

for accelerated transition. The economic parallel was with the Soviet Union in 1928; China was not so under-developed that it needed a long period of New Democracy (or some such equivalent of Soviet New Economic Policy). Mao thus rejected Stalin's view that socialist transition was premature, just as the CCP had rejected his assertion that the Chinese Revolution could not be led by its peasantry. Nevertheless, concludes Li, it was only Stalin's death in 1953 that allowed Mao to break free of the shackles and to embark upon his "general line for socialist transition."

This, then, is a work of political science, and Li's story is well-told. Although there is nothing especially remarkable in her conclusion, she makes her case with considerable force, and makes excellent use of Soviet archival materials on the discussion between the leaders of the two countries. Li also utilizes to good effect the Chinese materials which have come to be the foundation of much Western political science scholarship on the 1950s since their publication and release in the 1990s. Bo Yibo's "Memoir" of 1991 thus features prominently. The result is almost an anthem for doomed youth; what might have been if the Party had persisted with the policies which served it well in the early 1950s?

Now there is little to object to in Li's characterization of the politics of the period. She offers, I think, an entirely plausible and well-documented explanation of how New Democracy came to be supplanted by socialist transition. True, I remain rather suspicious of the current fad for slavish citation from Bo Yibo and his ilk in the political science literature; a little more critical scrutiny of this "history of the victors" would not go amiss. However, the problem with Li's work lies rather more with the broader set of assumptions that underpin it. For example, many will object to her glib characterization of China's post-1953 development strategy as Stalinist given the weight attached by Mao to ideological change as a precondition for the transformation of the economic base in the 1960s. I certainly do: to equate Maoism with Stalinism simply substitutes Cold War rhetoric for proper analysis. And however one characterizes the development path of the late Maoist era, there is surely a strong case for arguing that China only committed itself to that approach *after* the debates of 1955–1958 – not in 1953 as Li asserts. There is also an implicit assumption in Li's work that the economy performed well between 1949 and 1953, and therefore that New Democracy offered a genuine alternative path to modernity. This is an interesting question, but to answer it we need an exploration of a plausible counter-factual economic model – many economic historians have done precisely that in thinking about the Soviet Union in the 1930s – before concluding that New Democracy was the way forward for China. This is an issue on which political scientists are necessarily silent and Li is no exception.

We have here, then, a narrowly focused book which tells a plausible story, but which is underpinned by a set of Cold War assumptions and a blithe disregard for the economics of New Democracy. For many this will be its appeal. For others, it will guarantee the book's relegation to a dusty shelf.

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Historical Dictionary of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

EDITED BY GUO JIAN, YONGYI SONG AND YUAN ZHOU

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Much as one would like to quote a recontextualized CCP Chairman ("Among the items of this kind that I have seen, this one is the most successfully written" – Mao

Zedong, 19 May 1968) at the beginning of a review like this, there are compelling reasons for why one just might in the end decide not to. The *Historical Dictionary* is not particularly well written and the quality of the editing is poor: some entries appear to have gone missing, or how else do we explain the absence of one on Kang Sheng given that numerous lesser “personages” from the Cultural Revolution are duly included? There is an entry on the admittedly interesting but hyper-obscure “Fourth International Counter-revolutionary Clique,” but not one on the Central Case Examination Group – the notorious Cultural Revolutionary tribunal directly answerable to Mao that oversaw and managed the persecution of thousands of “enemies of the people” between 1966 and 1978. Not that an extended and informed assessment of Mao’s thinking is really what the user of the *Historical Dictionary* will likely be looking for between its covers, but there is something odd all the same about the fact that “Mao Zedong Thought” (to which so much of the intellectual foundation of the Cultural Revolution can be traced) is seen by the editors as meriting but half a page of text, while something called “New Trend of Ideas” (described as “a strain of radical ideas embraced by some student thinkers and writers”) is given the full page plus treatment. As one picks one’s way through the entries, one often wonders what the editors’ criteria of inclusion really are. The infamous national mouthpiece of the Shanghai “left,” the magazine *Study and Criticism* is not listed (nor is its CCP Central Committee counterpart *Red Flag*), but the by comparison far less important *Workers Insurrection Journal* gets a half-page entry. The Cultural Revolution’s best-known university “rebel” leaders (including Tan Lifu and Zhu Chengzhao) each get their own informative entries, but there are none on such equally well-known middle-school Red Guards as Song Binbin or Peng Xiaomeng.

As Nancy C. Mulvany wrote in the much underrated (as a work of applied cognitive science) *Indexing Books* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), the task of managing and indexing information properly and consistently for later retrieval “isn’t a low-order clerical task but a complex exercise requiring knowledge engineering skills” (p. 2). In order to make their *Historical Dictionary* truly useful to an audience communicating in English, the editors ought to have sought the input into their work of someone with these very skills – someone knowing little or nothing about the Cultural Revolution, perhaps, but professional in matters of managing information for easy retrieval. It is on this crucial point that the dictionary could have been a lot better, had its editors devoted more energy to questions of precisely what subjects to include/exclude, how to label and order entries, how to cross-index the information in the entries, and what principles of formal consistency to apply to entry content as such.

The main body of the *Historical Dictionary* is preceded by a convenient 20-page chronology and an introduction of equal length in which the editors engage in some critical commentary on the preparations and preludes, progress, official CCP assessment and legacy of the Cultural Revolution. In passing, they also manage to discreetly sprinkle some intellectual venom on unnamed Chinese adherents of post-modern critical theories that today produce an “alien theoretical discourse” analysing the Cultural Revolution and Maoism in plain “disregard for historical reality” (p. lvii). The *Historical Dictionary* comes with a useful 60-page bibliography attached to it at the end, listing English-language works on the Cultural Revolution published since 1966, but unfortunately not covering internet resources.

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