



The Man on Mao's Right: From Harvard Yard to Tiananmen Square, My Life Inside China's Foreign Ministry

By Ji Chaozhu

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No other narrative from within the corridors of power has offered as frank and intimate an account of the making of the modern Chinese nation as Ji Chaozhu's *The Man on Mao's Right*. Having served Chairman Mao Zedong and the Communist leadership for two decades, and having become a key figure in China's foreign policy, Ji now provides an honest, detailed account of the personalities and events that shaped today's People's Republic. The youngest son of a prosperous government official, nine-year-old Ji and his family fled Japanese invaders in the late 1930s, escaping to America. Warmly received by his new country, Ji returned its embrace as he came of age in New York's East Village and then attended Harvard University. But in 1950, after years of enjoying a life of relative ease while his countrymen suffered through war and civil strife, Ji felt driven by patriotism to volunteer to serve China in its conflict with his adoptive country in the Korean War. Ji's mastery of the English language and American culture launched his improbable career, eventually winning him the role of English interpreter for China's two top leaders: Premier Zhou Enlai and Party Chairman Mao Zedong. With a unique blend of Chinese insight and American candor, Ji paints insightful portraits of the architects of modern China: the urbane, practical, and avuncular Zhou, the conscience of the People's Republic; and the messianic, charismatic Mao, student of China's ancient past—his country's stern father figure. Ji is an eyewitness to modern Chinese history, including the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Nixon summit, and numerous momentous events in Tiananmen Square. As he became caught up in political squabbles among radical factions, Ji's past and charges against him of "incorrect" thinking subjected him to scrutiny and suspicion. He was repeatedly sent to a collective farm to be "reeducated" by the peasants. After the Mao years, Ji moved on to hold top diplomatic posts in the United States and the United Kingdom and then served as under-secretary-general of the United Nations. Today, he says, "The Chinese know America better than the Americans know China. The risk is that we misperceive each other." This highly accessible insider's chronicle of a struggling people within a developing powerhouse nation is also Ji Chaozhu's dramatic personal story, certain to fascinate and enlighten Western audiences.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Born in 1929 China to a privileged family of Communist sympathizers, Chaozhu has witnessed a country transform while catapulting to its newly-emergent centers of power. Chaozhu's memoir begins during the 1937 Japanese occupation, when his father sent him and his brothers to the U.S. to help raise money for the communists and get "a first-class education," after which they would return to "help build the new China." Returning to China in 1950, after dropping out of Harvard, Chaozhu began working as an interpreter in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, before rising to become a deputy director. After Nixon's ground-breaking 1972 visit to China, Chaozhu had several postings to the U.S. and was appointed as an Ambassador to the U.K. His last position was a 1991-94 stint as under-secretary-general of the United Nations. Chaozhu paints a vivid picture of life in China, both the extreme poverty (by 1958, 30 million Chinese had starved to death) and the civil unrest generated by Mao's draconian economic measures and purges of so-called dissidents. Chaozhu describes hard times but also exciting, eye-witness to history stories featuring Kissinger's and Nixon's first meetings with Enlai. This absorbing book should make an invaluable political (and personal) primer for anyone dealing with today's China.

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From [Booklist](#)

To Westerners, the actions of the Chinese government since the 1948 Communist triumph are often confusing and seemingly contradictory. So an account by a Chinese insider is to be highly valued, even if it must be viewed with a critical eye and a healthy dose of skepticism. Chaozhu was born in China but fled to the U.S. as a youth when the Japanese invaded. He was educated at Harvard but returned to China, where his knowledge of the West and his mastery of English led him to a variety of high governmental posts in the Foreign Ministry, including acting as Chairman Mao's interpreter. Chaozhu describes some of the key events in recent Chinese history with a curious detachment, including the violent collectivization movement and the Cultural Revolution. Chaozhu's greatest admiration and affection is reserved for Premier Zhou Enlai, whom Ji describes as sensible, tolerant, and blessed with the warmth and compassion that Mao seemed to lack. Although there are few startling revelations, this is a useful account of some of the inner workings and conflicts within China's ruling elite. --Jay Freeman

Review

"It is a relief to read an account by an urbane and often witty insider who neither idolizes nor demonizes China's top leaders.... Highly recommended." ---Library Journal Starred Review

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