



Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of China's Cultural Revolution

By Fens Jicai

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the end of the Cultural Revolution and the 30th of its beginning, Feng conducted extensive interviews with 100 people who lived through that harrowing decade. In 1986, when he placed ads in Chinese newspapers calling for people's experiences, he received over 4000 responses. Those he has selected are disturbing, utterly compelling, seamlessly told and, together, constitute a many-layered and intimate picture. The interviews, which read like monologues, are prefaced by the person's age and occupation in 1966. One man, who was a 16-year-old student at the time, enjoyed destroying churches with the Red Guard, but when a classmate and an elderly man were beaten, he became a "non-participant." "I found that if you want to be a non-participant, the best thing to do is go fishing." A middle-aged housewife was not so lucky. When her husband was falsely charged with counterrevolutionary activity, they were both sentenced to No. 63, a prison camp where inmates were routinely tortured to death. She describes not just the cruelties she miraculously survived but the incidentals like the opera record, *The Red Lantern*, that the guards played to mask screams. Another woman, a gifted young dancer in 1966, was brainwashed into believing that her father was a "rightist." He died before she recognized the lie, and she now lives with terrible guilt. Feng includes four appendices: a chronology; key figures; an interview with the author; and several dozen short interviews to sample the widely varying attitudes towards the Cultural Revolution of those born after 1976. "What I fear most," says Feng, "is that later generations will adopt a sensationalist attitude towards the suffering of an earlier one."

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From Library Journal

Originally published in China in 1991 and brought out in a different form here (*Voice from the Whirlwind*, Pantheon, 1991), this work by the noted Chinese author Feng (*The Three Inch Golden Lotus*, LJ 3/15/94) gathers the voices of 19 people from various walks of life who narrate candidly their personal experiences during the calamities of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76). With a preface translated by famous China expert Howard Goldblatt, Feng has faithfully recorded the interviewees' reminiscences, and it becomes apparent that their hearts and souls have been affected by their painful encounters. Appendixes include an interview with the author, a view of the Cultural Revolution in the eyes of the new generation left intact after the disasters, a chronology of events (1949-79), and the key figures of the revolution. The last two are valued resources for studying the history of modern China. Highly recommended for larger public libraries and the East Asia collection of academic libraries. ?Steven Lin, Dallas P.L., Tex.

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Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lenora Hungate:

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different

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