

Maoist Strategies of Revolution and Development

By Michael Y. M. Kau

RICHARD C. THORNTON: *China: The Struggle for Power, 1917-1972*. Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1973.

JÜRGEN DOMES: *The Internal Politics of China, 1949-1972*.

Trans. by Rudiger Machetzki. New York, Praeger, 1973.

ILPYONG J. KIM: *The Politics of Chinese Communism: Kiangsi Under the Soviets*. Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1973.

IT TOOK THE Chinese Communists nearly 30 years of zigzag policies and violent struggles, dating from the start of their organized activity in the early 1920's, to attain ruling power in China. In the last 25 years, since the establishment of Communist rule, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao has brought about drastic revolutionary changes affecting the social, political, and economic life of the now more than 800 million Chinese. The methods and strategies of both the Communists' revolutionary movement of 1921-49 and their socialist transformation of Chinese society since 1949 have been the subject of intensive academic and intellectual interest, as evidenced by the publication of literally hundreds of scholarly books and articles in the

past two decades.¹ Today, China's experience in revolution and development is also sparking growing political and ideological attention outside China, particularly in the underdeveloped countries of the Third World.²

Historians and social scientists are concerned with such basic questions as: How and why did the Chinese Communist movement take root and grow as a formidable political force in the theoretically "backward" agrarian society of China? What were the key factors that contributed to its political and military successes? What role did the Comintern and other external forces play in China? How relevant was the ideology of

¹Two series of scholarly studies on China—"Studies in Chinese Government and Politics" and "Studies in Chinese Society," both sponsored by the Joint Committee on Contemporary China of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies—illustrate this growing interest. Two examples of these studies are: A. Doak Barnett, Ed., *Chinese Politics in Action*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1969; and Robert A. Scalapino, Ed., *Elites in the People's Republic of China*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1972.

²See Bruce D. Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971; and Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1970.

Marxism-Leninism? And how decisive were the revolutionary strategy and leadership techniques developed by Mao in the crucial years of the 1930's?

For the period after the CCP takeover, the strategies and programs of China's large-scale socialist reform and transformation of society have equally fascinated Western scholars. What explains the revolutionary dynamism of the transformation and the shifting strategies of development? Why was the Soviet model replaced by the Maoist model in the late 1950's? What caused the constant "struggle between two lines"? How can we explain the origin and impact of the Cultural Revolution? Has Mao's charisma been routinized as a result of the growth of the Chinese bureaucracy? What is the pattern of interaction among the party, the army, and the state bureaucracy? All these questions have been important subjects of scholarly inquiry.

In recent years, moreover, the Maoist experiences of revolution and development have been moving from the realm of academic interest into the arena of practical world politics. Maoism, as a radical ideology, a model of revolution, and a strategy for socioeconomic development, has begun to

exert a growing appeal and attraction beyond China's borders. The Maoist leadership now openly claims that China's experience in protracted guerrilla fighting and "people's war" offers a living model of revolutionary struggle for impoverished countries suffering from the political and economic exploitation of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. Likewise, Peking maintains that the strategies of "mass mobilization" and "self-reliance" tested successfully in China provide the answer to the critical problems of economic development and nation-building confronting the underdeveloped countries. Unlike the industrialized nations of the West, China suffered in the past from external oppression and exploitation and is now a "developing" country itself. Therefore, the Chinese argue, their revolutionary experience and proven strategy are particularly relevant to the many underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.³ Today, with China emerging as a major power in the world arena and as self-appointed leader of the Third World, Peking's moral and political claims can no longer be dismissed.⁴

The books under review represent three of the most recent products of major research efforts by specialists on Chinese communism—two of them political scientists and one a historian. While the books cover different historical periods and time spans, all three are concerned specifically with the processes and strategies

of Communist revolution and development in China, and their substantive focuses and concerns are complementary. The major grounds covered and the key questions asked are by no means unfamiliar, but the authors offer new perspectives as well as fresh insights and interpretations. They have also taken advantage of newly available source materials, such as Red Guard publications and the Ch'en Ch'eng collection,⁵ to derive new data bases for their analyses.

OF THE THREE books, *China: The Struggle for Power, 1917-1972*, by Professor Richard C. Thornton of the Institute for Sino-Soviet Studies at George Washington University, covers the longest time span, tracing the development of the Chinese Communist movement from the 1917 victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia down to the purge of Lin Piao in late 1971. Focusing centrally on power politics and external interventions, the analysis is chronologically divided into three parts: (1) the period from the beginnings of the Chinese Communist movement under the manipulations of the Comintern to the emergence of Mao as the dominant leader in Yenan, 1917-41; (2) the period of power struggle and civil war between the Communists and Nationalists, with increasing involvement of the United States, 1941-49; and (3) the period of Communist rule

after 1949, marked by the emergence of Sino-Soviet conflict. Throughout the book the theme of power struggle is clearly dominant. The author treats in great detail the complex processes and intrigues of this struggle among contending political leaders and factional groups within the CCP and between the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT), as well as the impact on the CCP of struggles in the Kremlin and in the Comintern. As a historian, Thornton has done a remarkably good job of presenting an articulate account and provocative interpretations of the first two periods of development. Unfortunately, however, his political analysis of developments since 1949 falls short of the standard set in the first two-thirds of the book.

In his analysis of the long history of the endless struggles for power, Thornton advances two key theses: (1) that power motives and intrigues have carried far greater weight than ideological and policy disputes in all major political conflicts; and (2) that the outcome of political struggles within the CCP and between the CCP and the KMT has largely been determined by political and power inputs from external sources. Both these theses are essentially valid, but Thornton often seems to be carried away by his own arguments, with the result that he overestimates the importance of power motives and external influences at the expense of other factors. In-depth analysis of policy conflicts and ideological disputes is brushed aside in favor of superfluous speculations about factional politics and the power ambitions of rival Communist leaders—e.g., in Mao's conflicts with Li Li-san, the "28 Bolsheviks," Chang Kuo-t'ao, Liu Shao-ch'i,

³ A good example of this thesis is Lin Piao's *The Victory of People's War*, Peking, The Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

⁴ See Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing's recent speech at the United Nations, reprinted in *Peking Review*, No. 15, Supplement, April 12, 1974.

⁵ This collection consists of a wide variety of Communist documents, periodicals, and books gathered by General Ch'en Ch'eng during the Kuomintang campaigns against the Kiangsi Soviet in the 1930's. These rare materials, primarily covering the 1930-34 period, are now available on 21 reels of microfilm at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

etc.⁶ Similarly, careful examination of the respective political and organizational strengths and weaknesses of the CCP and KMT and consideration of China's internal political dynamics are slighted in favor of attributing overriding importance to external power manipulations and policy decisions made in Moscow or Washington—thus, Thornton would have us believe that the shifting course of the CCP-KMT civil war in China was virtually predetermined by certain decisions made in the Soviet Union or in the United States, and that even the key developments in China's Cultural Revolution of 1966-1969 were influenced by external forces. To analyze internal political events in the context of significant external inputs is certainly important, but to attribute every twist and turn in these events to power intrigue and foreign manipulation is an oversimplification. Kremlinologists will undoubtedly enjoy Thornton's emphasis on power intrigues and international conspiracies, but others may find his arguments too speculative and unbalanced.

FIRST PUBLISHED in German in 1971, *The Internal Politics of China, 1949-1972*, by Jürgen Domes, Professor of Political Science at the Free University of Berlin, focuses exclusively on internal politics since 1949. Like

⁶ These four conflicts occurred in 1928-30, 1930-35, 1935-37, and 1966-69, respectively. For details and interpretations of the policy and ideological aspects of the disputes, see, e.g., Jerome Chen, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967; Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1951; James P. Harrison, *The Long March to Power*, New York, Praeger, 1972; and Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Berkeley Calif., University of California Press, 1974.

the Thornton book, this study also ends with the fall of Lin Piao in late 1971 (because of the lack of source materials at the time of their writing, both authors treat the Lin Piao affair only briefly).

On the basis of shifting ideological orientations and developmental strategies, Domes periodizes post-1949 developments in three major phases: (1) the initial phase of socialist reform and construction, 1949-57, marked by a strong reliance on the "advanced experience" of the Soviet Union; (2) the shift to an experimental application of Maoist strategy, characterized by mass mobilization and radical social, economic, and political changes in 1958-59, followed by a period of "struggle between the two lines" during 1960-65; and (3) the intensification of violent policy conflict and power struggle between Mao and the "revisionists" during 1965-72, as most strikingly manifested in the crisis of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. Domes concludes that while Mao may have won the power struggle against Liu Shao-ch'i, P'eng Chen, Lin Piao, and the "New Right," the Cultural Revolution marked the end of Mao's charismatic power and personalized rule. The institutional bases of power, particularly the military base, and the trend toward "revisionist" pragmatism have largely survived the Cultural Revolution.

Generally, Domes takes a relatively cautious and balanced approach in his analysis. In contrast to Thornton's one-sided emphasis on the theme of "power struggle," Domes examines the political process in terms of both power struggle and policy conflict. By adopting such a dual-variable approach, he succeeds in constructing a more complex methodologi-

cal framework of analysis, in presenting a more refined view of the anatomy of the political process, and in bringing into clearer focus the interaction between power factors and issues. Political developments since 1949 are thus seen in terms of a shifting configuration of political forces centering around dominant leaders (Mao, Liu, P'eng, etc.), key institutional groups (party, army, state bureaucracy, etc.), and major ideological and policy positions (collectivization, class struggle, Great Leap Forward, etc.).

The balanced perspective maintained by Domes is also evident in his evaluation of the strengths of Communist rule in China. He argues that the ability of the leadership to carry out extensive socialist reforms and programs has rested simultaneously on both ideological mobilization and coercion. Through the leadership technique of the "mass line," the party has repeatedly carried out large-scale ideological campaigns to mobilize the masses for political support and policy implementation; and in the name of "proletarian dictatorship," the leadership has exercised authoritarian control and coercion against class enemies and the intellectuals. Domes skillfully avoids superfluous speculations about power motives and intrigues and frequently relies on quantitative data to substantiate his arguments. It may be noted, however, that most of the author's information on physical coercion and executions is based on sources of a speculative nature (pp. 47-66).

Domes' attempt at the end of the book to give an overall assessment—even if brief—of the achievements and failures of Communist rule is commendable. The conclusion he reaches is rather

negative. In particular, he takes exception to the common view that "the sacrifices made by the Chinese people since the CCP takeover have benefited an unusually effective development policy" (p. 235). His negative assessment inevitably raises controversial questions of perspective, criteria, and value bias. Some examples may help illustrate the point. The author is particularly critical of the unimpressive economic growth rate and the suppression of the intellectuals and individual freedom in China (pp. 229-44). He asserts that the Maoist leadership technique and developmental strategy may be good for engineering sociopolitical change but are not at all useful in promoting economic advance. However, if one starts out from a broader definition of "economic development" that takes into account not only quantitative measures of growth but also such qualitative measures as institutional reform and the general well-being of the people (*i.e.*, agrarian reform, distributive justice, social security, etc.), one may come to a different conclusion. Also, in measuring China's economic development, what weight should one assign to progress in education, public health, and communications, which Domes rates so highly (pp. 231-32)?

THE BASIC QUESTION of the processes and strategies of Chinese communism is also the primary focus of *The Politics of Chinese Communism: Kiangsi under the Soviets*, by Professor Ilpyong J. Kim of the University of Connecticut. In contrast to Domes' and Thornton's treatments of long historical periods, Kim focuses on the four-year interval from 1931 through 1934, a crucial

period that witnessed the establishment of China's first Soviet Republic in Kiangsi Province of southeastern China. The period was ushered in by Mao's successful formalization of his revolutionary leadership technique of mass mobilization through the operation of a soviet government based in the countryside, and it ended with the Communists' retreat and escape from the KMT's military encirclement campaigns to establish a new base area in northwestern China. From Thornton's perspective of power struggle, the period marked "an almost total defeat of the Communist movement and of Mao Tse-tung" (p. 49). However, from Kim's different perspective of the development of revolutionary strategy and leadership technique, it was a period of significant achievements and success. Despite serious political and military setbacks, Mao and his followers managed to develop and test systematically the concept and techniques of the "mass line" in the revolutionary base area. The organizational strategy developed by Mao at that time, according to Kim, became a crucial foundation stone for the ultimate victory of the Communist movement and greatly influenced the process and style of China's mass mobilization model of political transformation and economic development.

The mass-line strategy, as developed in the Kiangsi Soviet, involved a set of highly complex and sophisticated organizational principles, procedures and techniques. It was designed to serve as a mechanism for raising the masses' ideological and political consciousness and for mobilizing the masses to support the revolutionary war, to participate in socio-political reforms, and to perform

concrete organizational tasks. Moreover, it was calculated to create a close linkage between the cadres and the masses, between the government and the grass-roots mass organizations (such as the corps of poor peasants and the farm laborers' unions), and between policy formulation at the higher levels and task implementation at the lower levels.

Because its focus is on the short period of the Kiangsi Soviet, Kim's analysis achieves levels of depth, detail, and sophistication that the more diffuse studies of Domes and Thornton fail to attain. To the variables of policy conflict and power struggle, Kim adds organization and leadership technique and thus succeeds in constructing an even more complex and imaginative analytical framework. The reader who is particularly concerned with the organizational strategy and leadership technique of the Maoist model of revolution will surely find Kim's contribution invaluable.

In sum, the three books under review are all works of serious scholarship and make important contributions, from different perspectives and data bases, to our knowledge of Maoist strategies of revolution and development. A quick comparison of their respective strengths and limitations suggests two conclusions of methodological interest: (1) that the depth of analysis is clearly related

⁷ Issues of a similar nature have previously been raised by a number of leading China scholars. See e.g., Maurice Freedman, "What Social Science Can Do for Chinese Studies," *Journal of Asian Studies* (Ann Arbor), August 1964, pp. 523-30; A.M. Halpern, "Contemporary China as a Problem for Political Science," *World Politics* (Princeton, N.J.), Vol. 15, No. 3, April 1963, pp. 361-76; and John W. Lewis, "The Study of Chinese Political Culture," *ibid*, Vol. 18, No. 3, April 1966, pp. 503-24.

to the time span covered; and (2) that the degree of sophistication is positively related to the number of variables built into the analytical framework. It follows that focusing on a shorter period of time and taking into account more variables tend to produce analyses of greater depth and sophistication. The penetrating quality of Kim's study owes much to his

judicious choice of topical focus and analytical framework, while the limitations of the Domes and the Thornton volumes stem in large part from the necessity to sacrifice depth to breadth. Despite the latter's contributions to a broad historical overview of the evolution of Chinese communism, crucial variables and important data are often lost in summaries

and generalizations. This points to the question of whether the time has perhaps come when greater emphasis on "micro" as opposed to "macro" studies of the Maoist models of revolution and development is needed in order to maximize the effectiveness of our research efforts.⁷

(Footnote 7 appears on p. 82.)

Patterns of Chinese Growth

By Christopher Howe

KANG CHAO: *Capital Formation in Mainland China, 1952-1965*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1974.

CHU-YUAN CHENG: *The Machine-Building Industry in Communist China*. Chicago, Aldine-Atherton, 1971.

M. GARDNER CLARK: *The Development of China's Steel Industry and Soviet Technical Aid*. Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1973.

THE YEAR 1975 marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of the First Five-Year Plan in the People's Republic of China and is an appropriate time to review some of the changes that have taken place in the pattern of Chinese economic growth since that event. In this regard, data released during the past several years have enabled observers not only to discern with greater precision the

long-term swings in China's overall growth but also to analyze some of the interesting changes that have taken place in the intersectoral balance of the economy since 1959 (when publication of official statistics virtually ceased). As an added bonus, the appearance of a new collection of Mao's speeches entitled *Mao Tse-tung ssu-hsiang wan-sui* (Long Live the Thought of Mao Tse-tung)¹ has provided fascinating and completely unexpected in-

sights into the making of economic policy during the turbulent years after initiation of the Great Leap Forward in 1958. These materials serve to underline the depth of the economic crisis that resulted from the Communists' policies of rapid capital accumulation and priority concentration on developing the modern industrial sector—a crisis compounded by the Great Leap Forward. They also reveal the difficulties involved in subsequent efforts to reorder sectoral priorities, reconstruct an effective system of economic administration, and determine the appropriate role of foreign technology in China's industrialization. While there are currently under way a number of important surveys of the quantitative aspects of these problems (several of the reviewed volumes have contributions to make in this area), the primary focus of the present dis-

¹ Two volumes under this title, one apparently originating in 1967 and the other in August 1969 (both in the People's Republic), were reproduced on Taiwan in 1973. A discussion of the authenticity and significance of these volumes is contained in Stuart R. Schram, "A Review Article—Mao Tse-tung: A Self-Portrait," *The China Quarterly* (London), No. 57, January-March 1974, pp. 156-65. Photo reproductions of both volumes are available through the Center for Chinese Research Materials, Association of Research Libraries, Washington, DC.