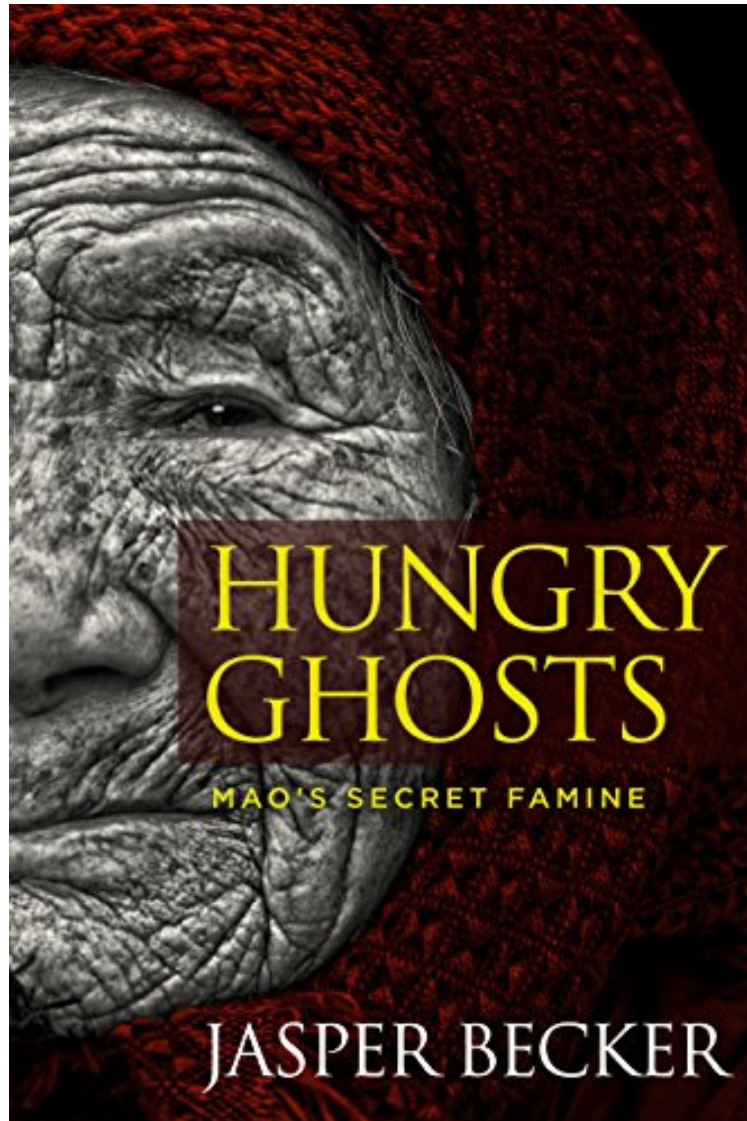


(Pdf free) Hungry Ghosts: Maos Secret Famine (English Edition)

Hungry Ghosts: Maos Secret Famine (English Edition)

Von Jasper Becker

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Von Jasper Becker : Hungry Ghosts: Maos Secret Famine (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hungry Ghosts: Maos Secret Famine (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A powerful but flawed indictment of Maoist ultra-radicalism.Von J. MartinBecker, Jasper. 1998. _Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine_. New York: Henry Holt. xiii+380 pp. Appendix, index, notes, photos, postscript, references. ISBN 0-8050-5668-8.Hong Kong-based journalist Becker documents calamitous starvation visited on China during the Great

Leap Forward, 1958 - 1960. Becker's thesis is that Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong's ultra-left communization and industrialization policies, which he pursued with blind zeal, were the root causes of the calamity; Becker estimates more than thirty million Chinese starved to death. This well-researched book is based on interviews inside and outside China and on documentary sources. Becker focuses on the anatomy of mass starvation, nonsensical agricultural theories and their effects on production, foolish "backyard" industrialization policies, unrelenting Communist Party factional politics, transparently venal political self-interest and Mao's emerging personality cult. Part one details the history of Chinese famines, Communist collectivization policies, pseudo-scientific agricultural theories and Mao's response to the calamity. The second part is a tour of the famine among peasants in the provinces, prisoners in labor camps, and citizens in cities. A Tibetan Buddhist leader's attempt to save his people, starvation's physiological effects and the facts of cannibalism each receive separate chapters. The third part examines political battles and policy changes that ended the Great Leap Forward and lifted the famine. Becker argues for Mao's personal responsibility, devotes a chapter to the death toll and discusses Western knowledge of and responses to the Chinese situation. A valuable postscript about ongoing starvation in communist North Korea ends the book. Becker lays the disaster at Mao's feet for his "...fundamental ignorance of modern science." (p. 99) and his willful refusal to believe the Great Leap Forward was leading not to utopian communism but to catastrophic national misery. Mao did not implement his policies without competition from other Party leaders. In 1959 at a Central Committee summer summit at Lushan, central China, Mao defeated powerful critics opposed to Great Leap Forward policies. Opponents were purged at the center and in the provinces; personal political loyalty trumped available evidence. As national starvation became more desperate, government exploitation turned more savage: "To force the peasants to hand over their last remaining reserves, the officials did not simply beat the peasants but created a nightmare of organized torture and murder." (p. 115). By spring 1961, news and investigations proved the extent of the suffering; Party leaders Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai succeeded in forcing a retreat from radical Great Leap policies. In keeping with practices intermingling policy and personal disputes, much of the anti-Great Leap movement took the form of factional attacks on Mao as supreme leader and policy maker. Many Chinese venerate the souls of their ancestors through ritual sacrifices; these acts keep the ancestors safe as members of their descendants' families. But souls no one nurtures are hungry ghosts. They are ill-fed, disoriented, kinless wanderers; they are troubled and may be troublesome. The metaphorical point of the book's title is that the souls of the millions who died exist outside the pale of human society. According to Becker, they do so because Mao Zedong caused their deaths. Although Becker does a credible job unearthing, displaying and discussing the evidence, his thesis that Mao is personally responsible for thirty million dead ignores the very complex etiology of the disaster. It is more reasonable to think the center designed and directed the disastrous policies but they were willingly carried out, until it was too late, by multitudes of cadre and citizens who must share the blame with Chairman Mao.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Left Wanting-LA Times review Von Ein Kunde Left Wanting; HUNGRY GHOSTS: Mao's Secret Famine. Reviewer, ANDREW J. NATHAN; Los Angeles Times Excerpt: This book does not do itself a favor by over-claiming anything. The subtitle says China's famine from 1958 to 1961, which killed 30 million people, was a secret. Promotional copy says the book brings to an end a "cover-up that kept {the famine} from the world's attention for more than two decades." It is true that the Chinese government has not come to terms with the famine, as it has refused to come to terms with most of what happened in the years of Mao Tse-tung's rule. It is also true that fellow travelers aided the Chinese in hiding the fact of the famine until after Mao's death, a cover-up that Jasper Becker tells well in "Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine." But after China opened to the West, journalists and scholars discovered the truth and wrote about it. Roderick MacFarquhar and Thomas P. Bernstein discussed the famine's political causes and Judith Banister and Penny Kane its demographic impact. Becker cites most of these works in his bibliography. In "Calamity and Reform in China" (Stanford University Press), which came out too recently--1996--for Becker to consult it, Dali Yang has analyzed the famine's differential impact in different provinces and its consequences for Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The famine became widely known in China too after Mao died. It exerted a major influence on reformers and democrats. Both groups vowed never to let it happen again. Becker, Beijing bureau chief of the South China Morning Post, does a service in drawing these and other materials together for a broader Western audience. He traces the causes of the famine to Mao's phantasmic Great Leap Forward, the failure of other top leaders to stop him and the haste of local leaders to comply first with Mao's irrational vision of free food for all and then with his demands for delivery of more grain to the state when there was none left. The core of the book is the story of human suffering. There are chapters on two of the worst-hit provinces, Henan and Anhui, a chapter on Tibet and details on other provinces. The book also contains fascinating material on death in the prison camps, life in the cities, post-famine recovery and the death count. Becker's carelessness with sources undercuts the effect of these stories. His citations are sparse; bafflingly, those to published works do not include page references. Many citations are to unspecified interviews or secret party documents. It is normal for an author to keep such sources secret, but it would have been appropriate to apprise readers of their nature and offer a defense of their reliability. Anyone who studies China knows how the historical victors demonize the losers. Horror stories are an unfortunate reality of life in the 20th century, but they are also a technique of totalitarian propagandists. True respect for the victims means caring which stories are true. When an official

document says a particular local official raped and tortured peasants and ate rich meals while others starved, is it telling the sober truth or creating a myth designed to foist blame on the losers and clean up the images of the winners so they can continue to rule? The logic of good guys/bad guys closes the door to deeper questions that a historic tragedy should lead us to ask. Becker does raise four important questions in a final chapter: What motivated Mao to lead his country into such a disaster? Why were local officials willing to torture their people to participate in Mao's fantasy? Why didn't the peasants revolt? What would have happened if Mao's senior colleagues had united to oppose him? Other questions could also be asked about the Communist Party's organizational and communications structure, the politics of Mao's court, the mental world of the sufferers, the social and demographic distribution of famine deaths, the literary and ideological treatment of the event, its historical relationship to the Cultural Revolution and the post-Mao reforms and its place in the comparative history of class persecutions. But by the end of the book it is too late to answer in depth either Becker's questions or others. Economist Amartya Sen, whom Becker cites, has supplied the main conclusion: Famine is caused by authoritarianism. Becker summarizes this insight in the wise words of dissident Wei Jingsheng: "Mao used class struggle to divide people into imaginary interest groups, rendering them incapable of discerning their true interests. Thus he was able to incite people to engage in mutual killing." Credit: Andrew J. Nathan is co-author of the forthcoming "The Great Wall and the Empty City: China's Search for Security" (W. W. Norton) and author of the forthcoming "China's Transition" (Columbia University Press) 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Free markets vs. government planning Von Ein Kunde I have taught finance at universities in both Hong Kong and the US, and I regularly recommend this book to my MBA and undergraduate students as a graphic illustration of the risks and weaknesses of a planned economy, particularly when combined with control of the media. Perhaps, as another reviewer suggested, Becker puts too much emphasis on the responsibility of Mao and not enough on his many followers. But the fact remains that this massive famine could not have occurred in a market economy and would not have occurred if so much power had not been concentrated in the hands of one person. Mao was brilliant when it came to maintaining political power but painfully inadequate in his understanding of science. In power politics, reality is whatever you can convince people to believe. Mao refused to accept the fact that science and economics do not ultimately follow this same rule (or perhaps he didn't care). No matter how many people claim to believe in a bountiful harvest, they will still starve to death if they have nothing to eat. To further understand the Chinese Communist Party under Mao, I recommend the book written by Mao's personal physician. As for Becker's account of the worst famine in history (and the postscript to the later edition, pointing out that it's happening again today in North Korea), the book is informative and fascinating. It offers a lesson for those, particularly in Asia, that don't believe that economic decisions should be left to the market. A government directing industrial policy is unlikely to produce the extreme consequences seen here. Nevertheless, the dangers of lack of diversification due to one set of possibly misguided or simply mistaken leaders forcing everyone in the same direction are the same. Too much attention is given to the relatively rare cases, such as Japan or Singapore, where it worked, at least temporarily. This is the most extreme of the many, many examples that show how painful failure can be when the same policy is forced on everyone.

Kurzbeschreibung 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 Zedong'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. 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." About the Author Jasper Becker worked in China as a correspondent for 18 years and is the author of 10 books on Asia. de This first authoritative expose of the 1958-1962 famine prompted by China's collectivization plan, "The Great Leap Forward," comes at a time when the cult of Mao is alive and well inside China, and while agents of Chinese influence are able to arrange audiences with a President. Via his painstaking research and reporting that included two treks through interior Chinese provinces, Becker tells how the famine occurred because ill-trained peasants were forced to undertake a gigantic and centralized industrial and agricultural expansion. The new factories, canals, and irrigation systems failed spectacularly, and in contrast to propaganda boasts of having economically outstripped the U.S., when in reality the populace was driven by starvation to cannibalism, slavery, and madness. Pressestimmen "An accessible, masterly account of the greatest peacetime disaster of this century." --The *New York Times Book* "An accessible, masterly account of the greatest peacetime disaster of this century." --The *New York Times Book* "An accessible, masterly account of the greatest peacetime disaster of this century." --The *New York Times Book*

