth" of Mao, and they succeed with the force, not just of moral outrage, but of facts. The result is a book, more indictment than portrait, that paints Mao as a brutal totalitarian, a thug, who unleashed Stalin-like purges of millions with relish and without compunction, all for his personal gain. Through the authors' unrelenting lens even his would-be heroism as the leader of the Long March and father of modern China is exposed as reckless opportunism, subjecting his charges to months of unnecessary hardship in order to maintain the upper hand over his rival, Chang Kuo-tao, an experienced military commander.

Using exhaustive research in archives all over the world, Chang and Halliday recast Mao's ascent to power and subsequent grip on China in the context of global events. Sino-Soviet relations, the strengths and weakness of Chiang Kai-shek, the Japanese invasion of China, World War II, the Korean War, the disastrous Great Leap Forward, the vicious Cultural Revolution, the Vietnam War, Nixon's visit, and the constant, unending purges all, understandably, provide the backdrop for Mao's unscrupulous but invincible political maneuverings and betrayals. No one escaped unharmed. Rivals, families, peasants, city dwellers, soldiers, and lifelong allies such as Chou En-lai were all sacrificed to Mao's ambition and paranoia. Appropriately, the authors' consciences are appalled. Their biggest fear is that Mao will escape the global condemnation and infamy he deserves. Their astonishing book will go a long way to ensure that the pendulum of history will adjust itself accordingly. --*Silvana Tropea*

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**10 Second Interview: A Few Words with Jung Chang and Jon Halliday**



**Q:** From idea to finished book, how long did *Mao: The Unknown Story* take to research and write?
**A:** Over a decade.

**Q:** What was your writing process like? How did you two collaborate on this project?
**A:** The research shook itself out by language. Jung did all the Chinese-language research, and Jon did the other languages, of which Russian was the most important, as Mao had a long-term intimate relationship with Stalin. After our research trips around the world, we would work in our separate studies in London. We would then rendezvous at lunch to exchange discoveries.

**Q:** Do you have any thoughts about how the book is, or will be received in China? Did that play a part in your writing of the book?
**A:** The book is banned in China, because the current Communist regime is fiercely perpetuating the myth of

Mao. Today Mao's portrait and his corpse still dominate Tiananmen Square in the heart of Beijing, and the regime declares itself to be Mao's heir. The government blocked the distribution of an issue of *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, and told the magazine's owners, Dow Jones, that this was because that issue contained a review of our book. The regime also tore the review of our book out of *The Economist* magazine that was going to (very restricted) newsstands. We are not surprised that the book is banned. The regime's attitude had no influence on how we wrote the book. We hope many copies will find their way into China.

**Q:** What is the one thing you hope readers get from your book?
**A:** Mao was responsible for the deaths of well over 70 million Chinese in peacetime, and he was bent on dominating the world. As China is today emerging as an economic and military power, the world can never regard it as a benign force unless Beijing rejects Mao and all his legacies. We hope our book will help push China in this direction by telling the truth about Mao.

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**Breakdown of a BIG Book: 5 Things You'll Learn from *Mao: The Unknown Story***

**1.** Mao became a Communist at the age of 27 for purely pragmatic reasons: a job and income from the Russians.

**2.** Far from organizing the Long March in 1934, Mao was nearly left behind by his colleagues who could not stand him and had tried to oust him several times. The aim of the March was to link up with Russia to get arms. The Reds survived the March because Chiang Kai-shek let them, in a secret horse-trade for his son and heir, whom Stalin was holding hostage in Russia.

**3.** Mao grew opium on a large scale.

**4.** After he conquered China, Mao's over-riding goal was to become a superpower and dominate the world: "Control the Earth," as he put it.

**5.** Mao caused the greatest famine in history by exporting food to Russia to buy nuclear and arms industries: 38 million people were starved and slave-driven to death in 1958-61. Mao knew exactly what was happening, saying: "half of China may well have to die."

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From Publishers Weekly
Jung Chang, author of the award-winning *Wild Swans*, grew up during the Cultural Revolution; Halliday is a research fellow at King's College, University of London. They join forces in this sweeping but flawed biography, which aims to uncover Mao's further cruelties (beyond those commonly known) by debunking claims made by the Communist Party in his service. For example, the authors argue that, far from Mao's humble peasant background shaping his sympathies for the downtrodden, he actually ruthlessly exploited the peasants' resources when he was based in regions such as Yenan, and cared about peasants only when it suited his political agenda. And far from having founded the Chinese Communist Party, the authors argue, Mao was merely at the right place at the right time. Importantly, the book argues that in most instances Mao was able to hold on to power thanks to his adroitness in appealing to and manipulating powerful allies and foes, such as Stalin and later Nixon; furthermore, almost every aspect of his career was motivated by a preternatural thirst for personal power, rather than political vision. Some of the book's claims rely on

interviews and on primary material (such as the anguished letters Mao's second wife wrote after he abandoned her), though the book's use of sources is sometimes incompletely documented and at times heavy-handed (for example, using a school essay the young Mao wrote to show his lifelong ruthlessness). Illus., maps. *(Oct. 21)*
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Chang, who was born in China in 1952 and left for Britain in 1978, recounted her family's suffering under Mao in her award-winning *Wild Swans* (1991). With husband-historian Halliday, she has written a shocking, authoritative account of Mao's life. The authors present evidence that refutes almost every aspect of the Chinese Communist Party's account, from the claim that the Party fought the Japanese to Mao's role in the Long March. Having gleaned indicting information from newly available Chinese and Soviet archives, they depict Mao as a bloodthirsty, ruthless egoist who committed crimes against humanity as serious as Hitler's and Stalin's. While critics acknowledged the authors' contemptuous, one-sided depiction of Mao, few faulted it. Some tedious details, vague generalizations, and scarce imperial history and context for Mao's rise frustrated some critics. But the book will destroy Mao's reputation forever.

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## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Dean Rakestraw:**

This book untitled Mao: The Unknown Story to be one of several books this best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this e-book you can get a lot of benefit upon it. You will easily to buy that book in the book retailer or you can order it by way of online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quickly to read this book, as you can read this book in your Mobile phone. So there is no reason to your account to past this book from your list.

**Maude Porter:**

The book Mao: The Unknown Story will bring one to the new experience of reading any book. The author style to clarify the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book you just read, this book very suitable to you. The book Mao: The Unknown Story is much recommended to you to learn. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

**Ricky Bradley:**

This Mao: The Unknown Story is great guide for you because the content that is full of information for you who have always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. That book reveal it facts accurately using great plan word or we can claim no rambling sentences within it. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole data in it. Doesn't mean it only provides you with straight forward sentences but difficult core information with wonderful delivering sentences. Having Mao: The Unknown Story in your hand like getting the world in your arm, info in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no e-book that offer you world with ten or fifteen moment right but this e-book already do that. So , this really is good

reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. stressful do you still doubt this?

**Bernie Watts:**

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