

Mao and Maoism

- ARTHUR A. COHEN: *The Communism of Mao Tse-tung*.
Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- STUART R. SCHRAM: *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*.
New York, Praeger, 1963.
- JEROME CH'EN: *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*.
London, Oxford University Press, 1965.
- JOHN W. LEWIS: *Major Doctrines of Communist China*.
New York, Norton, 1964.
- GUY WINT: *Communist China's Crusade: Mao's Road to Power and the
New Campaign for World Revolution*.
New York, Praeger, 1965.

Reviewed by James R. Townsend

THE FIVE BOOKS under review are a small sample of the increasing flow of publications about the Communist revolution in China. Until a few years ago, the student of Communist China had at his disposal only a handful of scholarly monographs, supplemented by numerous journalistic reports of very uneven quality. Like the Soviet field in the postwar years, however, the Chinese Communist field is now experiencing a publication explosion that will soon transform the situation of scarcity into one of relative abundance.

This development is entirely natural and welcome, for the Chinese Communist revolution is rich in themes that should engage the attention of scholars and writers for decades to come. It has an individual leader whose activities span the whole course of the revolution, and whose successes may rival those of the greatest figures in history. It is a movement of unparalleled scope embracing over three decades of struggle

against the old political order and linking up with a series of social, economic, and cultural changes that have made all of modern Chinese history a revolutionary process. And it now seems, in the light of the Sino-Soviet conflict, to have a mission that may profoundly affect world politics in the second half of the 20th century. These are the themes to which the books under review address themselves.

What sort of man is Mao Tse-tung and how will history assess him? This challenging question has spurred Messrs. Cohen, Schram and Ch'en to engage in intensive explorations of Mao's life and work. Mr. Cohen's book is the most limited in scope. His purpose, as stated in the introduction, is to delineate Mao's view of communism and to ascertain in what ways Mao is an innovator in the Marxist-Leninist tradition. In his analysis of Mao's originality as a political theorist, Cohen moves systematically through Mao's major writings on dialectical ma-

terialism, revolution, the state, the "transition to socialism," contradictions in socialist society, and the "transition to communism," quoting liberally from the texts in question and constantly comparing what Mao has said with what other Marxist-Leninists said before him. The book is heavy going, but it is well-documented and generally offers persuasive evidence in support of the author's viewpoint.

Mr. Cohen concludes that Mao is neither a philosopher nor an original political theorist, but rather a skillful political and military leader who has revised, improved, and on occasion departed from various Marxist-Leninist tenets in his adaptation of the original doctrine to Chinese conditions. Most Maoist innovations, he contends, are on "practical matters" and turn out, on closer examination (pp. 190-91), to be "additions" rather than "complete reinterpretations," or innovations from which Mao has since retreated. Mao's genuinely creative contributions, in Mr. Cohen's view, lie in the

realm of political strategy and leadership, principally his idea of protracted guerrilla warfare waged from self-sustaining rural bases, and the "political style" of tight control and indoctrination within the party. The acknowledged importance of these contributions, however, does not alter the author's conclusion that Mao lacks great theoretical originality or insight.

IN ARRIVING at his negativistic assessment of Mao's contribution to Communist doctrine, Mr. Cohen tries to draw a line between the Chinese leader's talent as a practical revolutionary and his capacity as a political theorist. As the author himself acknowledges (p. 192), however, the distinction between theory and practice is sometimes blurred. For example, did Mao's strategy of a peasant-based revolution in China constitute a creative addition to Marxist-Leninist theory, or was it simply an adaptation of an established Leninist concept? Cohen seeks to resolve this hoary controversy by a rigorous examination of what various Communist theorists have said about the peasant's revolutionary role. By and large, he succeeds in demonstrating that Mao produced no basic ideas that had not been propounded earlier, chiefly by Lenin or Stalin; nevertheless, one wonders whether the problem here is not, rather, one of emphasis and intent. In their efforts to anticipate the course of world revolutionary developments and thus protect themselves against future criticism, Communist theoreticians have said a great many things that ought not to be regarded as integral parts of the doctrine. Did Lenin and Stalin really believe that their own doctrinal formulations prescribed a peasant-based revolution in China? Lenin died too soon to provide a definitive answer, but Stalin's actions in China in 1926-27 indicate that *he* did not. Viewed in this light, Stalin's statements about the priority of the peasant movement (*e.g.*, the one cited by Cohen on p. 45) cannot be interpreted as a theoretical conviction, and it would seem historically naive to contend that his or Lenin's views on the peasant question were the decisive sources of Mao's conception of the peasant's revolutionary role.

Mr. Cohen also makes some questionable assertions about Mao as a person. We are told that Mao pretends to semidivine insight and *total* genius (p. 7); that personal vanity was his main motive in claiming that his treatises

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On Practice and *On Contradictions* were written in 1937, whereas Cohen maintains that they were actually written in 1950 and 1952, respectively (p. 28);¹ that Mao is a “fanatic” whose views of reality are sometimes blinded by conceit (pp. 29, 162-3); and that his “craving for adulation” is responsible for the “cult of Mao” (p. 202). These characterizations may possibly be accurate, but Mr. Cohen presents little if any hard evidence to corroborate them. They may, of course, be inferred simply from the existence of the cult of Mao; however, if we are to speculate about the causes of the cult, it might be well to ponder also on the psychological as well as the solid political benefits that the Chinese Communist Party undoubtedly derives from picturing China’s national leader as an infallible figure who has won his place among the immortals of Communist history. In sum, *The Communism of Mao Tse-tung* is a well-documented analysis of Mao’s doctrinal output which nevertheless leaves many questions about the man and his character unanswered.

MR. SCHRAM’S STUDY of Mao’s political thought consists, for the most part, of extracts from Mao’s writings arranged under ten topical headings, with one brief selection on his “pre-Marxist” thought. Inevitably, this sort of treatment creates a certain amount of confusion, since extracts from the same work may appear under more than one topic and there is no index permitting quick location of all references to and extracts from a particular title. Nevertheless, the documentary materials selected by Mr. Schram provide an excellent introduction to Mao’s writings and include several items previously untranslated or difficult to locate. These materials are accompanied by brief introductory comments and by bibliographical notes designed to assist those who wish to study Mao’s works in greater depth.

Mr. Schram’s general introduction (pp. 3-89) is of particular interest since it invites a comparison with Cohen’s book. Whereas the latter emphasizes the face value of Mao’s consciously doctrinal statements, Schram concentrates on the implications of all of Mao’s writings from the standpoint of determining the basic nature

and sources of the Chinese leader’s political thought. Schram might well agree that Mao is not impressive as a Marxist theoretician in Cohen’s use of that term (see Schram’s comments on pp. 111-12); however, he makes it clear (pp. 80-81) that he is not overly concerned with the precise degree of Mao’s dependence on Marxist-Leninist doctrine as he is convinced that Mao is much more than a conscientious follower of his European Communist predecessors. He states at the outset that Mao’s thought is the composite product of the historical situation in which he grew up, the intellectual currents to which he was exposed, and his own strong personality (p. 3). The product embraces Marxism-Leninism but also goes beyond it.

Much of Mr. Schram’s introduction is a roughly chronological discussion of Mao’s life and writings designed to show how the Chinese leader’s personality and experiences led him to a course of action which could be justified within a loose Leninist framework, but which also represented his independent convictions. Specifically, Mao’s great reliance on the peasants, his nationalistic ambitions for the regeneration of China, his populism, and his romantic belief in the power of the human will (or as Schram calls it, his “voluntarism”) derived from experiential rather than doctrinal influences. To the extent that these characteristics of his thinking are compatible with Leninism, they represent a form of “natural Leninism” rather than conscious imitation. Mr. Schram skirts the question of whether or not they amount to creative additions to Marxism-Leninism, but he does express the view that Mao carried these ideas far beyond their doctrinal antecedents. That they have had a profound impact on Chinese communism is certainly indisputable.

Mr. Schram’s failure to resolve the question of Mao’s “originality” does not detract from the value of his study. The *Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* is not a definitive analysis and evaluation, but rather an immensely useful and suggestive interpretation of a complex man’s political ideas. Whether Mao is “original” or not, his brand of Marxism-Leninism, with its nationalistic, populist and voluntaristic features, has succeeded in projecting the influence of communism into non-European revolutionary situations in a way that could not have been anticipated forty years ago. Through his exami-

¹ Schram disputes Cohen’s contention that these two essays were written in 1950 and 1952 rather than in 1937. See *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, pp. 43-44.

nation of the intellectual and political currents that shaped Mao's thought, Mr. Schram has made a notable contribution to our understanding of this fact.

THE DEBATE over Mao's contribution to Communist doctrine has tended to obscure somewhat his political activities as the virtually unchallenged leader, since 1935, of the Chinese Communist movement. Although both Cohen and Schram are keenly aware of Mao's stature in this respect, it is Professor Ch'en's book that best reveals the drama and significance of Mao's role in modern Chinese history. Ch'en's thesis, as stated in his foreword, is that the study of "Maoism" must be related to "Mao's personal experiences, the nature of Chinese society in the twenties and thirties, and the Chinese revolutionary wars." He disclaims any attempt to judge Mao's achievements or his place in history on the ground that the Chinese leader's career is not yet ended. He further states that his study is meant to be not just a straight biography, since Mao's career cannot be separated from Chinese politics, but rather a "dispassionate analysis of Mao's life and times." This the author has accomplished superbly in what is undoubtedly the best available account of the Chinese Communist movement up to 1949 as well as the best synthesis of what is now known about Mao's life. Despite his disclaimer, he has also said a great deal about Mao's contribution and role in the Chinese revolution.

Professor Ch'en's thoroughness in depicting the political background of Mao's career may at first be somewhat irritating to his readers. The attention he gives to the details of the warlord struggles in the 1910's, for example, tends to hinder rather than help the reader's grasp of the general situation, as does the later citation of the individual commanders and designations of every army unit. Nevertheless, the realization gradually grows that the course of the Chinese Communist movement is in itself a significant affirmation of Mao's leadership and importance. This is certainly not to say that Mao alone can claim credit for the success of the Chinese Communist revolution; Ch'en observes only that no one else can claim greater credit (p. 213).

The author shows that Mao's policies from 1928 on, and especially during 1937-45, were instrumental in bringing victory within the

grasp of the CCP. He shows, too, that Mao's determination and superior political insight contributed vitally to his success in establishing and maintaining his party leadership, although his command of the loyalties of the Red Army and the existence of divisions within the party in the 1930's also were important factors. Perhaps the Chinese Communists could not have won final victory without the Japanese invasion and the deficiencies of Kuomintang rule. Nevertheless, their survival of the disasters of 1927-37 and their effective exploitation of the opportunities of 1937-45 revealed exceptional qualities which stemmed in no small part from the leadership of Mao Tse-tung.

IT IS WORTH remembering that Mao's span of dominance in his party already exceeds that of Stalin by several years, and that the time elapsed since 1937, when the CCP first began to administer significant areas of China and to develop its characteristic policies and political style, is the same as that from the October Revolution to the end of World War II. The Chinese Communist movement may thus be approaching middle, if not old, age and may soon cease to be a "movement" in the sense that the word connotes youthful dynamism and adaptability.

The volume edited by Professor Lewis affords considerable insight into this process of maturation. It consists almost entirely of translated Chinese materials touching on all major doctrines and policies of the CCP from 1949 through 1963, with several pre-1949 selections thrown in. The editor has written a brief background statement for each of the ten chapters, plus a short introduction pointing up the uses and limitations of Chinese documentary materials. The selected materials of course include many excerpts from the works of Mao and other top Chinese Communist leaders as well as various basic laws and regulations. More importantly, they also draw on the vast store of middle-range articles and reports which not only mirror official policy but often fill it out with details and make it more meaningful. The collection is, perhaps, the most informative and up-to-date introductory text presently available on Communist China.

The maturity of the CCP comes through strongly in a reading of the documents. Above all, they impress the reader with the party's

consciousness of its past record and its confidence in its ability to meet the challenges both of its Chinese environment and of its political opponents. There is, however, another side to this maturity, and that is the limitations which the party's established methods and characteristics, shaped by revolutionary experience, may impose on its effectiveness in coping with vastly altered problems and conditions. The "mass line," the habit of total reliance on the wisdom of a few aging leaders, the use of agitation and indoctrination to rally the people in support of national causes, and faith in the invincibility of a mobilized population—these have virtually become fixed attributes of the movement. It is not at all certain, however, that they are the most appropriate attributes for a party which now must focus its attention on the mundane tasks of development. A movement relies on a sense of mission, but the CCP's initial mission of national independence, unification and reconstruction under a socialist system has been substantially fulfilled. One of the critical questions of our time is whether the CCP has embarked on a new mission or whether its current actions in the international arena simply represent the final phase of its drive to fulfill the old one.

ALTHOUGH ALL of the books under review except Ch'en's deal, in some way, with China's international ambitions, it is Mr. Wint's that attacks the question most directly. *Communist China's Crusade* is a new version of the author's *Dragon and Sickle* (1959), expanded to cover the development and implications of the Sino-Soviet conflict. The brevity of the book and

the breadth of the subject (the CCP's origins, road to power, and present international role) preclude detailed or exhaustive analysis. The book is actually a series of short, interpretive essays that range rather loosely over the entire history of the CCP. There are a few minor errors and some very sweeping generalizations, but the treatment as a whole is sound and suggestive.

Wint believes that the CCP has a new mission which derives, consciously or unconsciously, from the old universalism of Chinese culture (p. 110). He sees Communist China as a base for expansion (p. 67), and the only question is whether it is to be expansion of Chinese or of Communist power. The question, however, proves to be an intractable one, as Wint concedes when he says (p. 67) that China has "double aims, a double foreign policy, a double ambition." The Chinese Communists look to the Sinification of Asia, Africa and Latin America just as the Hans looked to the Sinification of large areas of Asia, he remarks (p. 110), but "Sinification" in the modern context means "the adoption of the Chinese version of communism."

Notwithstanding the difficulty of resolving the question, Wint does a good job of explaining the complex motives that underlie the present phase of China's foreign policy. One only wishes, given the author's talent for generalization, that he had said more about China's prospects for expansion. Whatever China's ambitions may be, and whatever the motivation of those ambitions, the material bases of Chinese power and the reaction of China's neighbors will necessarily affect the extent to which they can be fulfilled.

Cuba and Latin American Communism

- THEODORE DRAPER: *Castroism: Theory and Practice*.
New York, Praeger, 1965.
- JULES DUBOIS: *Operation America*.
New York, Walker, 1963.
- ADOLFO GILLY: *Inside the Cuban Revolution*.
New York, Monthly Review Press, 1964.
- BORIS GOLDENBERG: *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America*.
New York, Praeger, 1965.
- ROLLIE POPPINO: *International Communism in Latin America, 1917-1963*.
Toronto, Collier-Macmillan, 1964.
- MANUEL URRUTIA LLEO: *Fidel Castro and Company, Inc.*
New York, Praeger, 1964.

Reviewed by Daniel Tretiak

DURING THE PAST few years, several new books dealing with Cuba have appeared in print. Of these Theodore Draper's second study of the Castro Revolution, *Castroism: Theory and Practice*, and Boris Goldenberg's long work, *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America*, are particularly valuable. Professor Draper's book is a collection of three essays on various aspects of the Cuban revolution. Mr. Goldenberg's volume is a historical exposition of major developments in Cuban internal and external policy during the time of Castro's struggle against the Batista regime as well as during the years following the victory of the revolution.

While he was in Moscow in mid-November 1964, Ernesto Guevara remarked that Cuba was already a socialist country: ". . . we represent a socialist country, we officially feel that we are socialists. . . ." Indeed, Cuba is a member of the Communist world system, pledging

fealty to Marxism-Leninism—but with a difference. For while all the other Communist states are more or less closely allied with one or the other of the two great antagonists in the world Communist movement, Cuba has so far avoided exclusive commitment to either China or the Soviet Union. It has had better relations with the USSR than any pro-Chinese party state, and better relations with China than any pro-Soviet party state. Moreover, it has been more independent politically of Moscow than could normally be expected, given Cuba's strong economic reliance on the Soviet Union. On many issues that have divided China and the USSR, the Cubans have avoided taking a clearcut position, on some questions they have lined up with Moscow, on others, albeit less often, with Peking.

This stance of independence within the Communist world has been conditioned by develop-