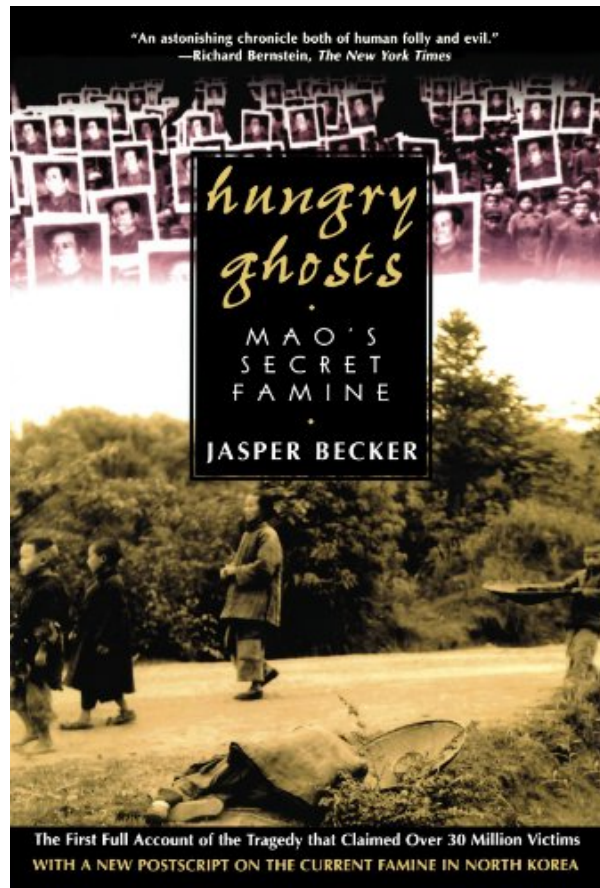
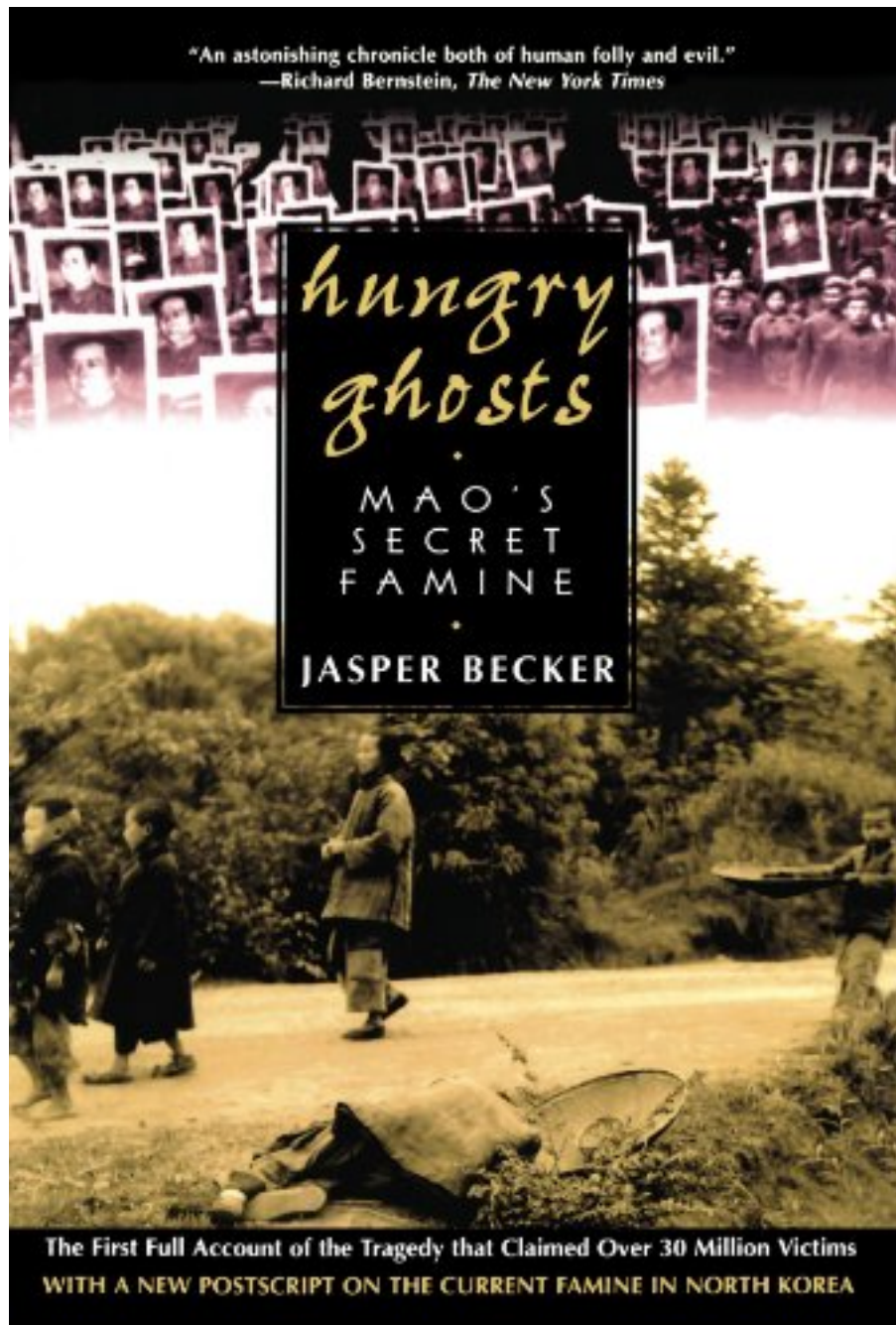


HUNGRY GHOSTS: MAO'S SECRET FAMINE (HOLT PAPERBACK) BY JASPER BECKER



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When you are rushed of work due date and also have no concept to get inspiration, **Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine (Holt Paperback) By Jasper Becker** publication is among your options to take. Book **Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine (Holt Paperback) By Jasper Becker** will certainly give you the appropriate source and thing to get motivations. It is not only concerning the tasks for politic company, administration, economics, and various other. Some got jobs making some fiction works also require inspirations to conquer the task. As what you require, this **Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine (Holt Paperback) By Jasper Becker** will most likely be your selection.

Amazon.com Review

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From Library Journal

Becker, Beijing Bureau Chief for the South China Morning Post, sees the 1958-62 famine, even more than the Cultural Revolution that followed it, as China's greatest trauma of the century. Population statistics made public since 1979 reveal that at least 30 million people starved to death in the wake of Mao's Great Leap Forward. Although Becker concedes that the American press (especially Joseph Alsop) reported the famine with accuracy, he notes that other Western "foreign experts" who admired Mao, such as Edgar Snow, Rewi Alley, and Anna Louise Strong, remained silent or played down its severity. The tragedy could have been averted, Becker concludes, after the first year if Mao's senior advisers had dared to confront him. Unlike such academic works as Dali L. Yang's *Calamity and Reform in China* (Stanford Univ., 1996), this work presupposes little knowledge of communism and China; Becker's strength is his anecdotal, journalistic style. This is fascinating journalism, but the definitive study has yet to be written. Jack Shreve, Allegany Community Coll., Cumberland, Md.

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In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Chinese people suffered what may have been the worst famine in history. Over thirty million perished in a grain shortage brought on not by flood, drought, or infestation, but by the insanely irresponsible dictates of Chairman Mao Ze-dong's "Great Leap Forward," an attempt at utopian engineering gone horribly wrong.

Journalist Jasper Becker conducted hundreds of interviews and spent years immersed in painstaking detective work to produce *Hungry Ghosts*, the first full account of this dark chapter in Chinese history. In this horrific story of state-sponsored terror, cannibalism, torture, and murder, China's communist leadership boasted of record harvests and actually increased grain exports, while refusing imports and international assistance. With China's reclamation of Hong Kong now a fait accompli, removing the historical blinders is more timely than ever. As reviewer Richard Bernstein wrote in the *New York Times*, "Mr. Becker's remarkable book...strikes a heavy blow against willful ignorance of what took place."

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Features

- Great product!

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101 of 105 people found the following review helpful.

Read it and weep

By G. B. Talovich

I immediately recognized the photo on the cover of *Hungry Ghosts*, a boy and two women (one carrying a baby) pulling a plow. When I first came to Taiwan, a few days after Lin Biao died and a few weeks before Nixon visited Mao, the government here frequently published this photo as evidence of how wrong things had gone in the PRC. Pooh, I thought, things can't possibly be as bad as they said. For proof I looked to the glowing reports published by the first American reporters to visit: one even brought along her father, who had been a missionary, and could speak some Chinese.

Years after Mao died, when the PRC started opening up, it became evident that the KMT had vastly understated its case, perhaps to avoid panic here. *Hungry Ghosts* documents a tragedy that the world hardly noted.

I would be the last to claim expertise on PRC government affairs, but one reason I believe *Hungry Ghosts* is credible is that detail after detail meshes with bits and pieces I had picked up over the years, unaware of the extent of the disaster.

Example: Becker mentions the dams peasants had to build. In the early 1980s, Mr Wei, from a family of tea farmers in Fujian, told me why his relatives starved: "We were told that tea is decadent and capitalistic. We were ordered to tear out all the tea trees and plant grain. Our family has farmed those hills for generation after generation. We know the soil, we know the climate, and we know that grain cannot grow there. We were ordered to build a dam. We didn't know how, so we asked the cadres. They said, 'Ask an old farmer.' We had no choice, so a couple old farmers got together and planned a dam, even though they had never seen one, either. We toiled and toiled. Since we were producing no crops, we had little to eat. Finally, our dam was finished. As soon as we let the water flow, it washed away the dam. We asked the cadres what to do.

They said, 'Grow tea.' But we couldn't harvest tea for several years. For three years, we had nothing to eat. Many of my relatives starved." Anybody who reads *Hungry Ghosts* will recognize the elements in this story. For me, practically the whole book reads like this, corroborating things I had seen and heard over the years. Mr Becker speaks with authority on modern China, but his ancient history is weak. The first chapter opens with "an inscription on a Shang tomb." I have never heard of an inscription on a Shang tomb. In, yes; on, no. If the inscription is translated correctly, it is hardly typical of early Chinese thought (unless the 'Emperor' refers to the god Di). Becker makes some outlandish comments about Confucianism. Okay, big deal, his book is about modern, not ancient China. His explanation that the Cultural Revolution was a response dealing with the GLF makes sense of an otherwise senseless convulsion.

Dear reader, this is a heart-breaking book. May you and I never suffer as those poor people suffered. May such times never come again.

30 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

Nice Job, Excellent Read

By Mark K. Mcdonough

I found this book well-written, well-organized, and moving. It's interesting to see how many Chinese readers consider it ethnocentric and anti-Chinese. I didn't take it that way at all -- Mao's sort of madness is all-too-universal in human history, and the story left me with a sense of great admiration for the Chinese people who somehow suffered through this period. Becker is also very careful to point out that the real roots of the disaster were not in China but in Mao's enthusiasm for actions of Stalin and the writings of Marx.

And if the portions on Mao sometimes read like a bio of Idi Amin, well, I'd consider that appropriate. He was a murderous, vainglorious sociopath. The fact that he was right about the terrible crimes of the Western powers against China neither changes nor justifies a thing.

Anyway, a very nicely written and fascinating account that left me wanting to learn more about both ancient and modern Chinese history.

20 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

The greatest peacetime disaster of the 20th century

By Peter D. Tillman

A horrifying and well-researched history of how Mao's "Great Leap Forward" became the worst famine in history, killing perhaps 30 million Chinese (1958 - 1960) -- it appears unlikely an exact fatality figure will ever be known. Which adds to the horror, I think, that millions of people, with hopes and dreams like our own, could vanish without leaving a trace, even a number, in the world outside their homes. Not to mention uncounted millions of children whose lives were blighted by brain-damage from malnutrition....

FWIW, Jasper concludes that Mao's Great Famine was more omission than commission (in contrast to Stalin's): Mao's absurd ideas of backyard industrialization, plus turning loose the Red Guards chaos, ruined the harvests. Then Communist Party officials simply denied the problem, and concocted elaborate coverups -- even painting the tree trunks to hide that the bark had been eaten by starving people -- when Mao or senior officials were to visit famine areas. And a smiling-peasants "Big Lie" for foreigners, which worked for years.

It's a remarkable, and depressing, account. Highly recommended.

review copyright 1999 by Peter D. Tillman

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