

Book Reviews

The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. Vol. 1: Contradictions among the People, 1956–1957. By RODERICK MACFARQUHAR. [London: Oxford University Press, 1974. 439 pp. £5.50.]

Numerous scholars have pointed to the consistent strains in the thought of Mao Tse-tung – his stress on struggle, antipathy towards bureaucracy and aspirations for a more egalitarian society. Mao has also pursued seemingly contradictory goals such as freedom and discipline, decentralization and centralization. Within a broad, somewhat vague framework, there have been a number of shifts in his thinking as well as his policies. These shifts are not so much inconsistencies as changes of emphasis in the Maoist vision necessitated by changing conditions. They also reflect Mao's constant search and persistent groping for a new way to modernize China.

Roderick MacFarquhar's book is an in-depth study of the Hundred Flowers movement, one of Mao's boldest switches in the effort to change China. According to Mr MacFarquhar, what energized Mao in 1956 and the first half of 1957 was not the "radical" spirit of the Cultural Revolution, but a "liberal" spirit which Mr MacFarquhar defines as opening the Party to criticism from without. The picture that emerges of Mao's policies in this period is that he did not use the Hundred Flowers movement simply as a tool in a power struggle. His actions and views reflected a genuine interest in producing a relative degree of freedom for non-Party intellectuals to criticize the Party in order to improve the Party's methods of ruling.

Initially Party leaders supported Mao's efforts to induce a more "liberal" environment. Liu Shao-ch'i also spoke of the need for a more relaxed political atmosphere. As in the case of Mao, the thought of Liu is also shown as a changing quality within a broad, constant framework. Thus, the régime's shift of emphasis from class struggle to contradiction between the leaders and the led was not the result of Liu's reactionary nature as charged in the Cultural Revolution, but of both Liu's and Mao's concern over the alienation of the Party from the masses. Both sought to resolve contradictions by discussion and persuasion rather than by force and violence. As Mr MacFarquhar points out, Liu as well as Mao sought to remedy the gap between peasants and workers and move away from the Soviet model.

Where they diverged was over the participation of outsiders, in this case non-Party intellectuals, in the rectification of the Party. Liu, like

Mao, believed the Party needed rectification, but opposed open rectification. He wanted rectification to take place within the confines of the Party. His view stemmed not only from fear of undermining the Party at a critical stage, but from his different interpretation of the cause of the contradiction between the leaders and the led. To Liu, the contradictions were the result of subjectivism, the cadres' misunderstanding of the new situation, which could be remedied by ideological study. To Mao, they were the result of bureaucratism, which could be remedied by criticism from without. So, as the Hundred Flowers progressed, a divergence occurred as Liu attempted to dampen rectification while Mao tried to intensify it.

Mr MacFarquhar uses a combination of contemporary sources and Red Guard materials to produce this fascinating scenario. In broad outline it rings true, but in detail some assumptions are made that are open to question. An intriguing aspect of his scenario revolves around the role of Teng Hsiao-p'ing. In the Hundred Flowers, he places Teng in the same camp as Mao and in opposition to Liu and P'eng Chen. In fact, Teng assumed a more "liberal" position than Mao. Mr MacFarquhar shows Teng as concerned with political power in and of itself as a corrupting influence and as producing alienation from the people. He identifies Mao with this view. Yet, there is little evidence that Mao believes political power is corrupting. Mao's concern is with who holds the power, not power itself. Even in the Cultural Revolution, when he virtually destroyed the leadership of the Party, the supposed corrupters of power, there is no indication that he had lost faith in the need for strong political power.

Though Mr MacFarquhar has used Red Guard materials carefully and primarily to back up evidence existing at the time of the Hundred Flowers, there is a tendency to reflect the polarized view of the Cultural Revolution. True, he has the actors on different sides than in the Cultural Revolution. In fact, one can question his placing Teng categorically in the Maoist camp. Teng orchestrated the Party constitution which Mao later charged was an anti-Maoist document. It is this very polarization of individuals into Maoist and Liuist camps as early as 1956 and the beginning of 1957 which lacks substantiation in the material he presents.

He uncovers this polarization by applying the "Kremlinological" approach to the Chinese leadership. He analyzes the nuance of words, the placement of leaders in pictures, and delays in carrying out changes in line. Particularly interesting is his analysis of the placement of words. In the epithet "bureaucratism, subjectivism and dogmatism," if "bureaucratism" is placed before "subjectivism," the speaker is in the Maoist camp. If "subjectivism" comes before "bureaucratism," the speaker is in the Liuist camp.

Though he skilfully and creatively analyzes numerous documents, the picture that emerges is not Mr MacFarquhar's assumption of polariza-

tion, but of differences within the leadership. For example, Mr MacFarquhar asserts that Liu compelled Mao to bring the Hundred Flowers to an end and questioned his ultimate authority in the Party in 1957. He presents as evidence of direct attacks on Mao the fact that newspapers published quotations of rightists impugning Mao. But they also published quotations impugning Liu. Publication of this criticism of the leadership once voiced by those under attack has been standard procedure in a campaign.

It may be true as Mr MacFarquhar claims that Mao restrained the attack on the non-Party intellectuals in the anti-rightist campaign, but all evidence indicates that Mao had become as disillusioned as Liu with non-Party intellectuals and became an active participant in bringing the period of "liberalization" to a close. If the degree of polarization and disaffection among China's leaders was as pronounced as Mr MacFarquhar insists, then it would have been impossible for them to compromise their differences to implement the anti-rightist campaign, then launch such a radically new policy as the Great Leap Forward and hold together for almost another 10 years. Obviously polarization in the leadership did occur, but its origin is more likely in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward than in the Hundred Flowers.

Despite the fact that Mr MacFarquhar has jumped to some conclusions not supported by his evidence, he has written an important book, not so much for what it tells us about the Cultural Revolution as for what it tells us about Mao, Liu and the Hundred Flowers. He corrects interpretations that have been accepted since the Cultural Revolution. As opposed to the view of Mao as a "radical" and as against the intellectuals throughout his career, he shows Mao to be a "liberal" and willing to work with the intellectuals. He revises the view of Liu as an advocate of the Soviet model who supposedly was unconcerned with the peasants and shows him also groping for a new way and grappling with the plight of the peasants. He proves that the Hundred Flowers was a unique experiment in which there was a genuine desire by most of the leadership, Liu as well as Mao, to induce a relative degree of relaxation in Party rule. Finally Mr MacFarquhar has demonstrated that it is possible in the China field to write a scholarly, detailed analysis that can be at the same time highly readable.

MERLE GOLDMAN

The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village. By EMILY M. AHERN.
[Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1973. 280 pp.
\$10.00.]

The Cult of the Dead is an important new addition to the anthropological literature on Chinese society. As the title implies, this is not a