



# The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957

By Frank Dikötter

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**A groundbreaking chronicle of the violent early years of the People's Republic of China, by the author of the BBC Samuel Johnson Prize-winning *Mao's Great Famine*.**

"The Chinese Communist party refers to its victory in 1949 as a 'liberation.' In China the story of liberation and the revolution that followed is not one of peace, liberty, and justice. It is first and foremost a story of calculated terror and systematic violence." So begins Frank Dikötter's stunning and revelatory chronicle of Mao Zedong's ascension and campaign to transform the Chinese into what the party called New People. Due to the secrecy surrounding the country's records, little has been known before now about the eight years that followed, preceding the massive famine and Great Leap Forward.

Drawing on hundreds of previously classified documents, secret police reports, unexpurgated versions of leadership speeches, eyewitness accounts of those who survived, and more, and told with great narrative sweep, *The Tragedy of Liberation* bears witness to a shocking, largely untold history, giving voice at last to the millions who were lost and casting new light on the foundations of one of the most powerful regimes of the twenty-first century.

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#### Review

“Frank Dikötter's *The Tragedy of Liberation* just might force Mao's fans to look reality in the eye--and grow up . . . With *Mao's Famine* and *The Tragedy of Liberation*, Mr. Dikötter has created the first two parts of an important trilogy . . . As someone who did witness the Cultural Revolution firsthand, as a diplomat in Beijing from 1966 to 1969, I look forward to Mr. Dikötter's analysis in his final volume.” *George Walden, The Wall Street Journal*

“As he did in his previous work, Dikötter wades deep into the grim reality . . . [and] marshals his meticulous research to show how Mao continually set up expectations only to mow them viciously down. Under the 'shiny surface' of Mao's propaganda, the author ably reveals the violence and misery.” *Kirkus*

“The book is a remarkable work of archival research . . . Dikötter sustains a strong human dimension to the story by skillfully weaving individual voices through the length of the book.” *Financial Times*

“With a mixture of passion and ruthlessness, he marshals the facts, many of them recently unearthed in party archives. Out of these, Mr Dikötter constructs a devastating case for how extreme violence, not a moral mandate, was at the heart of how the party got to power, and of how it then governed.” *Economist*

#### About the Author

**Frank Dikötter** is chair professor of humanities at the University of Hong Kong. Before moving to Asia in 2006, he was professor of the modern history of China at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has published nine books about the history of China, including *Mao's Great Famine*, which won the BBC Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction in 2011. He lives in Hong Kong.

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