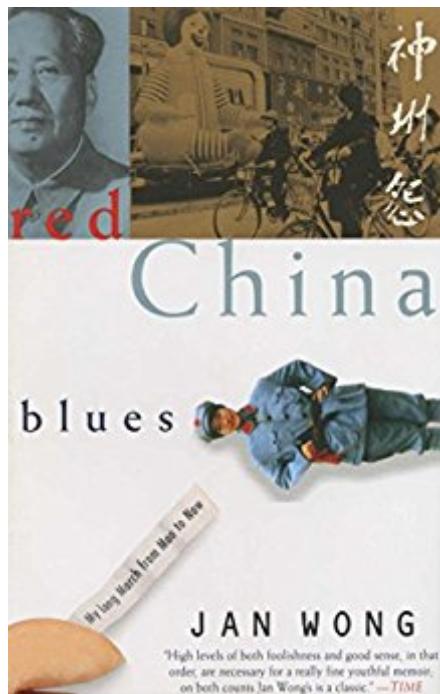


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Red China Blues: My Long March From Mao To Now



Synopsis

Jan Wong, a Canadian of Chinese descent, went to China as a starry-eyed Maoist in 1972 at the height of the Cultural Revolution. A true believer--and one of only two Westerners permitted to enroll at Beijing University--her education included wielding a pneumatic drill at the Number One Machine Tool Factory. In the name of the Revolution, she renounced rock & roll, hauled pig manure in the paddy fields, and turned in a fellow student who sought her help in getting to the United States. She also met and married the only American draft dodger from the Vietnam War to seek asylum in China. Red China Blues is Wong's startling--and ironic--memoir of her rocky six-year romance with Maoism (which crumbled as she became aware of the harsh realities of Chinese communism); her dramatic firsthand account of the devastating Tiananmen Square uprising; and her engaging portrait of the individuals and events she covered as a correspondent in China during the tumultuous era of capitalist reform under Deng Xiaoping. In a frank, captivating, deeply personal narrative she relates the horrors that led to her disillusionment with the "worker's paradise." And through the stories of the people--an unhappy young woman who was sold into marriage, China's most famous dissident, a doctor who lengthens penises--Wong reveals long-hidden dimensions of the world's most populous nation. In setting out to show readers in the Western world what life is like in China, and why we should care, she reacquaints herself with the old friends--and enemies of her radical past, and comes to terms with the legacy of her ancestral homeland. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I should start with why I like and recommend this book. Jane Wong tells a fascinating story, and I found this book to be extremely hard to put down. Her descriptions of life in China during the latter part of the cultural revolution, the gradual reopening of the country following Mao's death, and the crackdown at Tiananmen are first rate, emotionally powerful, and give you a sense of what it would have felt like to "be there" during those momentous events in recent Chinese history. I almost didn't read this book because I have read so many other books on China over the past years (in addition to a brief visit and many conversations with Chinese friends) that I didn't think this one would have much to offer. I couldn't have been more wrong. I would rate this book in the top two, along with Steven Mosher's "Broken Earth; The Rural Chinese". My disappointment with the book is due to the remarkable lack of depth in Jane's own spiritual journey. I was surprised to learn that she never really breaks with Mao. In the final scene of the book she is at a celebration of the 100th anniversary of Mao's birth, wearing a Mao button and nostalgically singing the Internationale (she explains that the communist anthem is still one of her favorite songs). While vacuously deceptive, the book's subtitle "My Long March from Mao to Now" is technically accurate; time did pass, Mao died, and she, like China, has changed. However, "My Long March from Mao to... a Little Less Mao" would be more descriptive. Perhaps because she hasn't rejected Mao, she approaches the many forms of oppression in today's China not as vestiges of the Maoist system, but as creations of the new one. It is as if the opening of the curtains had created the stage, instead of revealing it.

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