Review Articles

Mao Studies: Retrospect and Prospect

Mao: The People's Emperor. By DICK WILSON. [London: Hutchinson, 1979. 480 pp.]

Mao: A Biography. By ROSS TERRILL. [New York and London: Harper and Row, 1980. 481 pp.]

Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism: Eight Essays. By MAURICE MEISNER [Madison: University of Winsconsin Press, 1982. 255 pp.]

Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao. By JOHN BRYAN STARR. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979. 366 pp.]

The Thought of Mao Tse-tung: Form and Content. By STEVEN S. K. CHIN. [Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong. Centre of Asian Studies Occasional Papers and Monographs, No. 31, 1979. 287 pp. HK$50.00.]

Mao Tse-tung's Theory of Dialectic. By FRANCIS Y. K. SOO. [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1981. 192 pp.]

Mao Zedong's "On Contradiction." An Annotated Translation of the Pre-Liberation Text. By NICK KNIGHT. [Nathan: Queensland: Griffith University. Griffith Asian Papers Series No. 3, 1981. 53 pp. Aus$5.00.]

The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought, 1917–1935. By BRANTLY WOMACK. [Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1982. 238 pp.]

Mao Zedong ji/Collected Writings of Mao Tse-tung. Edited by TAKEUCHI MINORU. [Tokyo: Sōsōsha, 1983. Rev.ed. 10 vols.] *Mao Zedong ji bujuan*/Supplements to Collected Writings of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. 1. [Tokyo: Sōsōsha, December 1983. 315 pp.] (The remaining four Supplementary volumes, plus one chronological volume, are scheduled for publication between February and October 1984.)

Máo Zédōng 1917–1927: Documents. By M. HENRI DAY. [Stockholm: University of Stockholm. Skriftserien för Orientaliska Studier No. 14, 1975. 394 pp.]

Pensieri del fiume Xiang. By MAO ZEDONG. Translated by GIORGIO MANTICI. [Rome: Editori Riuniti, May 1981. 250 pp. L6,800.]

Mao Zedong de zaoqi geming huodong (The Early Revolutionary Activities of Mao Zedong). By LI RUI. [Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, February 1980. 490 pp. RMB1.54.]

The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911–1927. By ANGUS W. MCDONALD. [Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978. 369 pp.]

Mao and the Workers: The Hunan Labor Movement, 1920–1923. By LYNDA SHAFFER. [Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1982. 250 pp.]

Mao Zedong. Texte. Edited by HELMUT MARTIN. [München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1979–1982. 6 vols. in 7.]

China ohne Maoismus? Wandlungen einer Staatsideologie. By HELMUT MARTIN. [Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, June 1980. 240 pp. English trans.: *Cult and Canon. The Origins and Development of State Maoism*. [Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1982. 233 pp.]

In the summer of 1976 the Editorial Board of *The China Quarterly* decided, at the instigation of Roderick MacFarquhar, to commission a series of articles on various aspects of Mao Zedong's life and work. The idea was that these would be completed as soon as possible, and then held in readiness, to be rapidly updated and published in book form following the Chairman's disappearance, which manifestly was not very far distant.

Although this project was soon overtaken by events, the contributions were all submitted by early 1977, and the volume appeared the following autumn, roughly on the first anniversary of Mao's death, under the title *Mao Tse-tung in the Scales of History*.

Speaking not of my own essay, but of the work as a whole, I would say that this was not a bad book, considering the circumstances in which it was produced. But the title, while provocative and eye-catching, was manifestly over-ambitious. History had not then rendered its verdict, and could not have rendered its verdict, on a figure of Mao's stature. For the most part the authors could only fall back, at such short notice, on the views they had formed while Mao was alive, but at the same time they were seeking to shift focus to take account of the fact that the " era of Mao Zedong " was over. As a result many of the contributions (and this time I do not exclude my own) appear today rather like blurred snapshots, taken as it were from a moving frame of reference.

Even today, Mao Zedong, though he does not loom so large as he did in the 1960s, both in China and in the world, has not receded far enough on the horizon so that we can view him in true historical perspective. Nonetheless, during the past seven years the context in which Mao and his role can be apprehended has changed fundamentally in several respects.

To begin with, the Chinese have published a very large number of source materials, including the texts of many writings by Mao himself. Some of these are openly available. Others are, in principle, for internal use only, but on occasion foreign scholars have been allowed access to them, and a number of such publications have also found their way into libraries outside China. Thus the basis of information on which a judgment can be formulated has been greatly expanded.

Secondly, the Chinese have not only been writing extensively on Mao Zedong and his Thought, making use of these new materials. They have also been reconsidering both what actually happened under Mao's leadership from 1949 to 1976, and the fruits produced by his policies down to the present day.

Finally, with the passing of the years, it has become possible for observers outside China to distance themselves from the obsession with the Cultural Revolution which prevailed a decade ago, and to reflect on the significance of Mao's life, without treating any one period or episode (whether it be Yan'an, the Great Leap Forward, or the Cultural Revolution) as *the* prototype and summing up of the whole of Mao's model, or of his experience.

The purpose of this article is not to give my own view of Mao and Mao Zedong Thought seven years on. I propose to survey, first of all, recent literature in the field, with particular emphasis on the works listed above, published since Mao's death in China and abroad. I shall do so, not with the aim of reviewing them in the usual sense, though I shall make some comments on their respective strengths and weaknesses, but in order to sum up what they have added to our understanding of Mao, and to note new trends in interpretation. Having thus assessed the present state of " Mao studies " as I see it, I shall consider the prospects for future

research, and make some suggestions about key questions which need to be studied.

A word is perhaps in order regarding the sample chosen. For the most part, it comprises those works in Western European languages received since 1976 by *The China Quarterly*, with the random exceptions of two or three books, mentioned subsequently, which have already been reviewed here. I have omitted all writings by Soviet authors, because though some of them are of considerable interest, they pose special problems of interpretation, treated in a recent contribution to this journal.[1] I have omitted works published in Japanese, which are of course both numerous and important, for the simple reason that my rather basic knowledge of Japanese is not adequate to the purpose. Despite these defects in the sample, I should like to believe that it is large enough to be in some sense representative, and thus useful as an indication of where we have come from, and where we are going.

It seems logical to begin with two works which embrace Mao's life as a whole, the biographies by Dick Wilson and Ross Terrill. Although they bear dates only one year apart, and Terrill's book appeared just long enough after that by Wilson to allow the insertion of a reference to an " industrious biography by a British journalist " (p. 437), they belong in some respects to different intellectual worlds. It would not be unfair to say that Dick Wilson's book reads as though it had been produced in Mao's lifetime. " He invented for China a completely new system of life, economy and government " (p. 13). This system in Wilson's view, was almost wholly a good thing; indeed, " future generations may blame Mao " for not pressing forward with his project even more relentlessly while he had the chance, as well as for his lack of success in personal relations. " If Mao had been able to combine such experiments as the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward, both of which had exciting positive elements, with a better understanding of his colleagues and willingness to work with them, China would be in a happier state today. But one cannot have everything, and with a hero of this size one cannot carp too much " (p. 452). Ross Terrill's view is more sceptical. While concluding that the quarter century of Mao's rule " remade Chinese society," in a way that " runs on into the future," he adds that " China might have been better off if [Mao] had died twenty years earlier than he did " (pp. 429, 431).

Apart from such differences in the balance struck at the end the two authors approach their subject in very different ways. Wilson's book is, in essence, a history of the Chinese revolution and of Mao's role in it; Terrill concentrates more on the drama of Mao's existence. The difference is strikingly reflected in the proportions of the two accounts. Dick Wilson slices reality equally thick for every period of Mao's life. Ross Terrill gives very short shrift indeed not only to Mao's years in the wilderness, 1927–35, but (surprisingly) to the Great Leap and its aftermath. Mao's last decade, on the other hand, is accorded nearly one-third of the total

1. Gilbert Rozman, " Moscow's China-watchers in the post-Mao era: the response to a changing China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 94 (June 1983), pp. 215–41.

length of the book (130 pages for 1966–76, as compared to 43 for 1958–66). It seems evident that Terrill dwells at such length on what he himself regards as Mao's dotage partly because he was a first-hand observer of China in those years, and also has much material from interviews with foreign statesmen, but even more because this is the period when Mao's own tragedy seems to him to have been most poignant. The same focus on Mao, and on Mao's inward thoughts, finds expression in the style of the book, marked by very short paragraphs (many only one sentence in length), and a constant striving to be evocative, epigrammatic or both.

Despite these differences in perspective, the account of Mao's life down to 1949 given by the two authors is broadly similar, and is, in fact, very much along the lines of that presented in earlier biographies. Both Wilson and Terrill have incorporated into their discussions of Mao's pre-communist period the information regarding his participation in the Hunanese autonomist movement first brought to light by Angus McDonald,[2] but neither of them has been able to draw on the very full documentation about Mao's intellectual development during the May 4th period made available in China since 1979. Both authors correct the error of previous biographers (including myself) to the effect that Mao became Chairman of the Central Committee in January 1935 at Zunyi, making plain that the basis for his power at that time lay in his resumption of control over military affairs. Neither, for obvious reasons, is in a position to give details regarding Mao's election in March 1943, to the chairmanship of the Politburo and the Secretariat, since this information was published in China only in mid 1980.[3] Dick Wilson does state, correctly, that Mao had become Party Chairman by the summer of 1943 (p. 221); Ross Terrill indicates that this occurred only at the Seventh Congress in 1945 (p. 174). More surprising is the fact that, although both authors quote several picturesque passages from Mao's speeches launching the Rectification Campaign in 1942, neither of them gives any consideration at all to the political dynamics of this crucially important movement, which directly prepared the ground for Mao's triumph over his rivals (Wilson, pp. 216–18; Terrill, pp. 170–72).

If there is some similarity in the accounts by Wilson and Terrill of Mao's life prior to 1949, the picture is very different for the period after the conquest of power. It is here that Dick Wilson's rose-tinted view of Mao's last two decades makes his book seem most out of date. He explains away as unfair the common judgment regarding Mao's chilling remarks of 1957 on the consequences of nuclear war (pp. 326–28), blames most of the drop in production following the Great Leap on natural catastrophes, though " some of the responsibility " may be attributed to Mao's own policies (p. 355), suggests that Mao made " heavy weather " of his own errors in 1961 (p. 361), dwells complaisantly on the " colourful " language of the young radicals who warned the

2. See, in particular, his article in *The China Quarterly*, No. 68 (December 1976), pp. 751–77.

3. *Dangshi yanjiu*, No. 2 (1980), p. 77.

bourgeois bad eggs in charge of the schools that their " guts would be dug out " on the points of bayonets (p. 413), and argues throughout that the violence of the Cultural Revolution, the cult of Mao Zedong and his Thought, and all the other negative aspects of the decade 1966–76 were the work of Lin Biao, Jiang Qing, or someone else, and Mao had virtually no responsibility for them.

In a sense, this bias, because it can be discounted, is less important than the lack of a clear structure in Wilson's account. All too frequently the crucial turning-points in the political situation, and in Mao's own career, are glossed over or simply ignored. The confrontation on Lu Shan in 1959 is trivialized (pp. 347–50) in a passage ending with the judgment that Mao was " thrilled " to have spread the debate on socialism so widely among the Chinese people, and no real indication is given of the significance of 1957 or 1962.

Ross Terrill's hundred pages on the period from 1949 to the onset of the Cultural Revolution, while somewhat briefer than Dick Wilson's treatment, and oriented more towards evoking an atmosphere, or a series of images, do in the end give a better idea of the pattern of political change.

The long concluding section on Mao's last decade is, as already suggested, the most deeply-felt part of Ross Terrill's book, and generally speaking, the most valuable part. The author presents a thoroughly well-documented account of successive phases, from the first upsurge of the Cultural Revolution through the fall of Lin Biao and the visit of President Nixon to the final years of bafflement, frustration and decay. The view which is on the whole clearly and consistently taken is that the Cultural Revolution was " by no means " the " culmination of Maoism," but rather " a charade in a hothouse " (p. 330). Of the slogan " To rebel is justified " he observes: "It was a mindless theory and it issued in mindless practice " (p. 316). In fighting the " reality of socialism as proliferating bureaucracy," Mao's " inability to confront certain cold hard facts about the regime he had created made him invent phantoms " (p. 321). And despite his constant talk about the masses, there was on Mao's part persistent " bypassing of the masses " (p. 352).

I agree with many of these judgments, but the overall impression they convey is disappointingly thin and inconclusive. Why was Mao able, with such relative facility, to obtain mass support for the " mindless theory " of permanent rebellion? Did the answer lie primarily in his skill as a manipulator of the people and of the political system? Or was there something in the nature of Chinese society which lent itself to such a " charade in a hothouse "? Perhaps the main reason for Ross Terrill's failure to provide adequate answers to such questions lies in the preoccupation already noted with the state of Mao's psyche. On the inner world of the ageing Mao, he makes many telling observations, but the book is perhaps in the end too Mao-centred to tell us as much about the significance of the man and his work as it might have if the author had devoted more attention to the relation between Mao as the architect of revolution and the dynamics of socio-economic change.

Terrill does say in conclusion: " Mao's contradictions . . . became so large because China changed more than he changed, and so his relation to China's convulsions changed. . . . The man who hated the old ended up clinging superstitiously to an ideology others began to find old " (p. 431). But what was that ideology? If he does not give us much on Mao as a theorist of development, during and after the Great Leap Forward, Terrill comes back repeatedly to Mao's relation to Marxism and to the Chinese tradition. At times he argues that Mao had " cut loose from the tenets of Marxism " (p. 299), and evolved " from Marxist to monkey king " (p. 324), or more broadly to the role of a traditional Chinese ruler. But elsewhere, he says that Mao was successively China's Marx, when he analysed Chinese society half a century ago; Lenin, when he led the struggle for power; and Stalin, when he " took trowel and bricks to build a new China " as well as being a latter-day Qin Shihuang (p. 426). In other words, he was mainly Marxist in inspiration after all. The contradiction remains unresolved.

Another closely-related polarity is that evoked by Terrill at the very beginning: " This book is dedicated to the flair for leadership which is craved in some countries today, and equally to the impulse of ordinary people to be free from the mystifications of leadership." It is perhaps not so much a " flair for leadership " (which Mao manifestly had) as a strong and legitimate ruler, controlling an effective political system, to which the Chinese people throughout the 20th century have aspired. But the second half of Terrill's formulation is (if I understood it correctly) well put. I take it to mean, not that all leadership is, of necessity, mystification, but that Mao's role as leader increasingly assumed forms which disguised its real nature, and that these representations, anchored in Mao's own experience, were increasingly out of place in the new China he brought into existence. But why was this so, and where did the crucial conflict between Mao's rule and the needs and aspirations of the Chinese people lie?

This question, and more broadly the dualities of Marxism and the Chinese tradition, and of leadership and mass response, are central to the volume of essays by Maurice Meisner entitled *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*. Of the eight pieces in this book, five were published between 1968 and 1977, including one in *The China Quarterly*.[4] Noting this fact in the preface, Meisner remarks that despite Chinese condemnation of Mao's last decade as " the ten lost years," the " nature of Maoism appears essentially the same " to him now as it did then. He has therefore not attempted to rewrite these chapters with the " sometimes dubious benefits of historical hindsight " (p. xii). It is all too true that, as Maurice Meisner observes ironically, " many . . . Western observers who found so many virtues in Maoism during the Maoist era have now come to see the errors of their ways (now that the errors have been officially revealed in Peking) and join in the general celebration of the new course followed by Mao's successors " (p. x). It is refreshing to encounter a man of principle who refuses to follow the tide of fashion; but at the same time it is

4. M. Meisner, " Leninism and Maoism: some populist perspectives on Marxism–Leninism in China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 45 (March 1971), pp. 2–36.

disappointing to see someone with Meisner's knowledge and talent so preoccupied with not allowing himself to be dictated to that he refuses to re-examine his previous assumptions, even in his own way.

In my view Maurice Meisner's attempt in this book to demonstrate the immeasurable superiority of " Maoist utopianism " over the " depoliticization " and " deradicalization " of policy and ideology in China today is partially vitiated by two basic weaknesses. On the one hand, he exaggerates to the point of caricature the " Thermadorian reaction " which, in his view, has taken place in China since Mao's death (p. 217). And on the other hand, after himself highlighting some of the contradictions which lie at the heart of Mao's vision in the 1950s and 1960s, he simply ignores these in drawing his overall conclusions.

The first point – Meisner's evaluation of the curent line – I shall take up in the conclusion of this article, when I examine briefly the present significance of Mao Zedong and his thought. For the moment, I wish to consider his interpretation of Mao's own vision, which is one of the most recent of those thus far published (the preface to the book is dated August 1981), and which, though in my opinion flawed, raises most of the key questions in sharp form.

As the title suggests, the theme of Maurice Meisner's book is the nature and function of the utopian element in Mao Zedong's Thought, and in that of Marx and Lenin. Taking as his text an observation by Lewis Mumford to the effect that " utopia " can mean " either the ultimate in human hope or the ultimate in human folly " (p. 3), Meisner develops a complex argument regarding the need for a " chiliastic utopian expectation " if Marxism is to find " meaningful expression " in " backward lands " (p. 26), and regarding the basically positive impact of this aspect of " Maoism " on the course of the Chinese revolution from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In a word, Meisner's view is that, although the social goals proclaimed by Mao were " Marxist-inspired," the " means to achieve them were not." He makes this point as follows with reference to the Great Leap Forward, seen as the " fullest and most pristine expression " of the Maoist vision: " There is of course nothing either Marxist or Leninist in the Maoist belief that the truly creative forces for revolutionary social change reside in the countryside rather than the cities, in the faith that the power of the human spirit is the decisive factor in bringing about the new society, or in the assumption that ' the transition from socialism to communism ' could be accomplished in conditions of economic scarcity " (pp. 190, 193). And despite repeated references scattered throughout the book to the traditionalistic and downright anti-Marxist aspects of the Cultural Revolution, Meisner still regards this phenomenon, which had " begun with a fiercely iconoclastic assault against the traditions of the Chinese past . . . , and was undertaken on the assumption that the destruction of old values was the precondition for the modern revolutionary transformation of the consciousness of the people . . . , essential . . . to safeguard China's transition to socialism," as a " genuine and largely spontaneous mass revolutionary movement " (pp. 169–70).

Summing up the " Maoist vision " over the whole period during which it dominated Chinese political life, Meisner asserts that " a central part " of it is " certainly a Marxist-inspired conception of a future communist utopia." " Maoists," he declares, " consistently proclaimed their determination to achieve the classic Marxist goals of abolishing distinctions between mental and manual labor, between town and countryside, and between workers and peasants – and even the eventual ' withering away ' of the state. And these Marxist ends (or at least the first three) were pursued vigorously in Maoist socioeconomic policies and programs – and not without significant historical consequences " (pp. 197–98).

That there are aspects of the Maoist vision which have played, and can still play, a useful role is not a proposition I would dispute; indeed, using a somewhat different vocabulary and framework of analysis from Meisner's, I put such a view myself in this journal, in an article sent to the printer at about the same time as his book.[5] I have, however, two basic misgivings about the form in which Maurice Meisner argues his case.

First of all, he grossly exaggerates Mao's one-sided reliance on the peasants, the young and ignorant, and more broadly on " the spiritual and moral transformation of people " as the key actors and instruments for building socialism, asserting that " Maoists " (a category, incidentally, which he uses constantly but never defines) " relegate objective economic conditions to a secondary status " (pp. 198–99, etc.). This distortion is accentuated by Meisner's view that Mao himself only became a full-fledged " Maoist " in 1958 (p. 190). The argument that Mao was systematically hostile to technological and bureaucratic expertise would obviously be untenable if one gave any weight to his position in January 1956, when he stated categorically, in his speech presenting the 12-year programme for agricultural development to the Supreme State Conference, that in achieving the " great goal " of " wiping out China's economic, scientific and cultural backwardness," " the decisive factor was to have cadres, to have an adequate number of excellent scientists and technicians."[6] But even during the period of the Great Leap, if not that of the Cultural Revolution, Mao consistently stressed the importance of industrialization, " modernization " (a term he employed repeatedly), and economic development.

Up to a point, Meisner recognizes this, as when he defines the goal of Maoism as " rational mastery over the world," through " encouraging a spirit of experimentation and innovation favorable to modern economic development " (pp. 207–208). But it is hard to reconcile this statement, which apparently applies in Meisner's view to the Cultural Revolution as well as the Great Leap, with his own observations about " a partially dystopian strain in the Maoist mentality whereby the dominant values and tendencies of the . . . present conditions of economic backwardness were projected into a vision of a spiritual and rural-based future utopia " (p. 203).

5. See *The China Quarterly*, No. 87 (September 1981), pp. 407–439.

6. H. Carrère d'Encausse and S. Schram, *Marxism and Asia* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969), p. 293.

One is also left somewhat perplexed by this characterization of the " Maoist vision of the good society of the future ":

> The moral transformation of the people was not only the prerequisite for communism, but part of a vision of the future that was as much a spiritual utopia as a social and material one. A collectivistic society based on common spiritual bonds and maintained through a ceaseless process of " ideological struggle " against the ever-present danger of the intrusion of incorrect thoughts was a central element in the Maoist vision of the future. The Maoist conception of the leap from " the realm of necessity " to " the realm of freedom " suggests not the Marxist image of a society conducive to the free realization of individual human potentialities but rather a society whose members are engaged in a constant struggle to internalize and practice prescribed collectivistic moral values and social norms (pp. 201–202).

Maurice Meisner does not indicate total approval for this project, but broadly speaking it appears to correspond to what he regards as the positive side of the Maoist utopia. By those Chinese who lived through the Cultural Revolution, I suspect it is remembered more as a nightmare.

The second point which arouses some misgivings is Maurice Meisner's treatment of the political dimension of the Mao phenomenon. He recognizes, and indeed underscores, both the reality of the Mao cult and its roots in the Chinese past. He refers to the " infusion " of the cult " with traditional religious symbolism " during the Cultural Revolution (p. 168), and while, in his opinion, the cult had " stimulated the masses to take revolutionary and iconoclastic actions " in the early phases of the Cultural Revolution, at the end " it simply produced icons for the masses to worship " (p. 170). He notes, moreover, that the cult was " intimately involved in the Byzantine political struggles and palace intrigues among the Chairman's would-be successors which marked Chinese political life during Mao's last years " (p. 172). And yet he maintains that the Mao cult " differed radically . . . in [its] socio-political functions " from that of Stalin (p. 174), and that it " was employed in increasingly explicit fashion to serve peasant interests " (p. 178), the cult being in Meisner's view (as in that of the Chinese today) in large part a reflection of the mentality of the peasants. The cult, he concludes, " was used by Mao to promote policies which mitigated the exploitation of the rural areas, . . . policies which envisioned an agrarian road to socialism " (p. 182). But then, with another turn of the dialectical screw, he adds: ". . . the cult of Mao Tse-tung is one of the most extreme examples in modern history of the alienation of the social power of the people into fetishized political authority. . . . The once insurgent peasants who had given Mao his power in the first place, and who provided him with the mystique of ' savior ' and ' genius,' now bowed before plaster statues of their liberator. And thus, for the Chinese people, Liberation was only partially liberating . . ." (p. 183).

How can such an " archaic and alien " form of " fetishized political authority " which replaced the economic oppression from which the peasants had previously suffered by " a new form of political bondage " (loc. cit.) be squared with Meisner's view that, taken as a whole, Mao's

contribution to the Chinese revolution during his last two decades consisted in the elaboration of a utopian vision which had a profoundly positive historical impact? The key lies, I think, in the concluding lines of the chapter on the Mao cult, in which Meisner quotes a formulation of the young Marx: " Only when man has recognised and organised his own powers as social forces, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of political power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished " (p. 183; from " On the Jewish question "). If we take this (as Meisner plainly does) as a fair summing-up of the Marxist theory of the state, then one could argue that, since this mystification still survives everywhere in the world, it would be unfair to criticize Mao too severely for failing to promote effectively the " withering away of the state." In my opinion, Marx's thought, taken as a whole, attributes a far more positive role to state power in the process of historical development than Meisner is willing to recognize. But whether or not Marx took the view Maurice Meisner attributes to him, the either/or choice between despotism and anarchy which he proposes to the Chinese people does not in fact offer them any meaningful or viable way out of their predicament.

John Bryan Starr's work is the only book-length study of Mao's thought as a whole written since 1976. (Steve Chin's monograph, although the English edition appeared in 1979, was in fact published in Chinese in Mao's lifetime, and has already been reviewed in these pages.[7]) Starr's book has many merits. It is well written, comprehensive in its use of the sources which had become available by the time when it was revised for publication (summer 1978), and deals systematically with most of the important dimensions of Mao's thought, both political and philosophical. The author often draws interesting parallels between Mao's ideas and the theories of western students of politics and society. In the end, however, the value of the work is limited by two factors.

First of all, as the title suggests, the book was plainly conceived during the Cultural Revolution. While, as I indicated above in discussing Maurice Meisner's book, I by no means take the view that we should repudiate as erroneous, without further discussion, everything Mao did during his last 20 years, it does cause a certain unease to read that, despite the " occasionally willful and often excessive actions of young students attacking remnants of feudal culture," the Cultural Revolution " was a movement in which a new legitimacy was accorded to direct popular action in pursuit of the resolution of old conflicts in society," and that the reforms undertaken during it, though " in some cases . . . impossible to implement because they met with strong resistance from powerful interests unwilling to relinquish the authority they held," nonetheless " began the process of dealing with the problem of miswielded authority as a cause of embourgeoisement " (pp. 304–305). The " problem of miswielded authority " did indeed exist, but the Cultural Revolution did little to resolve it.

This defect (or what I perceive as a defect) is partially accidental, in the

7. *The China Quarterly*, No. 68 (December 1976), pp. 845–48.

sense that, if John Bryan Starr had revised his book two or three years later, he would probably not have drawn exactly the same conclusions, in the same terms. There would, however, remain the other, and perhaps more grievous problem posed by the essentially ahistorical character of Starr's approach. He is himself well aware of this issue, and justifies his methodology as follows:

> While it is impossible to speak of the evolution of Mao's ideas during the course of his career without alluding from time to time to certain events in that career, and while I have attempted to relate major shifts in his ideas to the events that I believe influenced those shifts, I have not set out to relate his political ideas to his political biography in a systematic fashion. . . .
>
> . . . Theory divorced from practice is, as [Mao] made clear on numerous occasions, both illegitimate and useless. Because of this fundamental principle, there is a certain illegitimacy in treating his theoretical conclusions in isolation from their practical context. A historical presentation of his political ideas . . . might approximate more closely his own sense of the necessary relationship between theory and practice. . . . [T]he disadvantage in such a format is that . . . [w]hat is gained in epistemological fidelity does not compensate for the attendant loss in clarity (p. xi).

Any discussion of Mao and his life must, of course, in some way combine a chronological and a thematic approach. Nor can there be any objection in principle to giving primacy to the latter. It is, however, indispensable in this case to indicate clearly the stages in the development of Mao's thought or policies regarding each of the themes taken up in turn. In John Bryan Starr's book, this is done only to a minimal degree. Broadly speaking, the author tends to treat everything Mao wrote from the 1920s to the 1970s as a single corpus, from which a suitable collection of quotations can be selected at random to prove a point. The juxtaposition of this methodological approach with Starr's admiration for the Cultural Revolution leads to the conclusion that the essence of Mao's " theoretical legacy " comprises, in particular, " the equation of political development with a deinstitutionalization of the political order – with the encouragement of creative disorder, if you will," and a permanent conflict with embourgeoisement displaying " semianarchic aspects " (pp. 306, 307).

One may well have doubts as to whether notions such as this, put forward during Mao's last years, truly constitute his greatest theoretical contribution; one must have even greater doubts as to whether ideas in any way analogous to these can be found in Mao's writings prior to 1960. There are, however, domains in which substantial elements of continuity can be discerned from beginning to end of Mao's life. One of these is, unquestionably, his understanding of dialectics.

These matters are discussed at some length by John Bryan Starr, and constitute a major theme of the books by Chin and Soo. The two main issues are (as illustrated by the texts chosen for inclusion in Mao's *Selected Works*) the relation between theory and practice, and the theory of contradictions. On the first point, Starr concludes that Mao's position was characterized by the fusion of " pragmatism " and " revolutionary

romanticism." Mao's theory of knowledge, he argues, " bears striking resemblance to that of the American pragmatist, John Dewey, whose thought exerted considerable influence . . . during the May Fourth period. Like Dewey, Mao sees ideas growing out of practical experience and, in turn, shaping that experience. . . . Indeed the resemblance was clear to Mao, since he on more than one occasion described himself as a pragmatist " (p. 71). It is doubtful whether the term (*shijizhuyizhe*) used by Mao in the text of May 1958 to which Starr refers here[8] should be translated as " pragmatist," rather than " realist." The point is nonetheless one which can be argued. Indeed, discussing Mao's philosophical writings with me in 1962, when I was engaged in writing *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, Herbert Marcuse remarked regarding " On Practice ": " There is more of Dewey than of Marx in all this."

Steve Chin by no means agrees; indeed, the name of Dewey is entirely absent from his book, as it is from that of Francis Soo. Chin regards Mao's formulation of the relation between theory and practice, which he sums up in the formula " practice-theory-practice," as firmly rooted in the Marxist tradition, but at the same time marking an enormous advance as compared to the writings of Marx himself – not to mention Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Marx, he argues, " never made any systematic exposition " of the problem of epistemology (p. 47).[9] As for the problem of contradictions, Starr and Chin agree that Mao's repudiation, in 1964, of two of Engels' three basic laws of dialectics (the transformation of quantity into quality, and the negation of the negation) is significant, but their judgments regarding the meaning of this development are totally opposed. Starr writes that Mao's conception of the process of reaching a synthesis (or of the negation of the negation) " is more mechanistic than organic, perhaps because he found Hegel only by way of Engels " (p. 27). And Mao's notion of " *Aufhebung*," as contained in a passage from his Hangzhou speech of December 1965, Starr characterizes as marked by a self-conscious return to his own " native " sources, and adds that Mao's " misconstrual " of the term is symbolic of his departure from Marx's, as well as Hegel's, conception of synthesis (p. 28).

Chin, on the other hand, regards this development as another step in Mao's efforts to " rid the theory and methodology of dialectical and historical materialism of the remaining shreds of metaphysics and idealism, thus making them more pure " than they had been in the hands of Marx himself (p. 202). Noting that, as early as 1937, Mao had placed the law of the unity and struggle of opposites above Engels' other two laws, he argues that, by putting forward in the early 1960s in the controversy with Yang Xianzhen the slogan " One divides into two,"

8. *Wan-sui* (1969), pp. 192–93; *Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought*, p. 96.

9. In fairness to Chin, it should be noted that authors rather more learned than he in Marxist philosophy put forward similarly extravagant views in the early 1970s; thus Martin Nicolaus asserted, in his Foreword to the *Grundrisse*, that Mao's " On Practice " and " On Contradiction " were " at the same time strictly orthodox . . . and highly original," and remained " the classic exposition of materialist dialectics as a whole, the standard against which all other writings must be measured and which will probably remain unequalled for a very long time." *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 43.

Mao had already, apart from signalling his intention to pursue class struggle ever more implacably, indicated implicitly that the three laws would henceforth be subsumed in, or replaced by, the law of the struggle of opposites (pp. 58–64 *passim*). Mao's explicit repudiation of the other two laws, in his philosophical talks of 1964, Chin hails as " an important development of the theory and methodology of dialectical materialism," which " renders materialist dialectics more consistent," and " brings it into closer conformity with reality " (p. 64). It is natural enough, in view of his ultra-dialectical outlook, that Chin should regard Yu Guangyuan as not really a Marxist philosopher because he wrote, in 1956, that certain problems in practical life " do not have any theoretical significance " (p. 51). Plainly he was still, when he wrote the book, stuck in the Cultural Revolution intellectual universe where Mao Zedong Thought was seen as the key to growing watermelons. It is ironic, however, to find him accusing even the late Yang Rongguo, of "*pi-Lin pi-Kong* " fame, of " avoiding the all-important issue of ' one divides into two ' " (p. 204).

As for Soo's book, its contribution to our knowledge of Mao, his times and his thought is severely limited by the fact that the author bases his study almost entirely on the four volumes of the *Selected Works*, apparently because he regards both the *Wan-sui* materials and the 1937 lectures on dialectical materialism as spurious. (See the note on pp. 162–63.) In fact, at the time when Mao made the statements to Snow denying authorship of " On dialectical materialism " quoted by Soo,[10] the whole of these 1937 lectures had been reproduced in collections of materials printed in China for internal use,[11] and now, of course, the authenticity of this text has been openly recognized in China, and articles have even been published commenting on the difference between the *Selected Works* version of " On contradiction " and the corresponding section of the original lectures.[12]

As readers of *The China Quarterly* will be aware, the complete text of Mao's 1937 lectures including the final section from which " On contradiction " was derived, has recently become available to scholars.[13] A careful and complete English translation of this version, with indications of all the variants between the 1937 and 1952 texts, has also been published as a monograph by Nick Knight. Because his interpretation has already appeared in this journal, I limit myself to two comments. First of all, it is characteristic that, where the post-1949 text cites Stalin's analysis

10. As originally published in *The New Republic*, 27 February 1965, this disclaimer was strong, but Mao carefully edged away from a flat statement that he had never given any such lectures. (". . . he had no recollection of having written any such work and he thought he would not have forgotten it had he done so.") When the interview was re-published as an appendix to *The Long Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1973, p. 207), it was " improved " to make of it a categorical denial of authorship.

11. See, for example, *Mao Zedong zhexue sixiang (zhailu). (Mao Zedong's Philosophical Thought – Extracts)* (Beijing: Department of Philosophy of Beijing University, 1960), 581 pp. *passim*. (The lectures on dialectical materialism are broken up into sections by theme and distributed throughout the volume.)

12. See the materials in *Zhongguo zhexue*, Vol. 1 (n.p., 1979), pp. 1–44.

13. Nick Knight, " Mao Zedong's *On Contradiction* and *On Practice*: pre-liberation texts," *The China Quarterly*, No. 84 (December 1980), pp. 641–68.

of the Russian revolution as " a model in understanding the particularity and universality of contradiction," Mao referred rather, in 1937, to Su Dongpo as one who thoroughly understood the relation between the universal and the relative, quoting by way of illustration a passage from Su's famous poem " The Red Cliff " (Knight, p. 24). Secondly, and more importantly, it turns out that Arthur Cohen was quite wrong when he wrote, in 1964, that Mao could not possibly have gone against Marxist " determinism " by talking about the decisive role of the superstructure until Stalin had shown him the way, with his writings of 1938 and 1950. In fact, the corresponding passage of the original text of Mao's 1937 lectures puts, if anything, even stronger emphasis on subjective factors than the current official version (Knight, p. 28). I would not venture to suggest that Stalin copied Mao, but the point is worthy of note.

This point leads us on to the discussion of the next seven books on my list, not only because, having looked back to 1937 for the roots of Mao Zedong's philosophical thought, it is appropriate to look back farther still, to the May 4th period, but because, like the slim monograph just mentioned, the latest group of books on Mao's early life make available an exceedingly rich harvest of new materials, on the basis of which it will be possible to re-think previous interpretations.

I shall take up first the book by Brantly Womack, since it embraces the whole of the formative period in the development of Mao's thought down to 1935, and raises explicitly, in thoughtful and suggestive terms, the problem of the relation between these early years and Mao's subsequent career. Surveying previous writings on Mao's pre-communist period and its relevance to what came after, Womack distinguishes three approaches: (1) an " intellectual history " approach, shared in some degree by Frederick Wakeman and Chinese authors such as Li Rui, according to which the " continuity between Mao's youth and his maturity is more important than any discontinuity or development "; (2) what he calls Richard Solomon's " reductionist approach," which likewise stresses continuity, but in terms of psychology rather than intellectual attitudes; and (3) "Schram's discontinuity thesis," according to which the ideas presented in Mao's early works submerge during his Marxist period (1922–65) and surface again with the Cultural Revolution (pp. 1–2).

Leaving it to the authors concerned to say whether or not this characterization is fair to others, I would like to comment briefly on Womack's presentation of my own view. It is quite true that, in my article accompanying a translation of " The great union of the popular masses " (cited by Womack in this connection), I did express the opinion attributed to me in the passage just quoted.[14] Womack's gloss on this statement, attributing to me the view that " the truly Maoist periods " in Mao's life were youth and old age goes, however, beyond anything I wrote in 1972, and to the extent that such an implication could be read into the article in question, the perspective I adopted at that time was manifestly erroneous.

14. *The China Quarterly*, No. 49 (March 1972), p. 88.

Ross Terrill in fact criticizes me for exactly the opposite error, namely for seeing Mao as " fundamentally consistent throughout his life " (p. 436). That there are elements of continuity in Mao's thought from beginning to end, I have indeed said, and still believe. This does not imply, however, that I adopt the view, which I have just criticized in discussing John Bryan Starr's book, that Mao Zedong Thought was basically one, from the 1920s to the 1970s. The methodology which seems to me appropriate is precisely the one advocated by Brantly Womack, who has stated the case so well that I prefer to reproduce his own words:

> The purpose of the study is to draw upon the practical nature of Mao's writings and their political context in order to produce an interpretation of his early political thought *in vivo*. I attempt to present emerging political concepts with their original referents and to discuss the subjects which Mao depicts as urgent and important in terms of the practical decision points he was facing as a political actor. This approach is particularly well suited for Mao because his theoretical concepts tend to emerge from a course of practical experience rather than an abstract program. . . .
>
> Mao's theoretical development has never been simply an explication of earlier convictions; developing experience and shifting political contexts have led to continual recastings of his thinking. . . .
>
> It is important to study the phases of development chronologically from the beginning because only with this approach is all of the relevant policy experience available to the researcher. Such an approach does not preclude generalizations about Mao's political thought, but I think it can make the difference between naive and responsible generalizations (pp. xi, xii, 192).

Broadly speaking, Brantly Womack carries out very successfully the project he has thus defined for himself. It is, obviously, not possible in this context to consider his treatment of the successive phases from 1917 to 1935 in any detail. There are, as is inevitable in any such study, minor errors of fact, and points where one might disagree with the author's interpretation. To mention only one of the latter, it is very surprising to find Womack claiming that the editorial changes in the *Selected Works* version of so crucial a text as the Hunan peasant report were mainly " stylistic " (p. 68; *cf.* also pp. 52 and 73). The introduction to Jerome Ch'en's *Mao Papers*, to which Womack refers here, does not in fact, taken as a whole, bear out this statement, which can hardly be accepted in view of the deletion of the formula giving 70 per cent of the credit for the achievements of the revolution to the peasants, the removal of all references to the leadership of the poor peasants, and overall the excision of approximately 15 per cent of the original document.

Most of Brantly Womack's account is, however, not only accurate, but balanced, perceptive and incisive. The summary of the continuities in Mao's thought from his pre-Marxist period onwards seems to me altogether correct in singling out " attention to the immediate . . . and the use of a dialectical logic in ethics and social analysis," the " primary assumption that ' the united masses of the people are the strongest political force ' . . . despite basic changes in Mao's framework of social

analysis," and the assumptions of " the necessity of struggle and the importance of practice " (p. 31). The discussion of " Socialism in one Soviet " and Mao's relations with the 28 Bolsheviks in the early 1930s (pp. 148–87) is deft and balanced.

Brantly Womack's summing up of the problems involved in studying Mao is also one to which I would subscribe:

> The challenge of analyzing Mao's political thought before the Long March is not that of understanding his conceptualizatons but conceptualizing the consistencies of his politics. This is not only a problem for the early period of Mao's thought. I think Mao's politics never received a thorough theoretical formulation. His political thought continued to exist in an unclear dialectic with the political situation and the ideological hegemony of Marxism–Leninism (p. 198).

The greatest single weakness of Womack's book, which is in my view one of the best on Mao's thought to have been published for many years, lies in its inadequate and out-of-date documentary basis. Although it bears the date of 1982, it contains no references to any materials which became available after mid 1979, and it would appear that, as is often the case with academic publishers, the University Press of Hawaii took three years to produce it. The result is that the author was not even able to make use of the revised and much expanded version of Li Rui's book which appeared in February 1980, let alone the complete contents of the *Xiangjiang pinglun*, published in Italian in May 1981. Nor did he have access to any of the collections of source materials published in China since 1979 for internal use, though several of these are available in libraries outside China.

It would not be appropriate to review here rcently-published *neibu* collections, such as that containing materials on the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, or that on the " New People's Study Society,"[15] for on the one hand, they are not explicitly centred on Mao, and on the other, these publications will be easily accessible only to a fraction of *The China Quarterly*'s readers. Fortunately, they have now been superseded, for the purpose of Mao studies, by the first of the five *Supplementary Volumes* [*bu juan*] to the Tokyo edition of Mao Zedong's pre-1949 writings, which has just come off the press.

Reviewing the original edition of the *Mao Zedong ji* in 1971, when this 10-volume set had begun to appear, I described it as " a meticulously edited critical edition of Mao's works, which not only makes conveniently available a very large number of items hitherto to be found only in scattered and sometimes illegible sources, but indicates all the changes which have been made in those items included in the official 1951 edition."[16] In the intervening decade, this edition has become an indispensable reference tool for everyone engaged in serious scholarly research on Chinese history and politics during the first half of the 20th century, and in particular the source cited by virtually all authors for

15. *YiDa qianhou* (*Before and After the First Congress*) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), 2 vols.: *Xinmin xuehui ziliao* (*Materials on the New People's Study Society*) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980).

16. *The China Quarterly*, No. 46 (June 1971), pp. 368–69.

Mao's pre-1949 writings, whenever it is appropriate to evoke the contemporary texts, since (unlike the rare periodicals and books of the 1930s and 1940s) it can be found in many libraries. Because the original press run was small, however, the collection has not been as easily accessible, especially to individuals, as might have been hoped. In the mid 1970s the supply of copies was increased by the activities of unscrupulous entrepreneurs in Hong Kong, who not only pirated the Tokyo edition, but added insult to injury by putting the names of their so-called " editorial boards " on the title page as the compilers, in the place of those of Takeuchi Minoru and the others who had actually done the work.

Now the original 10 volumes have been republished, in clearly-printed and well-bound form, with the correction of minor errors and misprints. That in itself is good news, for despite their cost, they represent, in the context of the general level of book prices today, a very worthwhile investment. But the additional materials (which the compilers have quite properly produced in the form of supplementary volumes, rather than combining them with the existing set, so that owners of the original edition will not have to buy the same thing twice) constitute better news still, for they will place research on Mao's early years especially on an entirely new footing. Some idea of the scope of this breakthrough is conveyed by the simple fact that the first Supplementary Volume, containing materials for the period down to the end of 1920, runs to over 300 pages. Here we have not only the articles contributed by Mao to *Xiangjiang pinglun*, and the entire collection of Mao's correspondence with members of the New People's Study Society, but all the articles Mao wrote for the Changsha *Dagongbao* during the May 4th period, and many other things besides. Beyond a doubt, the complete 15-volume set of the *Collected Writings* plus the *Supplement* will constitute for many years to come the standard work used by all those concerned with what Mao said and wrote prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

These comments on the Tokyo compilation of Mao's writings lead naturally to Mike Day's translation of the first volume of the original edition. This is the only book considered here which appeared prior to 1976, and a word of explanation is therefore in order. The reason for including it is quite simply that, although it was sent very promptly to this journal, no review was in the end written or published. I can say with good conscience that the delay was not the fault of anyone associated with *The China Quarterly*. It seems only proper to take this occasion for repairing the omission.

Day's work, which was submitted as a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Stockholm, takes the form of a complete English translation of Volume 1 of the *Mao Zedong ji*, and of some other documents of the period 1917–27, with accompanying notes and commentaries. As a translation it is, generally speaking, accurate, imaginative and idiomatic, and in this respect it will therefore be most useful to those who either cannot read, or do not want to take the time to read, the original texts. But embedded in the voluminous notes is, in fact, an interpretative essay about Mao's intellectual development of no mean interest.

Among the many themes dealt with by Day, I shall comment here on only two. The first, which might well be regarded as the central thesis of the work, is that Mao's awareness of the key role of the peasantry dates in reality from 1923, and not from 1925, as Mao himself later said. Taking this point in conjunction with the widely-accepted fact that the Kuomintang showed far more interest in the peasantry during the early years of the First United Front than did the Chinese Communist Party itself, he finds here the primary explanation for Mao's relatively conciliatory attitude toward the Nationalists from 1923 onwards (pp. 146–53 and *passim*). Day's argument to this effect, while perhaps overstated, is assuredly worthy of reflection.

Another insight, which is remarkable indeed in a work written in 1975, and animated by great admiration for Mao and his revolutionary achievements, is Day's emphasis on the influence exerted on Mao Zedong, at the time of the May 4th period, by Hu Shi. This is now freely acknowledged by Chinese authors,[17] but in the heyday of the " gang of four " it was obviously unmentionable. Day makes the point with reference to Mao's editorial for the first issue of *Xiangjiang pinglun*, which contains the statement that, in the realm of philosophy, the world has progressed as far as pragmatism. He does not draw from this the conclusion that Mao, as argued by Starr, remained a pragmatist for the rest of his life, but he does underscore (in my opinion quite correctly) how profoundly Mao agreed in 1919, and continued to agree, with Hu Shi's " strictures against those who mouth ideologies as a substitute for the hard work of investigating problems " (pp. 47–48, and note 2, p. 83).

Let us turn now to the *Xiang River Review*, as made available for the first time outside China in Giorgio Mantici's Italian translation. The story of how Mantici obtained a copy of the Chinese text of this periodical is in itself relevant here as an illustration of the unpredictable way in which materials regarding Mao's life and thought have become available to scholars, both during and after the Cultural Revolution. Having obtained permission, in the spring of 1979, to consult the photocopies of the available issues of *Xiangjiang pinglun* held in the Shanghai Municipal Library, Giorgio Mantici asked whether or not he might make a xerox of them. The librarian, amazed at his audacity, replied that the only person in China who could authorize this was Chairman Hua. Mantici thereupon sent a letter to the Chairman, and in October 1979 the copies were handed over to him (p. 46).

Giorgio Mantici's introduction to the translations is devoted in large part to a overview of political and intellectual trends during the May 4th period, but in conclusion he makes some perceptive observations about the significance of this episode in Mao's life for the development of his thought as a whole. The four issues of *Xiangjiang pinglun*, he argues, reflect Mao's " clear intention of situating the May 4th Movement within

17. See, for example, Wang Shubai and Zhang Shenheng, " Qingnian Mao Zedong shijieguan de zhuanbian " (" The transformation in the world view of the young Mao Zedong "), *Lishi yanjiu*, No. 5 (1980), p. 83.

the current of world history," his resolve that this movement shall lead to a contribution by an emerging " new China " to the struggle of the students and the workers of the world against the " powerful people " responsible for the horrors of the First World War, and " the generous illusion of a generation of Chinese intellectuals that they could *immediately* ' save China ' with a process of modernization along Western lines " (p. 39). Noting, as others have done, Mao's emphasis (and that of the May 4th Movement generally) on the emancipation of the individual as the indispensable precondition for a " just " and " modern " society, Mantici argues that the position developed by Mao in the magazine can be summed up in the equation: individual = needs = new society. Because the existing Chinese society is not capable of satisfying the needs of the " popular masses," the latter must conclude a great union to reform it. " Mao's intuition, derived probably from his reading of pamphlets on anarchism, consists in identifying as ' unjust ' a society which cannot satisfy the needs of the ' popular masses '. . . . Only a society both *just* and *new* will be able to satisfy what we call today . . . the ' unalienated ' or ' qualitative ' needs of the ' popular masses ' " (pp. 42–43). Whether or not Mao had in mind, as Mantici explicitly suggests in a footnote here, a conception of alienation analogous to that of the Budapest school, is doubtful, but otherwise this summing-up of the substance of Mao's thought in 1919 is a judicious one.

The translations which follow are generally accurate and readable, but there are one or two exceptions. The most perplexing of these occurs at the very beginning, in the editorial for the first issue of *Xiangjiang pinglun*. After evoking the " emancipation of thought " (*sixiang jiefang*, not *jiefang sixiang* as today) which has occurred since the Renaissance, Mao refers here to the Reformation and the religious freedom which has resulted from it, to the transition from autocracy to representative government, and also, as noted above, to the advent of " pragmatism." In Giorgio Mantici's translation, Renaissance becomes the " development of culture," the Reformation becomes a call for religious reform in the future, representative government becomes " pluralism," and " pragmatism " (*shiyan zhuyi*) becomes " a kind of experimentalism " (pp. 53–54). A note on p. 44 refers to Day's translation of the same text (Day, pp. 81–83), and observes that it is " often distorted " as compared to the Chinese original. In my judgment, it is Mantici rather than Day who distorts Mao's meaning on the four points mentioned above. I call this perplexing because the blurring of clear allusions to Renaissance and Reformation eliminates precisely that attempt on Mao's part to situate the May 4th Movement in the current of world history which Mantici himself stresses in his introduction.

Turning now to the problem of the links between the May 4th Movement and what came after, during the early years of the Chinese Communist Party, let us consider next what is in many respects the richest and most important of all the works reviewed here (with the exception of the Tokyo edition of Mao's writings), the second edition of Li Rui's biography of the young Mao. The book was first published in 1957, and

an English translation of that version appeared in 1977.[18] Having been sharply critical of Li Rui, both in *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* and in the introduction to the translation just cited, for his hagiographic approach to his subject, and his tendency to distort the record of Mao's early life by the selective use of quotations, I am under a particular obligation to highlight the quite remarkable sea-change which has taken place in this new edition.

Had he been aware of what western scholars were saying about him, criticisms like mine would no doubt have struck Li Rui as singularly ironic, for by the time they were made, in the early 1960s, he had already been incarcerated for the crime of speaking out against Mao's line at the Lushan Plenum of July–August 1959, and was to remain under detention for 20 years.[19] It is therefore not surprising that when Edgar Snow, having learned of the existence of Li's biography from *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, enquired about it in 1965, he was told that Li was " not in Peking," and that his book was not " official " and contained " inaccuracies." Snow's informant added that Li " did not interview Mao himself " – an ingenious half-truth, since he was part of Mao's entourage,[20] and therefore did not need to ask for an " interview."[21]

Despite these experiences, Li Rui's second edition, which has been so extensively revised as to constitute a new book, is remarkably balanced, and remarkably sympathetic to Mao. At the time it appeared, he was vice-minister of electric power, and such historical writings could be regarded, up to a point, as a personal hobby; at the 12th Party Congress he was elected a full member of the Central Committee, and any future writings on Mao would fall into a different category.

A few examples will suffice to make plain the differences in approach. The original edition contains a passage from Mao's marginal annotations on his ethics textbook by Friedrich Paulsen reading in part: " we must develop our physical and mental capacities to the highest degree. . . . Wherever there is repression of the individual . . . there can be no greater crime." In the new edition, this paragraph is preceded by the striking first sentence: " The goal of the human race lies in the realization of the self, and that is all " (" *Renlei zhi mudi, zai shixian ziwo eryi* ") (compare 1957 edition, p. 42, with 1980 edition, p. 110). In a neighbouring passage, Li Rui notes that at this time, Mao was an " idealist " (p. 108). Discussing the article " The great union of the popular masses," Li acknowledges that as yet Mao was not clear about the differences between Marxism and anarchism (p. 213). Finally, he recognizes that the

18. Li Jui, *The Early Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Mao Tse-tung*. Translated by Anthony W. Sariti. Edited by James C. Hsiung. Introduction by Stuart R. Schram. (White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1977). For a review see *The China Quarterly*, No. 76 (December 1978), pp. 915–18.

19. For a brief and discreet evocation of these events by Li Rui himself see his article " Zongli zai wo xin zhong " (" Premier [Zhou] as I remember him in my heart "), *Renwu*, No. 5 (September 1982), pp. 14–18.

20. See Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 397, n. 29, and p. 409, n. 228.

21. Edgar Snow, letter to the author dated 19 July 1965.

name of the " Problem-solving Society " set up by Mao in 1919 certainly owed something to Hu Shi's influence on him (p. 246).

As I have already noted, the fact that Li Rui makes much more full and less tendentious use of the available documentation in the new edition of his book does not at all mean that he is bent on belittling Mao. His approach is rather to show us the young Mao Zedong as a credible historical figure, who was not born a great Marxist-Leninist, but gradually learned about Marxism. Thus, on the one hand he stresses repeatedly that the idealist, individualist, anarchist, or pragmatist notions Mao had in his head in varying degrees prior to the winter of 1920–21 were shared by virtually the whole of the May 4th generation, including older and more learned figures such as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao. And at the same time, he notes that Mao's concern with the self was combined from the outset with a grasp of the importance of organization in achieving the liberation of the individual, and that his interest in solving concrete problems was soon inserted in the broader context of a pursuit of radical measures for the renewal of Chinese society, rather than a piecemeal reformist approach. The two long passages on Mao's intellectual development down to 1921 (Chapter 2, pp. 97–168, and the section " Studying Marxism," pp. 296–316) in particular must, in my opinion, be recognized as the subtlest, most balanced and most penetrating account of these crucial years available in any language. I do not mean to suggest, of course, that Li Rui has no ideological or political axe to grind, or that everything he writes should be accepted as just and well-founded. Considering the constraints under which he was writing, the result is, however, altogether remarkable. One can scarcely imagine the publication of a similar book on Stalin's early thought in the Soviet Union in 1956 or 1957 – apart from the fact that Stalin as a young seminarist probably had no thoughts of compelling interest.

Though Angus McDonald's book deals with the political, social and intellectual history of Hunan during a period of 16 years when Mao was almost constantly present and active in his native province, the young Mao does not loom as large in his narrative as might have been expected. This is primarily because of the author's methodological perspective, exactly the opposite to that of Ross Terrill. According to McDonald the Chinese revolution " was not, principally, the product of a small group of ' political geniuses.' " " Mao," he writes, " was an important actor in the story I have to tell, but so were many, many other people. . . ." (p. 2).

McDonald's analysis proceeds from a wealth of fascinating detail which I cannot begin to summarize here. His central thesis is, however, an important contribution to our efforts to situate Mao Zedong and his role in a broader context. It is stated most forcefully at the end, with reference to the peasant movement, where McDonald argues that the rapid burgeoning of the peasant associations after April 1926 " cannot be understood in chiliastic terms," as a spontaneous mass uprising to support the Northern Expedition (p. 273). " The outside agitator was the key. He was the person who could talk to the peasants, raise their consciousness, and control their energy," writes McDonald, paraphrasing and drawing

out the implications of Mao's September 1926 article on the peasants and the National Revolution (p. 261). But although " radicals and liberals " among the elites could collaborate in promoting the initial mobilization, they split regarding the implications and consequences of the mass movement, and in the end the radicals (of whom Mao was, of course, one) could survive only as outlaws in the countryside (pp. 280, 315, 319). This analysis the author describes as " a qualified ' yes ' " to the question of whether or not there was a " tidal wave of ordinary people rising to risk their lives against the forbidding power of Wu Peifu," but one so qualified that it " could as easily be qualified ' no ' " (p. 265). This is, in effect, a subtle way of saying that the Chinese revolution which Mao led (or in which he played a certain role) cannot be neatly classified either as " Leninist " or as " populist," but was a mixture of the two. Such an analysis seems to me illuminating and well-founded.

Although Lynda Shaffer's book has the name of Mao in the title, it is primarily a work of social history. It brings together in English much useful information about the Hunan labour movement in the early 1920s, and in so doing provides further background to our understanding of Mao's political and theoretical development. Her narrative account, though affected to some degree by a Cultural-Revolution style attempt to turn the young Liu Shaoqi in Anyuan into a pedestrian and compromising bureaucrat (pp. 98–103, 216–18, etc.), is generally sound. One must, however, have reservations when it comes to her treatment of broader issues.

Taking, modestly, as her motto " Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," Lynda Shaffer proposes to " put to rest " the notion that Mao was inclined, in 1923, to " hand over the leadership of the nationalist stage of revolution " to the merchants (pp. 1–2), thereby liberating her readers from the errors disseminated by various people, including myself. There are two dimensions to this question: What did Mao say about the role of the merchants in the Chinese revolution in his article of July 1923, " The Beijing *coup d'État* and the merchants "? What did he really mean by it?

On the first and narrower point, Lynda Shaffer simply ignores the evidence, and is totally wrong. Quoting extensively from the article, she asserts categorically that Mao did not refer on this occasion to merchant leadership, though he in fact wrote quite explicitly: " The broader the organization of the merchants, the greater will be their influence, the greater will be their ability to *lead* the people of the whole country, and the more rapid the success of the revolution."[22]

On the broader issue, Lynda Shaffer has a point, but she seriously undermines the force of her argument by overstating it. Although I have never said that Mao Zedong, in 1923 or at any other time after the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party, was prepared to hand over leadership of the revolution to the bourgeoisie (or to its party, the Kuomintang) for an indefinite period, I will freely confess that, animated

22. S. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 208. (emphasis added).

by a spirit of mischief, I highlighted this text of 1923 in the first edition of *The Political Thought* as a reaction against the view, current in 1963 and for 15 years thereafter, that Mao Zedong had always been revolutionary, and always been right. Perhaps, in that context, I over-interpreted it, but it cannot be interpreted out of existence. Even Mike Day, who approaches the early Mao from a political perspective not unlike that of Lynda Shaffer, recognizes that this article causes him a " problem," and proceeds to give a subtle and balanced analysis of it. (Day, pp. 151–52; see also Womack, pp. 42–44.)

Day and Womack both make a good case (with which I would basically agree) to the effect that this text, and other evidence about Mao's attitude in the years 1922–25, show us a man well aware of the weaknesses and limitations of the merchants, and other bourgeois strata, but resolved to co-operate with them in order to carry out the national revolution. Lynda Shaffer, who treats " merchants " simply as a coded reference to the bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution (p. 223), completely obscures, in her zeal to demonstrate Mao's consistency, the fundamental change which took place in his outlook between 1923, when he saw the cities as the main victims of imperialist oppression and therefore the main locus of revolution, and 1926, when his attention had shifted to the countryside and his analysis of Chinese society had been adjusted accordingly.

The last contribution to be noted here is that of Helmut Martin, which consists primarily of a seven-volume edition, in German and Chinese, of Mao's writings from the eve of the foundation of the Chinese People's Republic to the end of his life. The introduction to this collection, which appeared in Volume I in 1979, was, however, published separately in expanded and updated form in German in 1980, and in English in 1982.

The section of Martin's introductory essay dealing with the use of Mao's works in his own lifetime is relatively brief, and contains less new information than the portion dealing with events after Mao's death. Leaving aside for the moment his discussion of the struggles, since 1976, among factions in the Party regarding the interpretation of the Maoist heritage, I shall therefore concentrate here on the *Texte*.

This is, by a wide margin, the most comprehensive collection of Mao's post-1949 writings ever published outside China (and probably inside China as well), and as such must be warmly welcomed. Though many of the materials it contains are to be found in the principal Cultural Revolution collections of Mao's speeches and writings, and most of the others are from the Chinese press, it is enormously more convenient to have them all gathered together in one set of clearly-printed volumes. It should be explained that all the items the editors have been able to collect are here printed in Chinese (or, in the case of texts which appeared only abroad, in English, or in the original language of publication); the more important of these, amounting to roughly 70 per cent of the total number of pages, are translated into German as well. These translations will be of value not only to those whose native language is German, but to all those who read German more easily than Chinese, since a significant propor-

tion of the texts are not available in English translation. The detailed indexes to names and subjects at the end of each volume will also be helpful.

The main weakness of this collection results, in fact, from the editors' dynamism, or efficiency. The collection of materials was begun in the mid 1970s in collaboration with an American group, under the leadership of Ying-mao Kau, and a Japanese group, led by Kimiyoshi Nakamura, both of whose names appear on the title page as members of the editorial board. But whereas neither of the other projects has as yet even begun to publish the results of its labours, Helmut Martin and his colleagues began publication in 1979, and completed it in 1982.

Apart from a laudable desire to get on with the job, this decision by the German group to go ahead was no doubt based on the assumption, which appeared very reasonable in 1978, that after the " information explosion " resulting from the activities of the Red Guards, relatively little in the way of new materials would become available in the near future. This has, in fact, proved only partially true; the flow of Mao writings (to change metaphors) is no longer a torrent, but neither has it ever been reduced to a trickle, and today it shows every sign of increasing again. Some items of real significance, which could have been incorporated if publication had been delayed for only two or three years, are therefore missing here. But no such collection will ever be complete or perfect, and for the moment *Mao Zedong Texte* is the best there is, and should be in every serious library on Chinese affairs.

With this, I have completed the all too long retrospective look at works on Mao Zedong published since his death, and turn now to the prospects for future research. As I indicated at the outset, there are, in my opinion, two keys to progress here: materials and perspective.

The importance of the first point is obvious. Thirty years ago, when the celebrated tricephalous entity Brandt–Schwartz–Fairbank launched serious work in the west on the history of Chinese Communism, even some of the most basic items in their *Documentary History* had to be retranslated from the Japanese. As late as the early 1960s, which saw the Wittfogel-Schwartz polemics in the first issues of *The China Quarterly*, and books by Arthur Cohen, Jerome Ch'en and myself on Mao and his thought, no complete texts by Mao were available from 1917 to 1923, with the single exception of the announcement regarding the foundation of the Hunan Self-Study University, written in 1921 and reprinted in the Chinese press in 1923. Virtually the only source, apart from Mao's own account as told to Edgar Snow, was the first edition of Li Rui's biography of the young Mao. The extracts from Mao's own words available there and elsewhere were so fragmentary that, in effect, each author was virtually free to create, out of his own imagination, a vision of Mao's intellectual itinerary during and after the May 4th period, and then select a few suitable quotations as pegs on which to hang it. The situation was more favourable as regarded the period from 1923 to 1949, because many of Mao's speeches and writings had been openly published and could be found in libraries outside China, but the cost in time and money of visiting

the widely-separated centres holding the various items severely limited the freedom of scholars to use these resources.

The first great qualitative breakthrough took place in the early 1970s, with the simultaneous availability of the 10-volume *Mao Zedong ji* and of Red Guard publications containing hundreds of thousands of words of Mao's post-1949 utterances. As indicated above, the five supplementary volumes of the Tokyo edition mark another qualitative leap in our knowledge of Mao's mind and thought, especially as regards the early years. Methodologically speaking, it is important to note that the new materials thus made available have been derived not only from several important *neibu* documentary collections published in China in recent years, but from the exercise of ingenuity by foreign scholars. For example, the *bu juan* will contain the five articles Mao wrote for *Zhengzhi zhoubao* under the pseudonym " Ziren " which have been lying before our eyes for years, but which neither Takeuchi Minoru nor I (nor to my knowledge any one else outside China) had recognized as being quite obviously by Mao until this fact was noticed by a young Australian scholar, John Fitzgerald.[23]

As for Mao's post-1949 period, there are, to begin with, some Cultural Revolution compilations which have still not been adequately exploited, though they must, like all such collections, be used with care. Having made some rather critical remarks about others in this article, it is only proper to acknowledge that I have recently been led into two gross errors by one such volume, the *Ziliao xuanbian*. In presenting extracts from this source in translation, I attributed to Mao a text, " Address to China's peasants," which was in fact an article almost certainly not by Mao, previously published in *The Communist*, and used by Mao for teaching purposes.[24] And in lectures delivered last year in Hong Kong and recently published, I accepted the identification of the recipient of one of Mao's letters of 1917 as Yang Changji, though a careful reading of Li Rui should have told me it was addressed to Li Jinxi, a former teacher at the Changsha Normal School who had moved to Beijing.[25] (Volume 1 of the supplement to the *Mao Zedong ji* contains the full text of all six of Mao's letters to Li Jinxi between 1915 and 1920.)

Such mistakes in Red Guard compilations often result, of course, more from accident and carelessness than from design. In the case of officially-published texts, on which we will increasingly have to rely for materials on Mao's later years, nothing is the result of accident, and editorial decisions are based on careful political decisions. Thus the

23. John Fitzgerald, " Mao in mufti: newly-identified works by Mao Zedong," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 9 (January 1983), pp. 1–16. This pen name was, however, listed, along with several others, in a note giving such names for Mao and other leaders published in *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, No. 2 (Sichuan: Renmin chubanshe, September 1981), pp. 796–97.

24. S. Schram, " New texts by Mao Zedong," *Communist Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 1983), pp. 144 and 149–50; for the full text, which appeared in *Gongchandang* on 27 December 1920, see *YiDa qianhou*, pp. 208–209.

25. S. Schram, *Mao Zedong: a Preliminary Reassessment* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1983), p. 4; *Supplement*, Vol. 1, pp. 19–23. For a reference to these letters, see Li Rui, p. 28.

problem of materials rejoins the other key factor noted above: perspective, and in particular the current Chinese view of Mao and his historical role.

It is widely believed in the west that statements about Mao in China during the past seven years are of interest solely as reflections of the current political climate, and contribute nothing to the understanding of the man and his thought. That is, in my opinion, much too one-sided a view. Obviously there *is* political manipulation of Mao as a symbol, and of selected texts by the former leader. But this does not mean there is nothing to be learned from Chinese publications on the subject.

To begin with, the top political elite in China consists almost exclusively of persons who knew Mao, or observed him in action at first hand, from the 1950s to the 1970s, and in many cases for an even longer period. Though, as a result of the bitterness created during the Cultural Revolution decade especially, their judgments cannot be serene and objective, the experience of such people constitutes a body of evidence which cannot be simply ignored. Secondly, because there was a change of line and of leadership in the wake of the Third Plenum of December 1978, many interesting materials were published in Volume V of the *Selected Works*, as edited by Wang Dongxing and others, which those responsible for such matters would probably not have wished to release today. (For a useful account, see Martin, *Cult and Canon*, pp. 61–91.)

Finally, while the negative bias against Mao's " radical " phases since 1978 has to some extent inhibited detailed and balanced discussion of his thought during these years, " good " periods, such as Yan'an and 1956–57, have been the object of many studies, and the largest collection of Mao writings openly published in China since 1977, the 300,000 character volume of his letters issued on his 90th birthday, spans the whole of his active career, from 1920 to 1965, with the exception of the Cultural Revolution decade.[26] In stressing the importance of these publications, I am not suggesting we should follow the practice castigated by Maurice Meisner, and take over wholesale the ideas fashionable in Beijing at the moment. I do believe that not only documents, but scholarly writings emanating from China are worthy of serious reflection.

That being said, it must be recognized that the political objectives and ideological standpoints of those who control " Mao studies " in China create problems not only of bias, but of focus and emphasis, in any attempt to learn from their publications. One important concern of most of those who have written about Mao in the west has been, and remains, to understand the genesis and development of his thought in its historical context, and thereby to learn something about the experience of all those Chinese who have lived through the cultural, political and social upheavals since the May 4th Movement. The Chinese by no means deny in principle either the interest or the legitimacy of such attempts to analyse Mao's own personal and intellectual itinerary. In a conversation

26. *Mao Zedong shuxin xuanji* (*Selected Letters of Mao Zedong*) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983). For a description, and extracts in translation, see *Beijing Review*, No. 52 (1983), pp. 14–19 and 26.

of May 1982 Liao Gailong explicitly stated that there could well be two periodizations of the 60 years since the foundation of the Party: one for Mao's *own* development, and one for the Chinese revolution as a whole.[27] Indeed, in a recent and authoritative pronouncement at the third conference of specialists on the biographies of Party leaders, Wang Shoudao stressed the need to present all such figures (including Mao himself) as real human beings of flesh and blood; using the classic example of the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi*) and of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) derived from it, he called for writing about people in terms of real history, not fiction. Otherwise, he declared, " posterity will curse us."[28] But the fact remains that it is plainly awkward to apply these principles too uncompromisingly to Mao, though quite a number of the letters included in the recently-published volume are of human rather than political interest.

Even more significant, perhaps, are the differences in the purposes of " Mao studies " in China and abroad. As Mao's successors in carrying forward the cause of revolution in China, the present leaders and their ideological spokesmen are concerned to take over and develop those elements or aspects of his thought which they regard as correct, and therefore useful for guiding the revolution in the future. I am personally more inclined than some to accept that the current attempt at a re-definition of Mao Zedong's Thought does indeed have as its goal to determine what portions of his heritage are correct, in the dual sense of being good Marxism, and of being adapted to China's needs. But even if this is the case, the goals, and therefore the logic and the criteria of the ongoing Chinese reassessment, are different from those of foreign scholars. What we are, or should be interested in (as scholars, if not as citizens or political activists) is not laying down a " correct " revolutionary doctrine for China calling itself, or building on, " Mao Zedong Thought," but defining what constitutes the essence, heart or nucleus of Mao's thought, and of his policies, both before and after the conquest of power. The content of this " main-stream Maoism," as it might be called, should be defined not by what is politically useful today, but by an attempt to assess what is truly representative of the man himself, at his most typical. This does not mean taking the Cultural Revolution Mao as our standard of measurement, even though Mao himself may have regarded these years as the culmination of his life's experience, but an attempt to strike some kind of balance, or identify the centre of gravity of the vast and contradictory record of his thoughts and actions.

If our objectives should be to document and analyse Mao's life and intellectual development, and to sum up the essence of his political heritage, where do we stand today? The first point I want to make with great force is that with virtually no exceptions the books under review

27. Conversation of 7 May 1982 at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Marxism–Leninism Mao Zedong Thought, of which Professor Liao was then deputy director.

28. Wang Shoudao, " Guanyu dangshi renwu yanjiu de jige yijian " (" Some views about research on individuals in Party history "), *Renmin ribao*, 9 December 1983, p. 5.

here have made a significant contribution to one or both of these goals. Though I have ventured to make some critical comments about a number of them, all of these works placed before me, as I read them, facts and ideas which I had never encountered before, and which I found of value.

Secondly, because of the fundamental importance of the documentary base on which " Mao studies " are conducted, most of the works discussed here stand in serious need of revision, because of the information explosion even in the few years since they were published. (It goes without saying that the same applies to all of my own published writings.) In particular, I hope that Brantly Womack will revise his excellent study of Mao's formative years to incorporate materials and insights drawn from the corresponding volumes of the *Supplement* to the *Mao Zedong ji*.

As already noted, the mass of material available to permit such revision and re-thinking of previous views has grown steadily in recent years, and there has recently been a new " leap forward," with the publication of nearly a million characters in the five Supplementary Volumes to the *Mao Zedong ji*, and perhaps half that amount released in China in recent months. There must be, at a bare minimum, several million more characters of Mao writings in the archives controlled by the Central Party School, and while the whole of this corpus is very unlikely to be openly published in the foreseeable future, it seems reasonable to assume that other substantial volumes will be forthcoming from time to time.

In a sense, the problem has long been that, in quantitative terms, there was almost too much data. Both Dick Wilson and Ross Terrill are literally swimming in documentation when they reach the second half of Mao's career. I note this with no hint of a pejorative judgment, for I have suffered from similar difficulties in trying to come to grips recently with the development of Mao's thought, in chapters for the *Cambridge History of China*, and I shall assuredly suffer even more acutely when I undertake to revise my biography of Mao Zedong. And yet, despite the mass of documentation, there are zones which remain obscure in our vision of Mao's life and times as a whole. One thinks first of all of the Jiangxi period, but even after 1942, or after 1949, when Mao was ultimately in charge, it is far from clear, on many occasions, whether he acted on his own, or whether his role consisted primarily in endorsing the decisions of others. Every scrap of additional information may help in elucidating such problems, and must therefore be regarded as a challenge rather than a burden, despite the effort required to digest it all. In this context, " information " includes, of course, not only Mao texts, but the many historical writings published in China which, whatever their bias in favour of stressing collective leadership, do contain very valuable indications about the nature and limits of Mao's authority.

Important as it is to establish the facts, their interpretation must, in my opinion, be ranked even higher among the tasks confronting Mao studies in the future. Indisputably, the existential significance of Mao's policies and their impact remains difficult to apprehend for foreign observers. For this dimension of the story, we must rely primarily on the Chinese, who

actually lived through experiences such as the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Or, if we choose (as some do) not to believe their often contradictory testimony, we must rely on our own imaginations – and imagination, while it may be a fertile source of utopias, and a valuable complement to research, is not really satisfactory as the main foundation for scholarship.

I do not wish to minimize the difficulties of using Chinese testimony and Chinese interpretations intelligently, across cultural and political barriers. For example, as Edward Friedman pointed out in 1981, the tendency (which has, need I say, become far more explicit since then) to take the Yan'an Rectification Campaign as a model for solving current problems seriously inhibits consideration of the negative aspects of what actually happened, especially in 1943 under Kang Sheng's direction.[29]

On the other hand, the Yan'an experience, which is now universally exalted, had, as Benjamin Schwartz pointed out long ago (at a time when many people were hailing it as the prototype of the Cultural Revolution, and the Wave of the Future), " its ' soft ' as well as its ' hard ' side."[30] Closely linked to this " soft " side is the maxim " Seek the truth from facts," put forward by Mao in 1941 and taken by him, as recently recalled by a Chinese author, from Ban Gu's *Han Shu*.[31] Meisner (p. 238) sees the redefinition of " the essence of the [Maoist] doctrine " in terms of this " banal injunction " as a primary cause of the " crisis of faith " in China, and a symbol of the reduction of Marxism to an " ideology of modernisation." Even two years ago, when he put the final touches on his book, it was evident that Marxism, and/or Mao Zedong Thought, meant much more than that in China, and the increasing strident exhortations, during the past two years, in favour of " socialist spiritual culture " and " communist thinking," and against " spiritual pollution," have made this clear to everyone.

With the dynamics of these movements I cannot deal here. Despite these recent trends, however, the " practice criterion," both as Mao put it in Yan'an, and as it was re-formulated in 1978, still stands. It is linked, as I argued above, to the " soft side " of the Yan'an heritage, because while it by no means rules out commitment to Marxism, and to the goal of communism, it does rule out, at least in principle, the arbitrary pursuit of unattainable objectives at any given time. In this respect, I suspect most Chinese regard it as reassuring, rather than " banal," for such prudence, though characteristic of Mao in his earlier years, was anything but banal during his last two decades.

Two years after the adoption of the Resolution of June 1981 laying down an official evaluation of Mao and his thought, a symposium was

29. *The China Quarterly*, No. 86 (June 1981), pp. 350–52.

30. Benjamin I. Schwartz, " China and the west in the ' Thought of Mao Tse-tung,' " in Ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou (eds.), *China in Crisis*, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 367.

31. Li Haisheng, " Shi lun Mao Zedong zhexue sixiang cong Zhongguo lishi wenhua yichan zhong jiqu suyang de tedian " (" A tentative discourse on the characteristic of Mao Zedong's philosophical thought consisting of drawing nourishment from the heritage of Chinese history and culture "), *Shehui kexue*, No. 10 (1983), p. 18.

held in Nanning from 5 to 12 November 1983 regarding the interpretation of Mao Zedong Thought. Press reports at the time listed some of the main topics discussed in the 300-odd papers presented at this gathering: Chinese-style modernization, democracy for the people and within the Party, Party-building, basic contradictions in socialist society, and so on. None of the papers has, to my knowledge, thus far been published, nor has the keynote speech delivered on this occasion by Liao Gailong, though it is indicated that, according to Liao, the " guiding principles " for both economic and political work to build " Chinese-style socialism " had been laid down long ago by Mao Zedong, and would continue to be valid for a long period.[32] We may, however, reasonably assume that the line taken by Liao Gailong was not unlike that laid down by Hu Yaobang in his article written in commemoration of Mao's 90th birthday.[33]

Broadly speaking, Hu's perspective is, as might have been expected, that laid down in the resolution of June 1981: the Chinese Communist Party must distinguish between Mao Zedong's great positive contributions and the errors of his later years, build on the former, and analyse the reasons for the latter. The essence of Mao's legacy he sums up as the combination of " scientific ideas and revolutionary spirit." The scientific aspect of Mao's thought comprises, in Hu's view, an emphasis on practice, investigation and learning from " the people, society and his forefathers." As is suggested by the reference to forefathers, Hu's understanding of revolutionary spirit includes not only a commitment to Marxism and to communism, but devotion " heart and soul to the emancipation of the Chinese people."

In his speech at the Nanning conference, Liao Gailong, apart from discussing Mao's theoretical contributions, dealt with the way in which this heritage should be applied in the present and in the future. The line he put forward was basically that of the 12th Congress: taking as the three principal tasks modernization of the economy, the " democratization of the political life of the Party and the country," and the creation of socialist spiritual culture. Of course, he also called for active participation in the struggle against " spiritual pollution," but, like even more authoritative spokesmen in every possible context, he insisted that the opening to the outside world would not be called into question. If that remains the case, there may continue to be opportunities for scholarly and intellectual exchanges, even on issues as delicate as the interpretation of Mao Zedong and of his thought.

Whether or not this expectation proves too optimistic, so much has already been learned in recent years that foreign scholars are in a position, simply by making better use of the available information, to

32. *Renmin ribao*, 14 November 1983, p. 1. The account in *Beijing Review*, No. 48 (28 November 1983), pp. 5–6, is briefer, and omits some of the key points mentioned here.

33. Hu Yaobang, " The best way to remember Mao Zedong," *Beijing Review*, No. 1 (2 January 1984), pp. 16–18. The article was originally published in *Renmin ribao*, 26 December 1983, p. 1. Further details regarding the line laid down at the Nanning conference can be gleaned from an article by Wang Qi, a leading figure in the CCP's Party History Research Centre (of which Liao Gailong is vice-chairman), " Inheriting and developing Mao Zedong thought," *Beijing Review*, No. 52 (26 December 1983), pp. 20–26.

raise the standard of Mao studies to new and higher levels. Apart from coming to terms with the mass of facts, and delineating more clearly both the career of the man and the development of his thought, the principal question which should be addressed is, in my view, that of the relation between the man and the world in which he lived. It is easy enough to rule out both the Tolstoyan view of the hero as the smoke from the locomotive of history (or the vulgar Marxist view of the leader as simply the instrument of vaguely-defined " social forces "), and the opposite view of the leader as god, saviour and moulder of history. What is much more difficult, but what can and should now be done, is to examine seriously, with reference to a certain number of distinctive episodes in Mao's life, the extent to which the man made the occasion, and the extent to which the occasion shaped the man.

To mention only two examples, to what extent did Mao's emphasis on practice, and on adapting Marxist theory to the concrete circumstances of the Chinese revolution, result from the situation in which he found himself in the late 1920s and 1930s, that is, from the fact that he had no access to the cities and therefore could not rely on the working class, and the equally obvious fact that his mastery of Marxist theory was, at least until the late 1930s, inferior to that of many of his rivals in the Party? To what extent did it, on the contrary, flow from the natural bent of his mind, which can be traced back to the " Problem-Solving Society " he formed during the May 4th period, under the influence of Hu Shi? And, at the opposite end of his life, was the Cultural Revolution merely the peculiar Chinese manifestation of the " Stalinist " phase through which all totalitarian modernizing dictatorships must pass, as many have argued? Or did it grow out of Mao's thinking and personality, or out of Chinese political culture?

Neither of the above questions, and none of the other questions which should be asked about other periods in Mao's life, can, in my opinion, be answered in one simple statement, " a " or " b." But we do need to probe into the facts, and to reflect on the significance of all the relevant dimensions, as they relate both to the man who dominated Chinese history for decades, and to the China which made him what he was. If we do this seriously and effectively, perhaps we may realistically anticipate a situation by 1986, a decade after Mao's death, when he can truly be weighed, at least in a preliminary fashion, in the scales of history.

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