

What Worries Chairman Mao

by O. EDMUND CLUBB

THE RISE OF MODERN CHINA, by Immanuel C. Y. Hsü (Oxford University Press, 830 pp., \$14.50); **CHINA'S TURBULENT QUEST**, by Harold C. Hinton (Macmillan, 340 pp., \$7.95); **CHINA AFTER THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: A Selection from The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists** (Random House, 247 pp., \$7.95); **THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA: The Next Decade**, edited by A. Doak Barnett and Edwin O. Reischauer (Praeger, 250 pp., \$7.50; paperback, \$2.95)

A century ago the "community of nations" was assumed by Occidental political theorists to comprise a limited number of Christian states, which by their own accepted conventions were sovereign and legally "equal" one to the other. China, and other Asian states, did not belong to that exclusive club. Ironically, imperial China itself cared not at all to be judged equal. According to Confucian belief the Chinese emperor was the legitimate ruler of the universe. Admittedly, certain "barbarians" had not yet become sufficiently enlightened to adopt Confucian truth and accept Chinese rule; but eventually, in the natural course of events, they would *lai hua*, come and be changed—to the Chinese Way. This idea was in direct conflict with the Western assumption that it was China that needed enlightenment and would change in the end. In those circumstances little understanding was possible between the two civilizations.

Now, a new day has dawned in the field of international affairs. The organization of the League of Nations on a global basis after World War I and the participation in the United Nations of many ex-colonies as independent sovereign states have been expressions of the new era. Nevertheless the situation contains a striking anomaly: China is not only still outside the U.N. community, but there is much evidence suggesting that Communist China, even as imperial China, demands universal recognition of the superiority of its ideological and cultural values. Mutual understanding between China and the

rest of the world is yet to be attained.

Thanks to the assiduous efforts of scholars around the world, however, an increasing number of penetrating analyses of China's history and society, and of the Chinese psyche, are becoming available, and we are getting to know China better. The work by Professor C. Y. Hsü, for one, makes an important contribution to our background knowledge of the subject. *The Rise of Modern China* is not a book for the general public: its scope is too extensive, and there is too great a mass of detail regarding complicated political, economic, and social developments for ready comprehension by the uninitiated. But the study will probably be extremely useful in college courses, for which it would seem well designed.

Dr. Hsü is the author of an earlier work, *China's Entrance Into the Family of Nations* (1960). There, he concluded that China "had realistically, if also painfully," assumed its place in the community of nations by 1880. But that was true only in a formal sense, and Hsü in the end remarked that "it was only through necessity, not free choice, that China had entered the world community." Looking at the rise of Communist China, he wondered "whether the 'universal' state and the tributary system of the past have not been revived in a modern form."

In the present work Hsü is concerned with the "shaping forces" that operated on China during its modern, formative period, dating effectively from the Opium War (1839-42). He sees one such force in China's search for means of survival in the new world in which it found itself after strangers from the outside had callously broken into the nation's exclusive society.

The author treats extensively the impact of Western "barbarians" on China in the nineteenth century. He rightly remarks that, in the final analysis, the opium trade was not the cause of the Opium War; "Far deeper than the

opium question was the incompatibility of the Chinese claim to universal overlordship with the Western idea of national sovereignty. . . ." And during the era of "unequal treaties" introduced by a series of military defeats administered to China, one sees a wavering struggle by the decaying Manchu régime to reconcile new knowledge, technology, and political forces with traditional Chinese beliefs. What was the blocking factor in the problem? The Chinese ideologues desired to "modernize" in a manner that would enable the state to regain wealth and power while the society retained the essence of "Chineseness." That was the task undertaken in the "self-strengthening" movement after 1860. The effort, however, failed lamentably to regenerate the régime, and ended in the 1911 Revolution.

The revolutionary situation naturally evoked fresh thinking, and Hsü traces the intellectual currents of the critical first two decades of the twentieth century. But the record is one of clashing forces, influenced on occasion by foreign elements, and the task of adjustment had still not been basically accomplished when, after yet another foreign as well as civil war, the Communists came to power.

The Communist period of China's history is notoriously "controversial," and Hsü's treatment of contemporary developments must upon occasion be adjudged controversial. I hold this to apply to his handling of the Stilwell case, Nationalist-Communist relations and China's war effort, and Peking-Moscow relations from 1960 to 1969. Nevertheless, his conclusion, set forth in a brief epilogue, represents a sober, logical election of one of the alternatives posed in the Chinese dilemma. Hsü considers that the revolt of the Chinese against both the outside world and their own past is to be deemed a function of the nation's transitional revolutionary stage. "But once China's sense of injury at the hands of foreign powers is mollified by the achievement of big-power status, industrialization, and nuclear power, a more responsible and more realistic appraisal of her position vis-à-vis the rest of the world will be in order."

That same search by China for a suitable place in the world is suggested by the title of the new book by Harold C. Hinton, *China's Turbulent Quest*. Professor Hinton, author of *Communist China in World Politics* (1966), analyzes China's foreign relations since the Communists took power in 1949. His book displays a sure grasp of the complicated history of the Communist period and a refreshing readiness to speculate about possible factors underlying various developments still veiled



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by mystery, and to offer bold interpretations of significance of events. Hinton's speculations are recognizable as such, and his boldness enriches his book. There is, however, a structural fault to be noted: the author's device of dividing the work into three parts, with the second devoted to analyzing more fully some developments already treated, inevitably results in undesirable repetition.

Hinton places a major stress on the role of Mao Tse-tung and Maoism in Chinese policy formulation and implementation in both domestic and foreign affairs. According to Hinton's thesis, Mao's increased absolutism from 1955 on has not enhanced his authority as leader of the Chinese nation, for his errors have brought national disillusionment in their train. Under Mao, China has striven for "modernization, after its own fashion"; and the country has in addition "an immense felt need for prestige, for universal acceptance of Peking's self-image. . . ."

But Maoist aspirations have often outrun Maoist achievements. Hinton, in striking the balance sheet, finds failures in the realm of Peking's foreign policy. There have been errors in both perception and action, especially during the period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), when "Red Guard diplomacy" (some call it "Boxer diplomacy") alienated foreign support without achieving countervailing gains. Hinton concludes that, on the whole, the prospects favor the maintenance of "a reasonable degree of national unity" and the restoration of a central administration, "probably with a military and bureaucratic flavor." In China's foreign policy, he holds, a strong Maoist flavor will be retained "for the sake of legitimacy, unity, and continuity," but that element will likely not be permitted to thwart an increased reliance on state action instead of revolutionary militancy.

Thus Hinton, like Hsü, clearly suggests that, with the ebbing of the violent emotions attending the GPCR, China has decided to fit into the world community on the proffered terms—acceptance of existing international law and the present world political and economic order. This would be a return to the spirit of 1880. But, as remarked by Dr. Hsü, China on that occasion gave its agreement only because the goal of universal hegemony was discovered to be beyond reach. The "adjustment" thesis must for the moment be accepted only tentatively.

Estimates of the significance of the Maoist Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution are set forth in *China After the Cultural Revolution*, a compendium of articles on different aspects of that

earth-shaking phenomenon, written by a dozen able analysts of the China scene and first published in a special issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. The complexity of the task facing the analysts is suggested by W. A. C. Adie, who observes: "One cause of the present confusion in China is that traditional double-talk and opportunism, codified into the Maoist jargon all have been forced to learn, created a semantic fog in which even the Chinese did not know whose side they were on, who was winning, which way to switch, or when. The flood carried them along." Certain things derive naturally from induced chaos: "One of the revelations of the Cultural Revolution is that Mao had not really achieved a high degree of central control in China at all." Sketching the economic and social polarizations induced under Mao's rule, Adie remarks that Maoism has been transformed "from an integrative into a disintegrative formula. . . ." There has been an ideological split between "the revivalist attitude of the dispossessed and the search of the bureaucrats and the 'new class' for stability. . . ."

Again it was foreign policy that attracted the greatest attention, for these writers, too, were desirous of ascertaining whether, and how, China will fit into the world of the latter twentieth century. There is agreement with the theorem advanced by Hinton that China, after acting with reckless violence in the field of foreign affairs during the GPCR, has turned again to moderation; "Boxer diplomacy" had brought no gains, only losses. But several writers point to the Chinese animosity toward both the United States and the Soviet Union, and cast doubts on the permanence of Peking's renewed policy of peaceful coexistence. Richard Harris, Far Eastern specialist of the *London Times*, asks the pertinent question: "Is it not probable that Mao has no positive desire for friendly relations with anyone?" For, as Harris suggests, Mao still dreams of world revolution, and while he lives he "is not going to be put off by his apparent failure to win a world following for his revolutionary leadership."

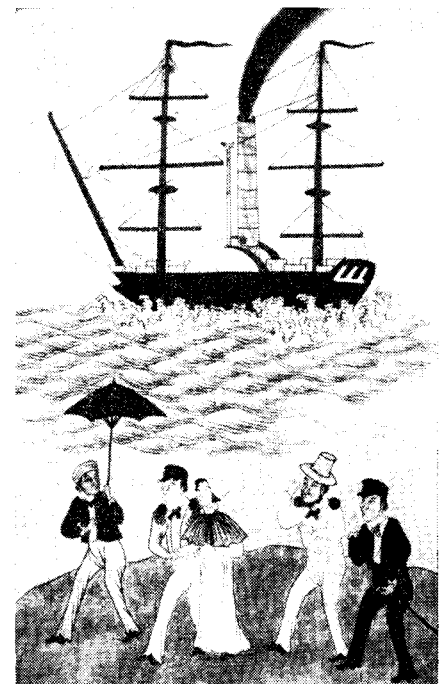
Premier Chou En-lai is quoted as saying, with reference to the matter of a U.N. seat for China, "China can wait." That may be true for the particular question, but it is not as true generally as Peking's leaders would have the world believe. As noted by Professor Robert F. Dernberger, in the present volume, the introduction of communes in 1958 not only failed to solve China's agricultural problem but "seriously increased the tension among China's leaders. . . ." The GPCR was a direct descendant of Mao's 1958 Great Leap

Forward, and it had equally disastrous results for the "modernization" process. Looking at the concrete results, Dernberger judges Mao's development program to be "bad sociology as well as bad economics." Time does not work inexorably for Chinese ends regardless of mistaken policies.

The quest for insight into the meaning of Chinese events was pursued in March of last year at a conference held in New York under the auspices of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. Those who wish to may now vicariously participate in that meeting, for the thirty-four presentations, together with a record of the subsequent discussion, are contained in *The United States and China: The Next Decade*. As suggested by the title, the over-all concern of the gathering was Sino-American relations and the potential for the years ahead. Apart from that, however, the different panels focused on a variety of topics, with the political element dominant.

The brief initial presentations by the panelists reflected a wide spectrum of attitudes, ranging from sympathy to overt hostility toward the Chinese People's Republic. The vast differences in appreciation of that country led one panelist to comment that "it seems that there are as many Chinas as observers of China." Opinions were voiced that Mao Tse-tung is moved by a "Promethean urge," that he aims at creating permanent revolution, and that his recent leadership has brought chaos to the country.

One observer contended that the Chinese have not yet decided whether



—From "The Rise of Modern China."

Chinese painting of the arrival of an early European steamboat in Canton.

it is in the Chinese national interest to participate in international organizations, or how much reliance to place on the international system as a whole. Professor Richard Walker put the matter somewhat differently: "The problem of bringing China's traditional agrarian society into the mainstream of today's world has not been solved."

Several persons referred to the eventual death of Mao Tse-tung. What comes after, given especially the division in the Chinese leadership—a division brought about in good measure by Chairman Mao himself in the pursuit of his "permanent revolution"? The economists painted a picture of national weakness. As Professor Alexander Eckstein graphically put it, China has "a small economy in a vast country."

One might legitimately conclude from the findings of this convocation, as well as from the previously cited volumes, that China has not yet achieved that "modernization" which spells material power, or in fact even decided whether "self-strengthening" (the Peking Communists use the equivalent phrase "self-reliance") will permit attainment of that goal. Its leadership seems wed to a chauvinistic approach similar to but more radical than that of the Confucian Chinese in the past: the Maoists would not only retain a Chinese essence but would invent new "Chinese" political forms and power techniques to the exclusion of "alien" elements.

This circumstance reflects the second major aspect of the present situation: China under Mao does not propose to join the world on the world's terms, but instead argues that a revolutionary movement governed by Maoism is destined to sweep "American imperialists" and "Soviet revisionists" alike into the dustbin of history, and mark the ad-

vent of a new universalism in the Chinese pattern.

Mao's China, then, is not yet ready to accept the idea of a world of sovereign states in which it is no more "equal" than others. But here one turns, as have so many contributors to the volumes under review, to the matter of Mao's mortality. His death, which cannot be far off, may well prove critical. Mao is of the pattern of other great Chinese reformers who have preceded him, have tried to change everything in their short lifetimes, and failed, to be followed in power by soberer men. There is an ingrown tendency on the part of Americans particularly to assume that the current ruler of China, be he a Chiang Kai-shek or a Mao Tse-tung, is a true personification of the nation. That assumption is far from the actuality. Mao's successor will inevitably be a quite different man—which, of course, is just what worries Chairman Mao.

It should worry the rest of us somewhat less. In theory, that successor might indeed be even more "revolutionary" than Mao himself. But since China has failed either to achieve strength through modernization or to win a host of alien converts to the doctrine of Maoism, and is challenged in its universalist aspirations by both the United States and the Soviet Union, the next Chinese leadership will probably be distinctly less messianic than that of the man who knew only revolution. And what will happen when China has attained a position of wealth and power? If the world's nations have not by that time developed a greater community of interests and organization, another Chinese leader might turn once more to the concept of the universal state as satisfying the immanent will of history.

A PAGAN PLACE

by Edna O'Brien

Knopf, 234 pp., \$5.95

Reviewed by Patricia MacManus

■ At one point the youthful narrator of Edna O'Brien's tale recollects a jittery vigil in the country dusk: "You tried to whistle. Only men should whistle. The Blessed Virgin blushed when women whistled and likewise when women crossed their legs. It intrigued you thinking of the Blessed Virgin having to blush so frequently." This is in holy Ireland, where the Mother of God is ever on the alert. At the same time other forces lie in wait, sheltering in places like the fort of dark trees you skirted on the way to school: "It was a pagan place and circular. Druids had their rites there long before your mother and father or his mother and father or her mother and father or anyone you'd ever heard tell of. . . . You were afraid of Druids. You had things to fear from the living and from the dead." This is pagan Ireland, refusing to stay decently buried.

Hallowed and unhallowed Ireland both pervade this lambent narrative as it traces the passage from girlhood to womanhood of the recollecting "you." And not the least of the wizardry here is the deftly controlled use of that hazardous second-person singular, involving the reader from the opening passage: "Manny Parker was a botanist, out in all weathers, lived with his sister that ran the sweetshop, they ate meat Fridays, they were Protestants. Your mother dealt there, found them honest." Altogether, in fact, the style of *A Pagan Place* is so organic to its total design that synopsisizing the action—an overworked custom, at best—would do the book a distinct injustice. The artfully artless manner of the telling, the pared-to-the-bone prose, and the richly comic overtones generate the novel's particular illumination, and it's of a high intensity.

The locale is an Irish farming village (such as Edna O'Brien was apparently reared in), but its inhabitants are no nest of simple folk. Evoked in the variousness of their virtues, frailties, and oddities, they comprise humanity in its many guises. At one extreme there was your much-loved mother, who "often dreamed that she was back in New York and was grieved to find herself in the blue room with the uncultivated hills and the boring fields around her. The hills were old mountains that had lost their peaks and that is why she often said she felt as old as the hills." And at the other extreme there was the dashing young priest, home on holi-

