



Life Under Mao Zedong's Rule

Da-Peng Zhang

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On Oct 1, 1949, when Mao Zedong proclaimed the official establishment of the People's Republic of China, the aims of the Communist Party of China were still largely unknown to the majority of the war-weary Chinese. Now a new kind of state had emerged— a People's Republic. People wondered with varying emotions what new changes this would bring to their daily lives and to their country. Zhang Da-Peng's novelistic memoir of his first four decades, *Life under Mao Zedong's Rule*, is a striking and chillingly unforgettable response to this question, for three of these decades encompassed the entire Maoist period, that is, from 1949 to 1977, when Deng Xiaoping assumed the helm of the Chinese state. Zhang Da-Peng was an eight-year-old boy of a middle class family living in Shanghai on that day in 1949. As the years passed, he, along with millions of his compatriots, was swept up in Mao's epic experiment to revolutionize all of Chinese life. And like countless others, Da-Peng personally became the target of the "class struggle," as the Communist Party undertook a never-ending cycle of absurdly destructive political campaigns and purges of the so-called enemies of Socialism that culminated in the Cultural Revolution and the terrifying near-complete breakdown of Chinese society and institutions. Written many years later in Hong Kong, *Life under Mao Zedong's Rule* is both Zhang Da-Peng's dramatic and deeply humanistic personal memoir and his impassioned call to his fellow Chinese not to bury the memories of those terrible years in newfound prosperity but to reform the continuing abuses of the political system, lest tyranny recurs in China. For the general reader this is an intensely moving portrait of the struggle to survive the massive and ultimately disastrous national transformation under Mao Zedong's rule.

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