

anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth. The aim of the conference was to evaluate the late CCP Chairman and his place in China's modern history.

Almost all the papers in this book are examples of *serious* scholarship – serious, that is, to the point of being rather dull. This is in itself an important part of the meta-information that the book as a whole conveys, namely that few German scholars still manage to get excited about Mao. The one paper that breaks the mould in this respect is Thomas Scharping's contribution, an informative inquiry into recently published memoirs and biographies of Mao, an English-language version of which appeared in *The China Quarterly*, No. 137 (March 1994).

Su Shaozhi's contribution "About the re-evaluation of Mao Zedong in post-Maoist China" provides interesting insights into how a Chinese Marxist (once a devout follower of Mao, now a critical proponent of social democratic ideals) chooses to represent what has happened to "Mao Zedong Thought" since 1978. Oskar Weggel's "Rights, morals, and class struggle: the dilemma of tradition in Mao's teachings," Wolfgang Bauer's "Mao's visions of a world in transformation" and Klaus-Georg Riedel's "The Maoist 'form of thought' and theories of totalitarianism" are all carefully crafted and substantial, yet could have been written, and almost certainly were researched, 20 years ago. Rarely does the reader of this book encounter references to the many new texts by Mao to have come out of China since the 1980s (such as the *Jianguo yilai wengao* series) or to the definitive, multi-volume collection of Mao's pre-1949 writings compiled by Stuart Schram for the American publisher M. E. Sharpe. In most cases, the papers remain firmly within the predictable canonical framework of Beijing's official *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*. The discourse covers a lot of ground that has been covered many times before.

Somehow one feels that given all the new information now easily available, something rather different and better could have been written about Mao *laorenjia*. The essays on Mao, prompted by the publication of Dr Li Zhisui's *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, in No. 35 of *The China Journal* are proof of this. Yet, on the pages of the present work one looks in vain for provocative, stimulating and exciting scholarship. And this, ultimately, is why *Mao Zedong – Der unsterbliche Revolutionär?* is unlikely to be remembered by the time the next anniversary comes around.

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*China Since the Cultural Revolution: From Totalitarianism to Authoritarianism.* By JIE CHEN and PENG DENG. [Westport, CN: Praeger, 1995. 134 pp. £44.95. ISBN 0-275-94647-9.]

The authors of this slim volume are ambitious. They promise to provide "important findings about the *dynamics* and *pattern* of China's political changes" since 1976 (p. 9; emphasis original). They conclude that "the

fundamental agent of the reform was the public mentality" (p. 112), which brings one back to their "theoretical" assumptions. They are that "public attitudes toward, and perception of, a polity are significantly affected by changing sociopolitical conditions," and that "changes in public attitudes are likely to cause a change in the nature of the polity" (pp. 6–7). To put it simply, the main argument of this work is that changes in public opinion in China since 1976 have caused the transformation of the Chinese political system from a totalitarian to an authoritarian one.

If one is willing to accept China under Mao as a totalitarian state, one will have to agree that the regime under Deng has lost or given up "totalitarian" control and is merely an authoritarian one, though what has caused this "transformation" is debatable. The authors' starting point about the totalitarian nature of Maoist China is a dubious one. They take it for granted that "the deeply rooted Chinese political culture ... generally has a strong preference for totalitarianism" (p. 111) and confuse the Chinese yearning for order as one for "depending on authority" (p. 3). They ignore the fact that the preferred government in the Chinese tradition is one which is efficient, effective, honest, paternalistic and yet non-intrusive into the life of the ordinary people – not totalitarianism. It is perhaps because of their misguided assumption that the authors cite John Fairbank, Immanuel Hsu, Ho Ping-ti and Frederic Wakeman as some of the representative scholars of the totalitarian school of Chinese politics, and "define China's new regime after the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989 as an authoritarian regime" (p. 114) as if China had not known authoritarianism before. Furthermore, the authors never address the question of how the general public in a totalitarian state could have served as "the fundamental agent of the reform" for its transformation to an authoritarian one. If Maoist China had been as totalitarian as the authors presume, how could the public have sufficient freedom of movement to break its totalitarian control? If the powerful Communist party-state had taken the initiative to give up some of its scope and span of control after Mao in order to pre-empt a repeat of the Cultural Revolution, could changing public opinion have been "the fundamental agent of reform"? I am still waiting to be enlightened.

Apart from its main argument being unconvincing, this volume has also not been put together with the usual care one expects of academic works. One wonders whether the authors feel Chinese writers of the Republican, particularly the May Fourth, period should simply be dismissed when they refer to individualism as a new thing after 1976 (p. 3). Had Sun Yat-sen (among the best-known modern Chinese leaders) not lamented about too much individualism – in terms of a plate of loose sand – as one of China's greatest ills? The authors are also careless, so that even a well-known event such as the February 28 Incident in Taiwan becomes "the April 22th [sic] Incident of 1947" (p. 82). There are far too many other mistakes but there is no point in listing them. This is not a work which I can recommend.

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