Book Reviews

The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. Vol. 2: *The Great Leap Forward, 1958–1960.* By RODERICK MACFARQUHAR [London: Oxford University Press; New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. 435 pp. £22·50.]

The Great Leap Forward is now recognized within and without China as a great catastrophe. The mismanaged utopian effort to attain an economic breakthrough caused enormous dislocations and losses, staggering drops in output, and boundless misery. Growing indications point to the conclusion that the Great Leap Forward gave rise to a famine similar in magnitude to those of the Republican era. The Leap prompts major questions about Chinese politics: how could leaders who had spent 20 years in the countryside learning about peasants and who in the years 1949–57 had achieved major successes in state buildings, economic development and social transformation make such a mess of things? Given the importance of the subject, it is remarkable that thus far no book-length study of the politics of the Leap has appeared. Roderick MacFarquhar's new book is therefore a most welcome addition to the literature.

The book is the second of a projected three-volume study of the 10 years preceding the Cultural Revolution. The author's goal is to explain why Mao chose in 1966 to " tear down and rebuild " his political system. Volume I, subtitled *Contradictions Among the People, 1956–57*, appeared in 1974 [reviewed in *The China Quarterly* in issue No. 59 (July/September 1974), pp. 593–95] and focused in particular on the conflict between Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi over the question of outside participation in Party rectification. The current volume traces the history of the Leap beginning in the autumn of 1957 and ending with its abandonment in late 1960. Volume 2, it is important to note, does not deal with the recovery measures from the Leap and the political conflicts that they and associated issues such as the reversal of verdicts on Peng Dehuai precipitated. The reader will have to wait for the final volume.

The book is organized into four parts, corresponding to the major phases of the Leap. Part I, " Charge," details the gathering momentum of the Leap in 1958 and culminates in a chapter on the " high tide " in the autumn. Part II, " Retreat," describes efforts to return to a measure of realism as " Mao veers right " from the Wuhan Plenum in December to the Shanghai Plenum in the spring of 1959. Part III, " Clash," consists of one chapter, " High Noon at Lushan," on the dramatic confrontation between Mao and Peng Dehuai, which resulted in Peng's dismissal and the revival of the Leap. Part IV, " Defeat," describes efforts to keep the Leap going in 1960 in the context of the emergence into the open of the Sino-Soviet split.

As was the case with Volume 1, the coverage is comprehensive. The book's 12 chapters are subdivided into 76 subsections, not unfortunately listed in the table of contents, which treat specific topics in the context of overall developments. If the reader is interested in education, in the role of Chen Boda in the emergence of the communes, in the backyard steel campaign, in Chen Yun's role in revising steel production targets in

1959, or in industrial trusts in 1960, he will find an appropriate section of a chapter. If the reader is interested in the linkage between Sino-Soviet relations and Chinese domestic politics, he can turn to the opening chapter on Mao in Moscow and the signing of the secret defence agreement as well as to Chapter 11 on the conflict in the key year 1960, but he must also examine subsections of other chapters, which contain discussions of Mao's rejection of the Soviet model, of the Soviet role in the Taiwan Straits crisis and of the possibility of a Soviet connection in the Peng affair. One exception to this comprehensive coverage is the Tibetan uprising, which the author chose not to discuss at length because it was not made the subject of criticism during the Cultural Revolution. The detail will overwhelm some readers, but for specialists it will be of enormous value. One example: An appendix on " A rectification of terminological turbulence in the people's communes," clarifies the crucial issues of just what Mao had in mind in early 1959 when he spoke of the " team " as the appropriate unit of accounting and distribution.

Compared to earlier studies of Great Leap politics the present book benefits from having had access to post-Mao sources, including statistics, evaluations of policies, and recollections by family members and associates of Peng Dehuai and Liu Shaoqi. Somewhat surprisingly the author did not make as much use as he might have of post-Mao data on the scope and terror of the anti-Rightist campaign, thereby understating its intimidating impact. Conversely, full use is made of memoir literature. The result is a much richer image of key figures such as Peng, whose motivations and behaviour leading up to the Lushan crisis are examined in sympathetic detail. Similarly, the book conveys a vivid image of Liu Shaoqi. We learn more of his austere, aloof, thrifty lifestyle, his denial of special privileges to his children, and his lack of close friends. Liu's relations with his associates contrasted with the " camaraderie of Zhou's State Council " and " the bonhomie of the marshalls." Indeed, the author's skill in re-creating the atmosphere of the times and in plausibly describing and explaining the motives and actions of the key individuals make this book of exceptional value in bringing Chinese politics to life, and is therefore also of interest to the general reader.

Scholars who demand that elite politics must be analysed in terms of formal models of bureaucratic or factional politics will be disappointed. That is not to say there is not plenty of material on these topics. The discussion of Li Xiannian and the Ministry of Finance and of various aspects of the steel production issue sheds light on bureaucratic politics. Much data is presented on groupings among the leaders, on long-standing personal relations and antagonisms and on temporary and shifting alignments. The underlying cleavage between the military and the civilian party comes up in the Peng affair. But these points are raised in the context of the events of the Great Leap Forward, not in abstract or generalized form. What emerges is a complex political process dominated by Mao. It is political history at its best.

In Volume 1 the author sought to demonstrate that two-line struggle interpretations of elite conflict are incorrect in that the key actors did not take consistent positions on the issues facing them. In the present volume he pursues this task, examining issues in order to determine whether Cultural Revolution changes were accurate. Usually he finds that they

were not, that while individuals may have had different perspectives they often agreed on what had to be done. If Cultural Revolution critics charged Liu Shaoqi and Lu Dingyi with opposing Mao's educational line, the author demonstrates that in fact there was considerable convergence on this issue. If Bo Yibo was criticized for excessive emphasis on steel production, the author shows that it was Mao who was the biggest " steel eater " of them all. If Deng Xiaoping was charged with failing to consult Mao, it was due to Mao's voluntary withdrawal to the " second line." If by way of exception to the renewed leftism of 1959–60 a more moderate policy towards the capitalists was adopted, MacFarquhar finds " hints " in Cultural Revolution sources that Mao approved, though Liu was blamed. Political alignments of the Cultural Revolution period were largely not as yet in evidence. Thus, Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao were on the same side in the Peng Dehuai purge. On the other hand, in 1960, Lin emerged as a champion of the study of Mao's thought, whereas Liu and others retained their more cautious approach to the issue dating from the Eighth Congress in 1956.

Indeed, a central theme of the book is the close co-operation between the Chairman and " China's Khrushchev." It was the Mao-Liu alliance that made it possible for Mao to pressure the government leaders (Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun, Li Fuchun, Li Xiannian) into acceptance of a leap – the same officials who had called off the mini-Leap of 1956, labelling it " reckless advance." It was Liu who at the second session of the Eighth Congress formally launched the Leap. Remarkably, it was this sober-minded individual who was also carried away by utopian visions. Liu not only approved the communes in 1958 but also showed great interest " in the encouragement of ' sprouts of communist life-style.' " Liu in fact exemplifies a great many leaders, including some now prominent, such as Deng Xiaoping or Tan Zhenlin, who in 1958 shared the heady optimism of the Leap, accepting the vastly inflated reports of results. MacFarquhar properly speaks of the " voluntary gullibility, the willing suspension of disbelief of the country's leaders." Liu's support for the Leap was rooted, it is worth noting, in perspectives that differed from Mao's, such as his well-known faith in organization versus Mao's faith in unleashed mass energy. It was also rooted in self-interest, in that the Leap enhanced the role of the Party, while he himself needed Mao's support to succeed him as state chairman in 1959. Liu is portrayed in this book as willingly subordinating himself to Mao to a rather extraordinary degree, a stance that contrasts with his readiness to oppose Mao in 1957. A full-scale study of Liu is evidently needed to analyse these inconsistencies.

Mao Zedong emerges as the central figure, without whose " demonic desire for earth-shaking progress " there would have been " no leap . . . no communes . . . no mass steel campaign . . . no revival of the leap." Aside from his visions, the book sheds light on Mao's political skills, his capacity to retreat and to change course and on his endless inconsistencies. The same Mao who rejected the Soviet model is for a time inspired by Khrushchev's own breakthrough utopianism. The same Mao who placated the experts at the Nanning Conference denounced them a few weeks later at Chengdu. The same Mao who professed belief in balanced development was behind the 1958 drive to expand steel output at a wholly irrational rate. The same Mao who denounced the state

economic planners in 1958 consulted them in 1959. The same Mao who in 1959 encouraged emulation of Hai Rui – one of the gems in this book is the section on Hai Rui in the Lushan chapter – could not tolerate criticism from Peng Dehuai. Indeed, as the author concludes, by 1959 " Mao had reached a stage when self-criticism was still possible, but criticism was difficult to accept and ridicule quite intolerable." The author also notes that Mao's counter-attack, in which he forced his colleagues to choose between himself and Peng was rooted in concern that the attacks by Peng and Zhang Wentian " might shame more formidable figures into speaking up." Mao carried the day, but MacFarquhar shares Frederick Teiwes's conclusion that the Peng purge was a breach of party norms, " the first arbitrary abuse of power," and thus a watershed in elite politics.

If Mao bears central responsibility for launching the Leap, for checking its excesses in 1959 and for reviving it after Lushan, who bears responsibility for its prolongation in 1960? The remarkable and disturbing answer is apparently nobody. To begin with, Mao himself was for some time engaged in theoretical study of Soviet political economy and Liu was ill in the autumn of 1959. (But Liu talked at length with economists during his illness and MacFarquhar dates his conversion to economic realism to this time, but evidently there was no immediate policy impact.) The main reason for lack of attention to domestic affairs was, however, Sino-Soviet relations, a point made by Mao himself. Beginning with the Soviet response to the Sino-Indian dispute and Khrushchev's visit in October 1959, Sino-Soviet relations dominated the Chinese political agenda for a year. Domestic conferences dealt with the issue, as the Chinese worked out their stand as publicized in the famous April 1960 polemic " Long Live Leninism," in which, as the author notes, Chinese felt free for the first time to set aside earlier compromises. Major leaders such as Peng Zhen, Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi spent much time abroad at the various international communist conferences held that year.

Conversely, the domestic policy process in 1960 appears as desultory, fragmented and inconsistent. MacFarquhar characterizes it as consisting of " recycled euphoria of 1958 mingled with persistent realism from the first half of 1959," but surely the dominant strain was continued leftism in such areas as steel production, rural policies and urban communes. Above all, one does not get a sense that Chinese leaders had any idea of the depth of the crisis into which much of the country had already sunk by the spring of 1960. Sun Yefang tells us that the death rate in China rose from 10·8 per 1,000 in 1957 to 25·4 in 1960. Various indications point to famine already in the spring of 1960. Yet, it appears that only the disastrous harvest of 1960 combined with the withdrawal of the Soviet experts forced Chinese leaders to come to grips with the crisis. Even then, they moved slowly. Li Fuchun proposed adjustment policies in July. Zhou Enlai approved them in August, and Mao gave his approval sometime in late October. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that while famine raged, China's leaders were fiddling to the tune of " Long Live Leninism." Why they apparently did not know what was going on is not explained in this book. Presumably deception and concealment by local officials such as Henan's Wu Zhipu played a major role in preventing central leaders from learning the truth, but having

experienced the massive exaggerations of 1958, central leaders should have been alert to the problem. In 1961 Liu Shaoqi in fact criticized himself on this count, speaking of the " bureaucratism " of the Central Committee. His recognition of his own failures and errors must have played a role in shaping his approach to post-Leap recovery policies. How others, including Mao, responded to the crisis once its full dimensions were recognized is a question that the author will presumably examine in Volume 3 of this project. Given the excellence of the present study, this reviewer eagerly awaits the results of MacFarquhar's further research.

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Growth Processes and Distributional Change in a South China Province: The Case of Guangdong. By PETER NOLAN. [London: The Contemporary China Institute, 1983. Research Notes and Studies, No. 5. 89 pp. £7·00. US$14.00.]

This monograph is clearly the work of a China specialist whose methodologically formative years fell within the Cultural Revolution decade. The study includes maps, tables and figures covering roughly 20 pages. A quarter of the remaining pages are consumed by 327 footnotes in reduced typeface. This leaves 50-odd pages of text for Nolan to thread his way through the disparate and heterogeneous materials informing the title issues, which are elusive subjects under the best of circumstances. Many will find the work ingenious. Others will find it redundant, unpersuasive, difficult to follow or simply opaque. Most of all, it is the familiar handiwork of the serious China career scholar, a designation Nolan merits in its most complimentary sense.

Research economists throughout much of the world go about the daily business of testing delineated hypotheses on available sets of data. When information on the target area is limited (as is the case with China, particularly during the Cultural Revolution decade, but extending through the present), one is faced with an unpleasant choice in selecting a research topic. The first option is to choose a topic on the basis of readily available data, jeopardizing one's efforts with heavy dependence on the quality and generality of the data selected, conceding that the categories of that data, not the scholar, will then dictate the questions which can be conclusively addressed, and perhaps relegating oneself to the rear in confronting important issues. With the release since 1979 of increasing volumes of comprehensive statistical materials, more and more studies on China have appeared selecting the first approach. Such data availability allows those relatively unfamiliar with China some means of ready international comparison, albeit at some risk, and allows the pursuit of various methodologies common to the mainstream within social science disciplines, but hitherto unworkable for China. This development therefore presents an opportunity for China specialists to join the rest of the world, and an opportunity for the rest of the world, more or less on its own terms, to get to know China.

The second option is to pursue whatever topics are deemed important, via whatever scraps of even peripheral information and whatever convoluted processes of reasoning and intuition can be pieced together.