



City of Heavenly Tranquility: Beijing in the History of China

Jasper Becker

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When the world descends on Beijing for the 2008 Olympics, it will find the results of a helter skelter rush for modernization and wealth. In the course of a thousand years, temples and shrines, palaces, and gardens had filled the walls of old Peking. Its narrow, twisting streets held the collective memories of five dynasties and turbulent events of the 20th century. It has now all been swept away to make way for a new city filled with dull, boxy high rises, rows of shopping malls, office towers blocks, and residential housing developments marching down uniform streets. *The City of Heavenly Tranquility* explores how and why the Chinese buried their history and destroyed one of the world's most fabled cities, virtually extinguishing the culture of one of the greatest and oldest civilizations within the span of a single lifetime.

In a tour de force by a long time resident, British journalist Jasper Becker brings to life the strange and exotic lives of the emperors, eunuchs, courtesans, and warriors who for centuries ruled from behind the red walls of the Forbidden City. Becker mixes his own experiences with poignant stories from those who were destroyed in the tornado of destruction as they tried to rescue something from the past. Writing vividly and with passion, Becker shows how ruthless officials and a fiercely nationalistic government set itself the monumental mission to change the fabric of a nation - and succeeded. He also explains how those currently in power, Mao's former Red Guards, remain determined to modernize China by jettisoning the past and clearing space for the future, evicting over three million residents in Beijing alone.

Praise for *Rogue Regime: Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea*:

· "Becker makes a powerful case for defining Kim once and for all--not as an ordinary, if nuclear-tipped, dictator, but as an extraordinarily skillful tyrant presiding over the worst man-made catastrophe in modern history.... A highly readable narrative that.... is a subtle plea to the world to expand its focus beyond the--admittedly important--nuclear issue to the vast humanitarian catastrophe unfolding under Kim Jong Il's gaze."--Joshua Kurlantzick, *New York Times Book Review*

· "A good new look at North Korea."--Nicholas Kristof

· "A very timely book.... Not for the faint-hearted. Mr. Becker takes an unblinking look at a dark regime that has made North Korea an international pariah, has elevated its rulers to the status of gods, and through torture and indoctrination reduced its subjects to virtual slaves.... The facts almost defy belief."--William Grimes, *New York Times*

· "Jasper Becker has warned us about North Korea, as a journalist with a sharp eye and an historian with perspective. North Korea with its bizarre cult of personality, its failed economy, its crackpot ideology and its relentless pursuit of weapons of mass destruction is a major challenge in the twenty-first century."--James Lilley, Former American Ambassador to South Korea and China

Praise for *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*:

· "A masterly account of the greatest peacetime disaster of this century."--Nicholas Eberstadt, *New York Times Book Review*

· "The first serious attempt to unearth the truth of the massive human tragedy behind the 'Great Leap Forward' in China between 1958 and 1961.... A remarkable book, the more devastating for its quietness and absence of rhetoric."--*Kirkus Reviews*

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