Mao Zedong, also known as Chairman Mao, was born on December 26, 1893, in Shaoshan, Hunan Province, China. He is best known as the founding father of the People's Republic of China and the chief architect of a form of revolutionary, anti-imperialist socialism known as Maoism. Mao's political career spanned more than half a century, during which he played a key role in transforming China from a predominantly agrarian society into a major world power. His theories, military strategies, and political policies are collectively known as Maoism or Mao Zedong Thought. Mao's early life was marked by hardship and constant struggle. His father was a wealthy farmer, but Mao rejected his father's lifestyle and values at an early age. Instead, he developed a deep sympathy for the poor and oppressed, which would later shape his political ideology. After working as a library assistant at Peking University, Mao became an early member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and helped to establish the Red Army during the Chinese Civil War. Mao is perhaps best known for his role in leading the Communist Party of China to victory in the Chinese Civil War, which lasted from 1927 to 1949. This conflict pitted the Communists against the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek. The Communists' victory resulted in the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, with Mao as its chairman. This marked the beginning of Mao's era of leadership, which would last until his death in 1976. Mao launched the Great Leap Forward in 1958, a campaign aimed at rapidly transforming China's economy from agrarian to industrial. This involved the creation of people's communes, where peasants were expected to produce steel in backyard furnaces and engage in other forms of industrial production. However, the Great Leap Forward resulted in one of the worst famines in history, with estimates of the death toll ranging from 15 to 45 million people. Despite the disastrous outcome, Mao maintained his grip on power and continued to implement his radical policies. In 1966, Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution, a decade-long period of political and social chaos aimed at purging 'counter-revolutionary' elements from Chinese society. This involved mass rallies, public humiliations, and violent class struggle, leading to widespread destruction and loss of life. The Cultural Revolution significantly disrupted China's education system and led to a general decline in productivity and standard of living. Mao's personal life was as controversial as his political career. He was married four times and had ten children. His last wife, Jiang Qing, played a significant role in the Cultural Revolution and was later arrested and sentenced to death for her activities during this period. Mao's personal habits, including his chain-smoking and penchant for young women, have also been subjects of much discussion and controversy. Mao's death on September 9, 1976, marked the end of an era in Chinese history. His passing sparked a power struggle within the Communist Party, with Deng Xiaoping eventually emerging as China's paramount leader. Deng embarked on a series of economic reforms that marked a significant departure from Mao's policies, leading to rapid economic growth and modernization. Despite the controversies surrounding his leadership, Mao remains a revered figure in China today. His portrait hangs in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and his embalmed body lies in state in the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong. His writings continue to be studied, and his image is used in propaganda and popular culture. However, his legacy is a subject of ongoing debate, with critics pointing to the human rights abuses that occurred under his rule. Mao was an avid reader and writer, and his works have had a significant influence on political thought both in China and around the world. His most famous works include 'On Practice,' 'On Contradiction,' and 'The Little Red Book,' a collection of his quotes and speeches that was widely distributed during the Cultural Revolution. Mao's writings reflect his belief in the power of the masses and the need for continuous revolution to prevent the restoration of capitalism. Mao's influence extends beyond China. His theories and strategies have been adopted by various revolutionary groups around the world, including in Vietnam, Nepal, and Peru. His vision of a peasant-led revolution contrasted with the Soviet model of a revolution led by the urban proletariat, and his emphasis on guerrilla warfare has influenced numerous insurgent movements. Despite the controversies surrounding his leadership, Mao's impact on the 20th century is undeniable.