crucial importance, there are episodes which still cannot be fully elucidated. Nevertheless, despite such lacunae, it is true that the balance between what is known and what remains obscure has shifted so far in our favour that the time is ripe to offer a new reference work of this kind.

Tony Saich has risen to this challenge, and has produced an imposing compendium of documents illuminating both the facts regarding the Party's history, and the policies and doctrines put forward from 1921 to 1949. The choice of texts is judicious; the interpretation is always thoughtful and generally convincing. The translations are readable and sound, though occasional lapses can scarcely be avoided in a work of this magnitude.

The volume begins with a 35-page general introduction evoking themes which, in Saich's view, run through the whole history of the Chinese Communist Party down to 1949, such as the role of the Comintern, the role of the military, the Party's urban and rural constituencies, and matters of organization and ideology. The 1,400-odd pages of texts which follow are divided into eight periods, from the founding of the Party in 1920–23 to "the slide to civil war and preparation for rule" in 1944–49. Each section is preceded by an introduction providing information both about the texts included and about the context in which they were written. Taken together, these introductory essays offer a substantial overview of Party history from 1921 to 1949.

The result is an extremely valuable collection of source materials, fully annotated so that they can be used and understood by students with a relatively limited background in Chinese history, and wide-ranging enough to be interesting and stimulating even to those who know a great deal about the subject. Despite its awe-inspiring price, this book should be in every library concerned not only with China, but with history and politics in general.

STUART R. SCHRAM

Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan. By WANG SHAOGUANG. [Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995. xi + 345 pp. £32.50. ISBN 0-19-585950-2.]

This book follows firmly in the footsteps of earlier social science analyses of the Cultural Revolution, but with a twist. Wang's thesis is that Cultural Revolution factionalism, despite outward appearances, was not a fit of mass irrationality but a product of the rational pursuit of interests by different social groups. Paraphrasing the argument made famous by Hong Yung Lee in his 1975 article in this journal and in his classic 1978 book, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Wang argues that mass factions divided along social fissures defined by a group's stake in the status quo (pp. 269 and 271). He echoes the findings of Lee that were later elaborated and modified by Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen and Jonathan Unger in 1980 in this journal, and argues that differences in class

background and connections to the Party establishment divided the factional alliances of Red Guards and rebels. Reinforcing Keith Foster's lucid 1990 book about provincial factionalism in Zhejiang, Wang shows that in Wuhan also this kind of local factionalism did not end with the Ninth Party Congress but continued to rock local politics right up to the post-Mao coup of October 1976.

Because Wang acknowledges these standard arguments obliquely if at all, some readers might conclude that the book offers little that is new. Such a reaction would be unwarranted. Wang does offer new insights, although readers must be intimately familiar with past scholarship to identify them. Because his long and complicated narrative is supported by a prodigious amount of original research, including extensive interviews in Wuhan and local archival sources unavailable until the late 1980s, he would have benefited by leaning heavily on the scholarly convention that research findings should be framed in relation to what is already known to guide him in organizing his findings.

So what is new in this analysis. First, Wang's account of the social background of factionalism differs significantly in tone from the accounts based on intensive interviews with Guangzhou rebels. Wang portrays a "new elite" of educated, middle-class professionals as more privileged, assertive and contemptuous of Communists and proletarians than past accounts. This is a provocative view that deserved more explicit argumentation: the main evidence for it is published quotations from "rightists" Hundred Flowers utterances in Wuhan. Secondly, Wang's relatively brief account of school and work unit factionalism in 1996 differs from Lee's argument that intra-unit factors divided neatly by class background and political orientation. What Wang calls "tangled fighting" reflects a more nuanced understanding of how complex local circumstances can deflect rebels from actions that might be predicted from their class backgrounds. Thirdly, Wang's analysis of the famed "Wuhan incident" of July 1967 sheds significant new light both on the motives of the mass factions and on their interactions with central-level politicians.

The way in which Wang's analysis departs most originally from past accounts is in his critique of the group politics arguments that guide virtually all of them. In the early 1970s the argument that "totalitarian" regimes were pervaded by group conflict was a novel idea, and Hong Yung Lee's analysis applying it to the Cultural Revolution yielded exciting insights. Wang updates this by infusing his introduction with the 1990s' rational choice emphasis on the "collective action problem." That is, one cannot assume that shared interests lead to collective action. Leaning heavily on Russell Hardin's Collective Action, Wang's introduction raises questions neglected in earlier scholarship. The assumption that individuals rationally pursue their interests is of course not unique to rational choice theory. It was just as central to the work of Lee and Rosen. What is distinctive about Wang's position is that individual interests cannot be equated with group interests, and that shared interests will lead to group action only under special circumstances. Therefore evidence about differences in group interests and backgrounds is not

enough: one needs further evidence about how and why individual choices aggregate into collective movements.

Wang articulates this position clearly in his introduction, although he does not bring the argument to bear directly on past research and therefore fails to show explicitly how his arguments are better supported by the evidence than earlier ones. Unfortunately, his evidence appears to have been collected before he began to grapple with individual-level explanations. He has superb material about the social backgrounds of members of large factional alliances, and he assembles a detailed narrative account of the manoeuvrings of city-wide factional alliances over a ten-year period, but he has little evidence about events and interactions within schools and workplaces or within the smaller organizations that made up city-wide alliances – settings where one might observe the aggregation of individual choices into collective action.

Wang appears to recognize this problem and adds a periodic rational choice gloss to his narrative of factional struggles in 1966 and 1967. By late 1967, however, the collective action problem recedes and the subject shifts to coalitional politics among rebel organizations. Wang's glosses change to game theoretic arguments drawn from Riker's theory of coalitions. This is appropriate given the subject matter, but Riker's arguments, while certainly a form of rational choice thinking, are about coalitions among groups, and equate individual with group interests just as completely as the group theorists of the 1960s. At this point in the book the distinction between Wang's arguments and those of Lee, Rosen and Foster begins to blur.

This book's critique of group interest explanations raises a challenge that all subsequent researchers must heed. Its original contributions to our understanding of the Cultural Revolution would have been clearer had the author squarely addressed the large and fascinating body of research on the subject.

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Mass Politics in the People's Republic: State and Society in Contemporary China. By ALAN P. L. LIU. [Boulder: Westview, 1996. xiv + 251 pp. Hard cover £48.00, ISBN 0-8133-1334-1; paperback £13.50, ISBN 0-8133-1335-X.]

Even a casual glance at state–society relations in the People's Republic in the 1980s and 1990s reveals a set of phenomena of a type and a scale that would have been unimaginable in the years between 1950 and 1980: a state that has significantly retreated from heavy-handed domination of society, resulting in somewhere between 50 and 60 million peasants on the move in search of employment and opportunities, youth that does not fear to express cynicism and disaffection about the regime and their life chances, workers' protests, student-led mass urban demonstrations, and, most recently, open ethnic separatism in the historically non-Han areas of Xinjiang and Tibet. In response to these developments, a large number of