Micropolitics in Contemporary China: A Technical Unit During and After the Cultural Revolution. By MARC J. BLECHER and GORDON WHITE. [London: Macmillan, 1980. 135 pp. £12·00.] (originally New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc. 1979.).

The study of contemporary China has long suffered from a scarcity of detailed case studies of Chinese work organizations. Most of our studies of factories and offices have been conducted at a rather general level, using the Chinese press and China trip visits, and as a consequence it is hard to get a feel for day-to-day organizational realities. For this reason this new work by Blecher and White is particularly welcome.

The volume concerns a technical unit operating in an interior province in China. The need for confidentiality prevents the authors from being precise about the unit and its work, and this is one factor that makes the book less than fully satisfactory as a case study. The study is based entirely upon detailed interviews conducted in Hong Kong with a " Mr Ji," who worked in a technical post within the organization from 1968 until about 1973. Blecher and White use Mr Ji's recollections to describe the situation in the unit before the Cultural Revolution, the dynamics of that campaign within the unit, and the ways in which the organization was and was not altered by the Cultural Revolution. There is much in this study that is of interest. For instance, there are descriptions of wage scales and various types of promotion, discussions of the divergent social origins of the three main occupational groups in the unit (technicians, administrators and workers), and an account of the Party reconstruction campaign in the early 1970s. The bulk of this slim volume, however, is devoted to analysing the social roots of participation in the contending factions that arose within this unit during the Cultural Revolution. This analysis is supported by a myriad of tables where we see factional allegiance arrayed against a large number of explanatory variables.

There are a number of problems in this study, and most of these involve the total reliance on Mr Ji. He is described by the authors as having an encyclopedic memory, able to recall detailed personal facts about all 248 people who worked in the unit while Mr Ji was there, right down to who their friends were, how they got along with key administrators, and where their spouses and children lived and worked. This great detail supplies the basis for the quantitative tests Blecher and While perform to determine why people acted as they did in the Cultural Revolution. One member of the authorship team (Blecher) has shown an unusual ability in the past to locate informants with supposedly total recall (in the earlier case rural family income figures were involved), and the absence of other corroborating data appears worrisome to this reviewer. He wishes the authors had treated their data with more caution and made fewer claims for absolute precision. Reliance on Mr Ji gives rise to another problem. Since he only joined the unit in 1968, his views on earlier events and issues are necessarily after the fact. There is simply no way to judge how much the description of the pre-Cultural

Revolution situation is coloured by the contentiousness that arose thereafter. Finally, the fact that Mr Ji left the unit in about 1973 means that we are left wondering about more recent changes.

Given the timing of Mr Ji's five-year stretch in the unit, the focus on Cultural Revolution factional alignments is a natural and important one. The conclusions the authors reach about the sources of factional allegiances are interesting. A large number of factors turn out to have been related to factional affiliation. Members of the conservative faction tended to have good class origins, to be workers or administrators rather than technicians, to be Party members, to be older and less well educated, to be PLA veterans, and to be male. Employees affiliated with the radical faction tended to fit a contrasting pattern on each of these traits. In one table (on p. 78) the authors examine the relative importance of class background labels and other factors in explaining factional affiliation, and they conclude that class origin had the strongest independent influence. This conclusion parallels those reached by a number of scholars analysing red guard activities within Chinese middle schools. As such this finding draws our attention to how an imposed set of political labels can assume more importance than more " real " social characteristics, such as educational attainment or occupation.

However, if one accepts for the moment the detailed figures provided by Mr Ji, it appears that this conclusion is too strong. For unexplained reasons, occupational position – whether a person was a technician, administrator or worker – was left out of the variables " competing with " class origin in the page 78 table. Figures provided elsewhere in the book reveal that whether a person was a technician or not is about an equally good predictor of whether that person joined a radical faction as whether they had " impure " class origins. And elsewhere in the volume we see issues involving occupation rather than class origins receiving primary emphasis. It appears that issues of " red versus expert," and how technically skilled people were treated relative to other groups, deserve to be stressed as of at least equal importance to the issues of class origins. That this is the case follows logically from the difference between schools, where this kind of analysis has been done before, and work units. In schools issues of mobility are very much real and anxiety-producing, while students have as yet no occupational identities and must be distinguished upon other grounds. In a work such as the one described in this book there was precious little chance for mobility in the 1960s, and on the other hand the types of work people did and their occupational categories and wage ladders were clearly distinguished. In this comparison it is not surprising that in schools the issue of class labels should become central, while in a work unit the class issue would have to share the stage with contention about the relative treatment of different occupational groups. Class origin labels are surely the most unusual and intriguing feature of Chinese stratification, but they are not always the most important basis upon which social categories are formed. Furthermore, the recent changes in class policy by

the post-Mao leadership may make class origin labels less salient in the future, and we would do well to be sensitive to other bases of cleavage in Chinese society. It is to the credit of the authors that they present their data in full enough form so that the reader can evaluate them independently and suggest changes in emphasis such as the one proposed here.

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The Future of Taiwan: A Difference of Opinion. Edited by VICTOR H. LI. [White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980. 187 pp. $17.50.]

Those who are inclined to pass judgment on Taiwan's future from comfortable chairs placed well away from the *terra operandi* would do well to read with some care this agonizing assessment undertaken by 15 Chinese-Americans, whose loyalties are at times stretched to breaking point and whose widely differing views are a reflection of a highly complex situation. As one of the contributors says: " Taiwan is not just a piece of real estate; there are 17 million people living there " (p. 38).

Among the participants in this discourse, Victor Li of Stanford University, the editor of this volume, alone stands openly by his view of Taiwan as " a *de facto* entity with international personality " (p. 20). The other 14 cover their tracks by the extraordinary device of using Christian first-name pseudonyms so as not to give away their own identity and thus endanger their friends and relatives who still reside in Taiwan or in mainland China. As most of them are natives of the Republic of China (Taiwan), nothing could be more telling. Taiwan's inhabitants from previous immigrations as well as the post-revolutionary immigrants of the KMT have lived for over 30 years under the restrictions of martial law, prohibiting industrial strikes and gatherings of the political opposition which nevertheless exists, though it is in constant fear of denunciation, arrest and interrogation, such as the treatment meted out in the Chungli " birthday party " incident (May 1979) and in the " Formosa sedition " case (December 1979).

The student of Chinese affairs may wonder why such ruthless measures should be thought necessary. After all, no other underdeveloped country can boast a record of a quarter-of-a-century of uninterrupted economic success, steadily rising living standards, outstanding educational advance and growing social equality. Moreover, even a cursory glance across the 100 miles of the China Sea ought to tell any sane inhabitant of the Island how much better off he is than any of his contemporaries in the People's Republic of China. Yet, the minority of some 2 million " mainlanders," who after 30 years on the Island rule some 15 million indigenous people in a manner no less single-minded than that of the former Japanese colonial administrators, do not dare allow the " natives " anything like a genuine proportional share in positions of political responsibility and power. In this, as in the