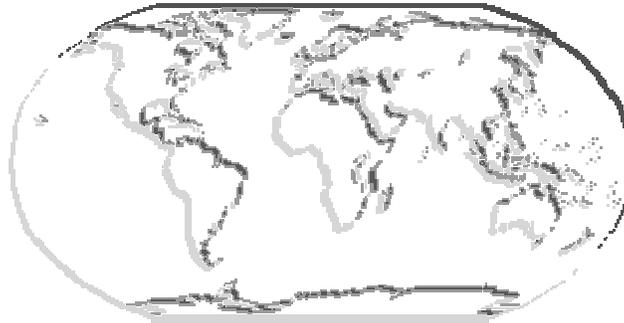


Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century



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- **People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong's regime (1949-1975): 40 000 000 deaths** [\[make link\]](#)

- Agence France Press (25 Sept. 1999) citing at length from Courtois, Stephane, *Le Livre Noir du Communism*:
 - Rural purges, 1946-49: 2-5M deaths
 - Urban purges, 1950-57: 1M
 - Great Leap Forward: 20-43M
 - Cultural Revolution: 2-7M
 - Labor Camps: 20M
 - Tibet: 0.6-1.2M
 - TOTAL: 44.5 to 72M
- Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts : Mao's Secret Famine* (1996)
 - Estimates of the death toll from the Great Leap Forward, 1959-61:
 - Judith Banister, *China's Changing Population* (1984): 30M excess deaths (acc2 Becker: "the most reliable estimate we have")
 - Wang Weizhi, *Contemporary Chinese Population* (1988): 19.5M deaths
 - Jin Hui (1993): 40M population loss due to "abnormal deaths and reduced births"
 - Chen Yizi of the System Reform Inst.: 43-46M deaths
- Brzezinski:
 - Forcible collectivization: 27 million peasants
 - Cultural Revolution: 1-2 million
 - TOTAL: 29 million deaths under Mao
- Daniel Chirot:
 - Land reform, 1949-56
 - According to Zhou Enlai: 830,000
 - According to Mao Zedong: 2-3M

- Great Leap Forward: 20-40 million deaths.
 - Cultural Revolution: 1-20 million
- Jung Chang, *Mao: the Unknown Story* (2005)
 - Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries, 1950-51: 3M by execution, mob or suicide
 - Three-Anti Campaign, 1952-53: 200,000-300,000 suicides
 - Great Leap Forward, 1958-61: 38M of starvation and overwork
 - Cultural Revolution, 1966-76: > 3M died violent deaths
 - Laogai camp deaths, 1949-76: 27M
 - TOTAL under Mao: 70M
- *Dictionary of 20C World History*: around a half million died in Cultural Rev.
- Eckhardt:
 - Govt executes landlords (1950-51): 1,000,000
 - Cultural Revolution (1967-68): 50,000
- Gilbert:
 - 1958-61 Famine: 30 million deaths.
- Kurt Glaser and Stephan Possony, *Victims of Politics* (1979):
 - They estimate the body count under Mao to be 38,000,000 to 67,000,000.
 - Cited by G & P:
 - Walker Report (see below): 44.3M to 63.8M deaths.
 - The Government Information Office of Taiwan (18 Sept. 1970): 37M deaths in the PRC.
 - A Radio Moscow report (7 Apr. 1969): 26.4M people had been exterminated in China.
 - (NOTE: Obviously the Soviets and Taiwanese would, as enemies, be strongly motivated to exaggerate.)
- *Guinness Book of World Records*:
 - Although nowadays they don't come right out and declare Mao to be the Top Dog in the Mass Killings category, earlier editions (such as 1978) did, and they cited sources which are similar, but not identical, to the Glaser & Possony sources:
 - On 7 Apr. 1969 the Soviet government radio reported that 26,300,000 people were killed in China, 1949-65.
 - In April 1971 the cabinet of the government of Taiwan reported 39,940,000 deaths for the years 1949-69.
 - The Walker Report (see below): between 32,250,000 and 61,700,000.
- Harff and Gurr:
 - KMT cadre, rich peasants, landlords (1950-51): 800,000-3,000,000
 - Cultural Revolution (1966-75): 400,000-850,000
- John Heidenrich, *How to Prevent Genocide: A Guide for Policymakers, Scholars, and the Concerned Citizen*: 27M death toll, incl. 2M in Cultural Revolution
- Paul Johnson doesn't give an overall total, but he gives estimates for the principle individual mass dyings of the Mao years:
 - Land reform, first years of PRC: at least 2 million people perished.

- Great Leap Forward: "how many millions died ... is a matter of conjecture."
 - Cultural Revolution: 400,000, calling the 3 Feb. 1979 estimate by Agence France Presse, "The most widely respected figure".
- Meisner, Maurice, *Mao's China and After* (1977, 1999), doesn't give an overall total either, but he does give estimates for the three principle mass dyings of the Mao years:
 - Terror against the counterrevolutionaries: 2 million people executed during the first three years of the PRC.
 - Great Leap Forward: 15-30 million famine-related deaths.
 - Cultural Revolution: 400,000, citing a 1979 estimate by Agence France Presse.
- R. J. Rummel:
 - Estimate:
 - Democide: 34,361,000 (1949-75)
 - The principle episodes being...
 - All movements (1949-58): 11,813,000
 - incl. Land Reform (1949-53): 4,500,000
 - Cult. Rev. (1964-75): 1,613,000
 - Forced Labor (1949-75): 15,000,000
 - Great Leap Forward (1959-63): 5,680,000 democides
 - War: 3,399,000
 - Famine: 34,500,000
 - Great Leap Forward: 27M famine deaths
 - TOTAL: 72,260,000
 - Cited in Rummel:
 - Li, Cheng-Chung (*Republic of China*, 1979): 78.86M direct/indirect deaths.
 - World Anti-Communist League, *True Facts of Maoist Tyranny* (1971): 64.5M
 - Glaser & Possony: 38 to 67M (see above)
 - Walker Report, 1971 (see below): 31.75M to 58.5M casualties of Communism (excluding Korean War).
 - *Current Death Toll of International Communism* (1979): 39.9M
 - Stephen R. Shalom (1984), Center for Asian Studies, *Deaths in China Due To Communism*: 3M to 4M death toll, excluding famine.
 - Walker, Robert L., *The Human Cost of Communism in China* (1971, report to the US Senate Committee of the Judiciary) "Casualties to Communism" (deaths):
 - 1st Civil War (1927-36): .25-.5M
 - Fighting during Sino-Japanese War (1937-45): 50,000
 - 2nd Civil War (1945-49): 1.25M
 - Land Reform prior to Liberation: 0.5-1.0M
 - Political liquidation campaigns: 15-30M
 - Korean War: 0.5-1.234M

- Great Leap Forward: 1-2M
 - Struggle with minorities: 0.5-1.0M
 - Cultural Revolution: .25-.5M
 - Deaths in labor camps: 15-25M
 - TOTAL: 34.3M to 63.784M
 - TOTAL FOR PRC: 32M to 59.5M
- July 17, 1994, *Washington Post* (Great Leap Forward 1959-61)
 - Shanghai University journal, *Society*: > 40 million
 - Cong Jin: 40 million
 - Chen Yizi: 43 million in the famine. 80 million total as a result of Mao's policies.
- *Weekly Standard*, 29 Sept. 1997, "The Laogai Archipelago" by D. Aikman:
 - Between 1949 and 1997, 50M prisoners passed through the labor camps, and 15,000,000 died (citing Harry Wu)
- *WHPSI*: 1,633,319 political executions and 25,961 deaths from political violence, 1948-77. TOTAL: 1,659,280
- **Analysis**: If we line up the 14 sources which claim to be complete, the median falls in the 45.75 to 52.5 million range, so you probably can't go wrong picking a final number from this neighborhood. Depending on how you want to count some of the incomplete estimates (such as Becker and Meisner) and whether to count a source twice (or thrice, as with Walker) if it's referenced by two different authorities, you can slide the median up and down the scale by many millions. Keep in mind, however, that official Chinese records are hidden from scrutiny, so most of these numbers are pure guesses. It's pointless to get attached to any one of them, because the real number could easily be half or twice any number here.
- Perhaps a better way of estimating would be to add up the individual components. The medians here are:
 - Purges, etc. during the first few years: 2M (10 estimates)
 - Great Leap Forward: 31-33M (14 estimates)
 - Cultural Revolution: 1M (13 estimates)
 - Ethnic Minorities, primarily Tibetans: 750-900T (8 estimates, see [below](#))
 - Labor Camps: 20M (5 estimates)
 - This produces a total of some 54,750,000 to 56,900,000 deaths. The weak link in this calculation is in the Labor Camp numbers for which we only have 5 estimates.
- Notice that many early body counts (such as Walker) completely miss the famine during the Great Leap Forward, which was largely unknown in the west until around 1980. There are two contradictory ways to assess those early estimates which ignore the famine:
 1. "If *these* are the numbers that they came up with *without* the famine, imagine how high the true number will be once you *add* the famine deaths."
 2. "Can we trust *any* of these numbers? After all, if they missed such a huge famine, they can't have known very much about what was going on inside China."

- ... so this line of reasoning will get us nowhere. In fact, the median of the 7 estimate that predate 1980 is 45.7M, which is almost the same as the median of the 7 estimates that post-date 1980 -- 58M. (At this scale, a 12M difference counts as "almost the same".)

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