

A CONCISE HISTORY
OF CHINA

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A Concise History of China is a succinct account of China's 4,000-year recorded history. Its carefully selected material and scholarly analyses are designed for foreign readers with little previous knowledge of Chinese history.

The authors are three eminent historians:

Jian Bozan (1898-1968), head of the History Department, Beijing University, who wrote the chapters on the early period;

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INTRODUCTION

This *Concise History of China* was written by the authors in consultation with the Chinese Historical Society.

China is a country with a very early civilization and a long and rich history. The purpose of this book is to give a brief introduction to her history and to outline the development of Chinese society.

The book is in three parts: early, modern and contemporary periods.

Like all other peoples, the Chinese have passed through primitive commune, slave and feudal systems. The development of feudal society in China was a slow and protracted process, the feudal landlord class maintaining itself by extremely ruthless exploitation and oppression of the peasantry. Nevertheless, society did progress, thanks to the continual revolutionary struggles waged by the Chinese peasants. The three large-scale peasant uprisings at the end of the Qin, Sui and Yuan dynasties gave a powerful impetus to the development of the productive forces of society. The Han, Tang and Ming dynasties with their mighty national power and brilliant culture rose on this foundation. Chinese history testifies to the glorious revolutionary traditions of the Chinese people and their splendid historical heritage.

Britain launched the Opium War against China in 1840, and from that time on imperialist forces made continuous inroads into China. Working hand in glove with Chinese

feudalism, they hindered the growth of Chinese capitalism and China became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. China's capitalist economy went through twists and turns and developed at a slow tempo. With the deeper penetration of the aggressive forces of imperialism into the country, the Chinese people became utterly impoverished, but more determined and powerful in their resistance. The first upsurge of the people's revolution was the Taiping Revolution, launched by the peasants in 1851. It speeded up the collapse of the feudal rule of the Qing Dynasty. The second upsurge was the Yi He Tuan movement launched by the peasants in 1900. During this movement the Chinese people dealt a severe blow at the joint forces of the imperialist powers who were compelled to abandon, for the time being, their schemes for the partitioning of China. The third upsurge was the bourgeois-led 1911 Revolution. It overthrew the feudal monarchy which had reigned for two thousand years in China, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government instituted a provisional constitution. The idea of a democratic republic became embedded in the mind of the people, and restoration of the monarchy was out of the question. However, as the Chinese bourgeoisie was too weak to defeat imperialism and feudalism, it could not change the semi-colonial and semi-feudal character of Chinese society. The history of the Chinese revolution demonstrates that only under the leadership of the working class has it been possible for the Chinese people to really complete the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution.

The salvos of the 1917 October Socialist Revolution in Russia were echoed by the introduction of Marxism-Leninism into China. The Chinese capitalist economy had then further developed and the Chinese proletariat had

become powerful enough to lead the revolution. Under the influence of Marxism-Leninism the May 4th Movement of 1919 started, and a new period in Chinese history was inaugurated, the period of the new democratic revolution. The Chinese Communist Party, founded in 1921, led the entire people to wage resolute struggles against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. Rallying round the Communist Party, the Chinese people fought three revolutionary civil wars and the War of Resistance Against Japan, finally bringing about the great victory of the new democratic revolution. The People's Republic of China was founded on October 1, 1949. With the birth of the People's Republic, the greatest world event following the October Revolution, China entered the new era of building socialism.

CHINA KNOWLEDGE SERIES

The Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, is publishing a number of new works in the CHINA KNOWLEDGE SERIES. The initial ten volumes will each address an issue central to the understanding of China.

CHINA'S SOCIALIST ECONOMY, which came off the press in early 1981, is a comprehensive analysis by Xue Muqiao, one of the country's leading economists. The author tackles both theoretical and practical problems, particularly those connected with the current economic reform.

Some forthcoming titles:

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF CHINA — From Ancient Times to 1919: A 500-page account based on the latest theories and discoveries.

ANCIENT CHINA'S TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE: A record of the discoveries and inventions by ancient Chinese scientists and master artisans over the centuries.

CHINA'S PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY: A description of the country's physiognomy with special reference to farm production.