The Tragedy of Lin Biao: Riding the Tiger during the Cultural Revolution 1966–1971. By FREDERICK C. TEIWES and WARREN SUN. [London: Hurst, 1996. 251 pp. £25.00. ISBN 1-85065-266-X.]

The "Lin Biao Incident" occurred nearly three decades ago. Immediately after Lin's death in September 1971, the Beijing regime first attempted a cover-up, later provided a partial explanation followed with an anti-Lin campaign and finally, after Mao's death, fell silent. Outside analysts reconstructing the 1969–1971 events had to rely on the prosecution's declarations, supplemented only by the incontrovertible evidence of the aeroplane crash in Mongolia. A "mystery" thereby arose as to what "really" happened and why. Given the lack of new data, observers had little choice but to accept the regime's assertions. Moreover, the story of the last two years of Lin's life, the tussle with Mao, the alleged plot to kill him, its discovery, the rush to the airport and the hurried takeoff, all made sense. So there the matter rested.

For the last decade, however, "new" (for latter-day China) kinds of evidence have seeped out. Surviving participants, including Lin's daughter and his chief of household, published memoirs; popular journals published numerous stories; Chinese scholars, using *guanxi*, penetrated archives and wrote more careful analyses in official media, *neibu* or open. An interview industry sprang up, movies referred to Lin, and official histories included Lin's activities. "Inside" stories and histories were written, the revelations concerning Mao and his personal *modus operanti* being the most sensational. Teiwes and Sun tie together these disparate strands and re-open the case.

Their analysis possesses three virtues. First, they show that any credible job on Chinese politics must use an "all-sources" approach. The days are long gone when analysts could rely on official media and rest easy with their conclusions. Now information is available at every turn for evaluation and integration. This volume breaks new ground in that direction. Secondly, their work demonstrates the utility of penetrating to as detailed a level as possible in seeking the "truth" of Chinese politics. Along with Roderick MacFarquhar's work on the origins of the Cultural Revolution, this book points the way to achieving as full an understanding of the field as is possible until Chinese archives are opened. Finally, this case study shows conclusively that Chinese politics is intensely personal, composed more of relations between and within families (*guanxiwang)* and extended households, and less between institutions, decision-making groups and levels of administration, or debate over issues. One implication is that it may be impossible for anyone, inside or outside the Zhongnanhai, to understand what did go on. Cultural Revolution politics was a deadly game and everyone got caught up in the political/personal whirlwind, with death, destruction or failure almost inevitable. The Lin Biao story illustrates this verity.

This study therefore belongs on the shelf of every serious student of Chinese politics. Unfortunately, it may remain there as a reminder of the pitfalls of working in this field. For having plunged into the relevant

literature, the authors fall prey to the hazards of working at such close range and become so fascinated with titbits, various interplays, campaigns and purges that they lose the overall direction of their story. Moreover, they become too close to their subject – if that is possible, given Lin's shadowy existence. They advance the thesis that Lin, far from being an active Cultural Revolution participant, was off to the side, often uninformed, too ill and uninterested in politics.

It is true that Lin's health was poor, but apparently not so bad that, at critical moments (such as the run to the aeroplane at Shanhaiguan) he was literally comatose. Nor does their thesis track with Lin's previous involvement in Chinese Communist politics, well documented since the early 1920s, nor with his own political activity before the Cultural Revolution. The fact that Lin survived Chinese Communist politics for five decades points to his full involvement and interest. He did his best to protect himself from Mao's sword by swearing never to cross the Chairman, and that carried him far. Once designated Mao's successor, he did what Liu Shaochi did: build his own support base so that, when post-Mao challenges came, he could survive. However, there was no escaping Mao's jealousy as inevitably he turned against Lin, as he did Liu. Lin knew he was caught and the authors chose an appropriate subtitle for the book, but Lin was forced to ride atop the Maoist tiger and not run for cover or cower behind Mao. In the end, to save himself, Lin did move directly against Mao.

The book's other major idea is that the extant literature, whether the regime's case against Lin or "Western" analyses, are so far off the mark (in the latter case) or so suspect of made-up data (in the former) as to merit *a priori* rejection. However, the authors must demonstrate why that literature is to be cast aside and an entirely new approach adopted. In the case of the "Western" literature, the authors lump together the few sources, assert they all carry the same message – that the regime's presentation and interpretation of the facts should be accepted – and then set them aside entirely. That literature is hardly unitary, is too small to be given any generic title and does not always accept the regime's interpretation. The authors also fail to consult other significant work. As for the regime's own case, a better way might be to see how far it can go in explanatory power and what the consequence would be were the Chinese Communist Party to be found to have engaged in wholesale lying. There is also the general congruence between the regime's assertions and the facts ascertained by independent sources including radio intercepts and satellite data. Perhaps it would have been better to start with the existing thesis and see how new data modifies it. That is how scientific inquiry proceeds, even in the social sciences.

Other difficulties remain. The authors, to their great credit, interviewed many people knowledgeable about or involved in the Lin affair. However, most of those interviewees are not named and the reader cannot evaluate their assertions but must accept the authors' judgement. The authors have investigated several hundred written Chinese sources, which alone makes this book a model, but they rely too heavily on a few,

for instance Zhang Yunsheng's *True Account of Maojiawan: Reminiscences of Lin Biao's Secretary* and Wang Nianyi's *China 1949–1989: The Years of Great Turmoil*. Teiwes and Sun must explain why their assertion should be accepted as fact and not merely subjective interpretations.

The authors adopt a chronological approach, which clarifies certain events, for instance the purges of Luo Ruiqing and Yang Chengwu. These mini-analyses strengthen the volume and the reader interested in the turning points of Cultural Revolution politics will be much rewarded. It takes work and faith, however, to wade through sometimes pages of great (and admirable) detail, often to be footnoted only at the end by a single source or unnamed interview. These analyses point to another feature of the volume: it is more a storehouse of data on the Cultural Revolution than an interpretation of Lin's role therein. Its long-term value may inhere in a reference for those bent upon "getting to the bottom" of the twists and turns of those years, but the Lin Biao mystery, despite taking some new turns, remains to be solved.

How will that come about? One way is to ask how to conceive of, and therefore arrive at, the "truth." While many philosophical and logical answers exist, surely "truth" lies at multiple levels of analysis, not just the most detailed. In science, "truth" is to be found at the sub-atomic particle levels upward to that of the universe itself. Moreover, each level depends on its surroundings and each possesses a history, which is also part of the "truth." So it is in the social sciences: to remain at one level of analysis, even the most detailed, is to deprive us of finding ultimate answers. Teiwes and Sun have shown that we must include as much detail as possible in evaluating Chinese politics. It is now necessary to integrate this portion of the "truth" with that derived from more general levels of inquiry.

This volume is enriched by the authors' chronology of Lin's activities from 1949, containing many newly revealed and thoroughly documented facts. There is also an excellent index, useful for Cultural Revolution politics as a whole. Finally, reference must again be made to the superior bibliography, which (among its other virtues) alone makes this volume worthy.

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China's Road to Disaster: Mao, Central Politicians, and Provincial Leaders in the Unfolding of the Great Leap Forward 1955–1959. By FREDERICK C. TEIWES with WARREN SUN. [Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1999. 376 pp. $27.50. ISBN 0-7656-0202-4.]

This book squarely and decisively makes the case for the "unchallenged political dominance" of Mao Zedong, not just during the Great Leap Forward (GLF), but also during 1956–57 and 1960–62, when policies widely regarded as "un-Maoist" were being pursued. The book's four main chapters examine four stages of policy-making: the "opposition to rash advance" (*fanmaojin*) that began in the spring of 1956 and ended