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Given the hostile biographies and debunking histories that have recently appeared, it's safe to say that Mao's long honeymoon is over. In this exhaustive critique, MacFarquhar (director of the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard) and Schoenhals (lecturer on modern Chinese society at Sweden's Lund University) cover the terrifying Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, when Mao unleashed the Red Guards on his people. As the unceasing, pointless intrigues between Mao and his chief henchmen unfolded, the violence and denunciations, the staged humiliations and mass executions raged remorselessly out of control, and the country lurched into turmoil. Even today, no one knows the final death count of the Mao cult. In rural China alone, according to a conservative estimate, 36 million people were persecuted, of whom between 750,000 and 1.5 million were murdered, with roughly the same number permanently injured. In the end, the authors, ironically, take comfort from one of the chairman's favorite sayings: "Out of bad things can come good things"