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# The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction

By Richard Curt Kraus



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China's decade-long Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution shook the politics of China and the world. Even as we approach its fiftieth anniversary, the movement remains so contentious that the Chinese Communist Party still forbids fully open investigation of its origins, development, and conclusion. Drawing upon a vital trove of scholarship, memoirs, and popular culture, this *Very Short Introduction* illuminates this complex, often obscure, and still controversial movement.

Moving beyond the figure of Mao Zedong, Richard Curt Kraus links Beijing's elite politics to broader aspects of society and culture, highlighting many changes in daily life, employment, and the economy. Kraus also situates this very nationalist outburst of Chinese radicalism within a global context, showing that the Cultural Revolution was mirrored in the radical youth movement that swept much of the world, and that had imagined or emotional links to China's red guards. Yet it was also during the Cultural Revolution that China and the United States tempered their long hostility, one of the innovations in this period that sowed the seeds for China's subsequent decades of spectacular economic growth.



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#### Review

"This remarkably full and efficient account provides a basic narrative of the Cultural Revolution, and then discusses in greater depth its politics, culture, economics, foreign relations, and memory. The book profits from Kraus's particular expertise on culture and the arts, and does not shy from controversial claims that are likely to provoke lively discussions." -Joseph Esherick, Hwei-chih and Julia Hsiu Chair in Chinese Studies, University of California, San Diego

"It's just 152 pages, small enough to slip in your back pocket, and written by a political scientist who knows the complex event in question through and through, and does a nice job of, among other things, dealing with the strange shadows it continues to cast on contemporary Chinese politics." -- Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Chancellor's Professor and Department of History Chair, University of California at Irvine

#### About the Author

**Richard Curt Kraus** is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Oregon and the author of *Pianos and Politics in China*.

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