duplicity in dealing with both Nationalist and Communist forces in the north-east is again clear. There was no "lost chance" of a CCP alignment or friendship with the United States; the CCP simply sought (as did Moscow) to neutralize American influence in China. Yet this did not mean – and here Heinzig's narrative continually breaks new ground – that a Soviet alliance with a Communist China was a foregone conclusion. It was, rather, an alliance reached with difficulty despite increasing disputes and mistrust. The alliance was ultimately possible above all because of the change in Soviet foreign policy that limited Moscow's imperial appetite in Asia.

This is, then, an analysis driven by a belief, at least in this case, of the primacy of foreign policy. Ideology was no hindrance to the alliance; but the alliance itself was much more the result of "classical national interest politics" (p. 634).

That is the simple synopsis. But this does no justice to a work that is a multi-source, multi-archival, international history at its finest, distinguished by its appreciation for the telling detail, the nuance of a negotiation, the interaction between economic and advisory relations with power politics, and above all by its complete mastery of the facts, where we know them, and its intriguing speculation where we do not. Scholars who know this period well will still learn much from this book. The description of Chiang Ching-kuo's hapless interviews with Stalin is superb; the *two hundred page* account of Mao's comparative triumph in his Moscow negotiations is a book to itself. In between there is much that is new in the chapter on the "*Wendejahr*" 1949, particularly on Mikoyan's secret visit to China and Liu Shaoqi's equally clandestine sojourn in Moscow. All along the way there are surprises: Stalin never invited Chiang Kai-shek to Moscow, as has often been claimed; nor is there credible evidence – Mao's utterances to the contrary – that Stalin sought to have the CCP military conquest of China "stop at the Yangzi."

This is an important work. It is a rare book in our field also because it reads so well – if you read German. I hope that it will be translated into the several languages in which it might make an even larger impact: English, Russian, and of course, Chinese.

WILLIAM C. KIRBY

Captive Spirits: Prisoners of the Cultural Revolution. By YANG XIGUANG and SUSAN MCFADDEN. [Oxford, Hong Kong and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 302 pp. £21.50. ISBN 0-19-586845-5.]

This book is the prison memoir of the "ultra-left" Red Guard Yang Xiguang, originally published in Chinese and now appearing in a lucid translation by Susan McFadden. In early 1967 Yang aligned himself with the Cultural Revolution's rebel forces despite being a child of the political elite, and a year later authored "Whither China," a systematic critique of the Maoist system that apparently the Chairman himself denounced as "reactionary."

While this background is necessary for a full understanding of the book, its story is about Yang's decade in the Chinese gulag following his arrest in 1968. Although Yang's account provides a clear sense of his own situation, its focus is on his fellow inmates. Through sketches of petty criminals, former capitalists, activists on both sides of bloody rebel–conservative clashes, and dedicated dissidents long involved in anti-regime activities, Yang provides what McFadden terms "a sense of the dignity and diversity that characterized the vast underworld of the Cultural Revolution" (p. xxii). Through the stories of his varied subjects Yang takes us into their lives outside the prisons and into pre-Cultural Revolution China.

Although thoroughly gripping, the catalogue of rampant hatreds among Red Guard groups, official terror and arbitrary mindlessness during Yang's prison experience and the Cultural Revolution on the "outside" is not new. More arresting are reminders of the sheer humanity of the inmates and those around them, sometimes ennobling, more often reflecting common frailties, and always ensnared by the requirements of the system and the broader culture. A particularly moving case concerned an affair between a shop assistant at the camp and a prisoner. When the shop assistant's abortion was discovered, the prisoner faced an additional sentence. Acting on Yang's advice, the young woman desperately tried to protect her lover by claiming the affair was her initiative. Surprisingly, the ploy worked, but it earned her the curses of local women, and in the end was to no avail as the prisoner wound up married to another woman in Changsha. As Yang observes, "Having overcome an almost impossible political hurdle in keeping [her lover] from being re-sentenced, this woman ... lost him anyway, defeated not by political persecution, not by another woman, but by the household registration system, which keeps people born in the countryside chained there for life" (p. 243).

While Yang's book provides a remarkable window into prison life and Cultural Revolution madness, it is his ventures into broader issues and the pre-Cultural Revolution past that are most enlightening and challenging for our understanding of the Maoist system. While not framing the question in quite these terms, his recollections address the issues of the degree of alienation from the system, and whether repression or a degree of legitimacy sustained the regime. Yang provides many indications of alienation and resistance. Of particular interest are organized anti-regime underground groups that, in Yang's account, began to appear during the post-Great Leap famine. While Yang is in no position to give an estimate of the extent of these organizations, his discussions provide a significant insight into resistance to the pre-Cultural Revolution Party–state.

Nevertheless, one is left with the impression of a regime sustained in large measure by acceptance of its claims, i.e. a regime that had obtained a significant degree of legitimacy. The crucial factor was the Party's hold on the intellectual world of its subjects, the fact that there was no easily obtainable alternative way of thinking. Even the inmates of the gulag, the segment of the population with arguably the greatest reason to reject the regime, could not escape this mental bondage. Thus "few people will

even know what [a rightist critic] is talking about" (p. 36), and "Almost no one dares to doubt Mao, even privately" (p. 115). Even Yang himself, a daring and innovative thinker, initially responded to the denunciation of his parents by believing they must be wrong and desperately seeking sustenance in Mao's works. Moreover, despite his own incarceration and his mother's suicide, it took another three years before anti-communist ideas that he "would have rejected out of hand" earlier in his prison experience became "almost palatable" (p. 169).

This memoir is highly recommended for its graphic account of the harsh reality of the Chinese gulag, its wonderfully human picture of the gulag's inmates, and the broader issues it raises about the nature of the Maoist system.

FREDERICK C. TEIWES

Thirty Years in the Red House: A Memoir of Childhood and Youth in Communist China. By ZHU XIAO DI. [Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998. xiv + 225 pp. £31.50. ISBN 1-55849-112-0.]

Most of the personal accounts of the Cultural Revolution published in English to date have been stories of gloom and horror. They all reject socialism and blame it for what went wrong in China and for the pain inflicted on their families. This book is different: it is not angry but melancholy. The author is the son of a red house, a red family: his father was a high-level cadre in Nanjing. Zhu wants to show that the socialist beliefs that his parents followed, and for which they suffered during the Cultural Revolution, were real and valid. The book is a loving, gentle account of how Zhu's father, a man of great idealism, lived. This man, who bore an uncanny likeness to Zhou Enlai, was a model figure. He was first a brave underground fighter, then an ideal cadre – he never took perks or abused his authority. He undertook his work with dignity and compassion. He refused to follow the twists and turns in orthodoxy. In 1961 he managed to get the stigma of being a rightist lifted from 1002 of 1013 people labelled as rightists in the area under his jurisdiction. The subjects which Zhu attacks are not socialism but corruption and extremism, two cultural attributes which derailed the idealism of the early years of the Communist period.

This book is a labour of love which unwittingly turns out to be full of irony. The first irony is that it is almost a revisionist interpretation of the Cultural Revolution. Although his parents were sent away to the countryside, the family kept in touch and neither parent was seriously abused. It was a bad time for the red family, but nothing like as bad as for some whose stories have been told. For the children it was confusing rather than horrifying. The tone of the book is similar to that used in Jiang Wen's film, *Heat of the Sun*, in which young boys left on their own when their parents are sent away have a wild and exciting time careering round Beijing. Zhu's may be a valid version of the Cultural Revolution, but it is a milder one than the literature of scars and the personal accounts to date portray.