Intellectuals, Utopian Dreams, and the Question of Human Rights in China

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of thirteen essays, primarily on China, is part of my labor of long years of study, reflection and writing concerning the painful experience of the humiliation of, and great struggle for a better future by, the Chinese people since the decline and collapse of the old imperial order. I refer to it as "one hundred years of entanglement." I am particularly interested in the role the intellectuals played, emphasizing the tensions between the urge towards utopian dreams and the quest for human rights and democracy.

The earliest articles in this collection are the two chapters dealing with the people's commune movement taken from my Columbia University PhD dissertation of 1969. They are presented here to illustrate the end of the road for the utopian project championed by Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong). Part two turns to three articles dealing with, in turn, Chinese tradition, the Marxist perspective and the liberal idea of human rights since the May Fourth Movement in the early 1920s. Two of the articles were written in the early 1990s and first published in Chinese in New York City by Human Rights in China, a non-governmental organization. Part three takes up the situation of human rights in China at the close of Mao's era and the early years of Deng Xiaoping's rise to power. The piece on the Xidan Democracy Wall Posters, slightly edited was originally published as the introduction to the *Fifth Modernization of 1978-79*, a book of documents, written by this author and James D. Seymour.

At this point, I turn to the intriguing and precarious relationship between China and Taiwan, arguing for a federal arrangement as a possible solution to break the stalemate between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The article on the Anti-Nuclear Movement in Taiwan makes clear how the consciousness of rights and freedoms took root in Taiwan. The last part of the book contains two articles and goes beyond China and Taiwan by dwelling on the Asian Values debate and the divergent concepts of peace and human rights in the Asian context. The paper on Asian Values debate is a slightly modified version of the original article.

I have chosen to arrange my articles chronologically so that it is easier for my readers to understand the unfolding political situation in China, and to a

lesser degree in Taiwan, and assess my thinking and reflection through the decades. Three encounters with China, so to speak, left a very deep impression on me. In the summer of 1966, I visited Hong Kong to gather materials and interview refugees from China for my dissertation. I met with scholars, experts and journalists, but spent most of my time interviewing more than a dozen young men from rural areas, especially from Kwangtung (Guangdong). The refugees were young, most of them in their thirties, all male. Two had been members of the Chinese Communist Party, and several of them had been low-level cadres in the people's commune or brigade. It was the first time I had met, and talked to, peasants face-to-face, and I learned much about life in rural areas, and the conflict between the Party cadres and the peasants.

My second experience was a meeting with a group of former Red Guards in Hong Kong in the mid-1970s. They were young, men and women, idealist, agitated, loosely organized and completely disillusioned with the Cultural Revolution. I helped them publish a journal, which in a short time became quite well-known. The reason was not difficult to discern. Writing with passion and commitment, they provided much material for thought. Yet it was clear that they were marginal persons in Hong Kong and the journal could not be maintained for long. By 1979, when Deng was solidly in control, the group simply dispersed and disappeared from the scene.

In 1980, after thirty years of sojourn, studying and teaching in the USA, I returned to China for a brief visit. I was privileged to have the opportunity to speak to a group of prominent liberal scholars at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and in several universities. I was somewhat puzzled that a few of them, as they kind of admitted, had firmly believed that Mao could lead China to a great future during the era of the Cultural Revolution. They were optimistic, however, that with Deng, the situation for the intellectuals would improve and they were determined to do their utmost for their country.

In preparing for this publication, many colleagues and students gave me much encouragement and help, without which it could not have been done. Dr. Edmund Ryden SJ was kind enough to go over many of the chapters and not only correct my English grammar but help me understand and appreciate the subtlety of the English language. Next, two assistants of mine deserve my thanks. Ms. Heng-chun Liu served as my preliminary editor, her forte being how to tackle footnotes and references. Mr. Justin Yu-zhe Huang transcribed many papers, which is a laborious task. As for those who have given me encouragement, there are too many to thank individually. I do, however, count my family members among them.

ABBREVIATIONS OF JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS AND DOCUMENTS CITED IN CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

CB	Current Background
CCPDA	Communist China, 1955-1959
CKCN	Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien
CKCNP	Chunq-kuo ching-nien pao
CKFN	Chung-kuo fu-nu
ECMM	Extracts from China Mainland Magazines
HHPYK	Hsin-hua pan—yüeh k'an
KMJP	Kuang-ming jih-pao
NCNA	New China News Agency
NFJP	Nan-fang jih-pao
JMJP	Jen-min jih-pao
JMST	Jen-min shou-ts'e
SCMP	Survey of China Mainland Press
TCKT	Tung-chi kung-tso
TKP	Ta kung pao

"Lienchiang Documents," a collection of forty-two documents issued by the Chinese Communist Party Committee, Lienchiang hsien, Fukien, 1962-1963, 278 pp. Made available by the National Defense Department, Republic of China, March 1964.

"Pao-an Bulletin," a collection of documents issued by the Chinese Communist Party Committee of Pao-an hsien, Kwangtung, late 1961, Union Research Institute, Hong Kong.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

INTELLECTUALS, UTOPIAN DREAMS AND UNTENABLE PROJECTS

The fall of the Qing Dynasty was not merely the end of a dynastic rule in the celestial empire, which by itself must be reckoned as a world-shaking event but, more far reaching in its impact, the demise of a moral order based on Confucian teachings that presented itself as universal. The founding of the Republic of China did not bring peace and prosperity. Instead, it brought in its train several decades of rebellion and revolution, civil war and foreign aggression, poverty and disease, threatening China's survival as a nation. For the literati and their spiritual successors, the modern intellectuals, it was a time of disillusion, agony and hurt. They felt obliged to bear their responsibility for the future of the nation. And what made their responsibilities extremely onerous and almost unbearable was their sense of shame, real or imagined that they had suffered at the hands of foreign governments and foreigners. This psychological state could not but contribute greatly to the rise of nationalism, the desire to return China to its lawful and august status in the international community. Many of them succumbed to an urge towards utopian projects, of tackling all problems boldly and quickly without delay. They drew upon both traditional ideas and classic Marxism. In the hands of Mao Zedong, it ended in disasters a half century later. Yet the hold of utopian dreams was so powerful that a few groups in China today are still championing Mao Zedong's ideas and hope for the revival of his grand, but impractical, dreams.

I. The New Intellectuals

Briefly, "the literati" refers to the educated class in traditional China who served the government in the administration of the state. They were educated primarily in Confucian ethics; other schools of learning such as Buddhism or Taoism being judged as not so relevant to the handling of public affairs. However, many of the Confucian scholars tended to have

some affinity with Legalist doctrines, which were apparently quite useful in the service of the government. It needs to be noted that the Legalist doctrines being referred to here have nothing to do with contemporary ideas of the rule of law. Chinese Legalism rather emphasizes the absolute power and control of the ruler and the need to have a solid economy drawing upon ample agricultural production and a powerful military based on conscription.

The recruitment of the literati into government service began with "recommendation," that is, the community would nominate men known for their knowledge and more importantly, moral integrity, to serve in the government. Yet after a few centuries, the great invention of the civil service examination system rose to take its place. No doubt, the civil service examination system had its merits; it was fairer and opened up opportunities to the commoners, and it did indeed give the sovereign a method of selecting and thus controlling the most talented men in the nation, making any challenge to his power and authority nearly impossible. As Professor Ho Ping-Ti put it in his well-known study *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*, "In fact, the examination system's long history of thirteen centuries is a most eloquent testimonial to its usefulness as a main channel of mobility and as a politically and socially stabilizing factor."[1] Yet it is not surprising that the civil service examination system also exacted a heavy price: "At its worst, it produced parrotlike scholar-officials without imagination and originality and fostered ideological conformity."[2] And as is well-known, many scholars failed many times in their effort in passing the higher degrees and thus for all practical purposes wasted their lives, which could definitely have been put to good use. The vital weakness, especially when China was confronted by the Western powers in the late 19th century, was no doubt, their conservatism, their habit and inclination not to rise rapidly enough to the challenge of an entirely different world. To be fair, some of them did endeavor to change, and engaged in first what is called the national self-strengthening movement, through industrialization and the training of a new army and navy, then by institutional changes, building a modern bureaucracy and learning foreign languages and international law. However, all these efforts failed to repulse foreign aggression; nor did they help prolong the life of the Qing Dynasty.

Through the long centuries of dynastic rule, there were always a few literati, closely tied to the government as they were, inspired by the Confucian ethic to criticize the emperor or his relatives or his eunuchs when they abused their power. These court officials knew well that they were risking their position and fortune, if not their lives. But they were compelled by their sense of responsibility to the moral order of which they were the guardians.

Many of them achieved immortality through praise by historians for their moral integrity and courage.

The new breed of intellectuals obviously came on the heels of the collapse of the traditional order. On further scrutiny, it would appear that the abolition of the civil service examination in 1905 was its death knell, to be followed by the introduction of a new type of schooling, modern journalism and publishing houses, among other things. In his well-known study of the May Fourth Movement, Professor Chow Tse-tsung clearly states that he used the term intelligentsia or intellectuals in a fairly broad sense. It refers to "a fluid group, including the more or less educated people such as teachers, scholars, students in middle or higher schools, and the gentry, as well as other professionals, such as, journalists, writers, artists and lawyers."[3] The rise of the new intellectuals was closely related to the emerging new cities. Chow estimated that "in the ten years after 1907, when the new Western style of educational system started functioning on an appreciable scale, there were some 10,000,000 persons who had received or were receiving the new education in one form or another. Their various contacts with modern Western civilization and increasing alienation from the traditional ideology and ruling class enabled them to lead other restless people in a 'save China' crusade. The movement reflects the regrouping of all these social forces".[4] During this period, it needs to be noted in passing that almost 80 per cent of the population were illiterate, and scientists, engineers and managers of industry and enterprises were very few indeed. Professor Chow was especially concerned with the liberal and leftist intellectuals among them, and they were almost to a person struggling against the traditional moral order and political power, on behalf of the weak and downtrodden.

In a collection of essays on Chinese intellectuals and their search for a new relationship with the state published in the 1980s, Merle Goldman and her colleagues sketched a somewhat different situation. They emphasized the multiple traditions inherited by the Chinese intellectuals, those of Confucianism and Marxism-Leninism as well as the "enlightenment movement of the May Fourth Movement." This complex and contradictory heritage has produced three major roles for intellectuals in the 20th century: ideological spokespersons, professional and academic elites, and critical intellectuals. A number of intellectuals have rotated among these roles at different times in their careers.[5] Given this analytical framework, it is easy to understand that Ai Siqi was characterized as an ideological spokesman, faithfully supporting the Chinese Communist Party and the leaders without any qualms, either morally or otherwise. Yet, Professor Joshua Fogel was determined to make

a case for Ai Siqi, presenting him as a complicated and learned man and a philosopher in his own right. In this view, although it is clear that Ai did not conform to the liberal values of the Western academy, and for him "objectivity always is defined in terms of the party," it did not detract from his achievements.[6]

The case of Wang Ruoshui as a critical intellectual was equally if not more instructive in discerning the possibilities and limits of a new relationship. As David Kelly portrayed him, having graduated in philosophy from Beijing University around 1948, Wang Ruoshui worked for the *People's Daily* for long years and rose to the high position of deputy editor. In the post-Mao era, he emerged as the leader of what was dubbed "the socialist alienation" school and revived the debate on humanism. Without engaging in the more esoteric discussion relating to Hegel, Marx and Engels, for which a definitive conclusion was difficult if not impossible, Wang's appeal clearly lay in his argument that, under Mao, Marxism had become a dogma, and the personality cult of Mao denied the intellectuals the possibility of creativity and freedom. Marxism, he said, must keep up with the changing situation, "must constantly be supplemented, revised, developed through testing practice; as soon as it comes to a stop, its life is over; it will be Marxism no longer but dogmatism."[7] The climax of dogmatism was precisely the personality cult, the willing transfer of powers and prestige from the people to the leader, ultimately to Mao.

It should be obvious that some of the things Wang Ruoshui had said so eloquently were of help to Deng Xiaoping in his effort to move China forwards. However, the Party leadership was clearly suspicious of him, and he was attacked and removed from his position at the *People's Daily* in the Campaign against Spiritual Pollution in late October 1983. The hope, in China, just as in Eastern Europe for a humanistic Communism was doomed from the very beginning.

At the height of Deng's decade of reform and opening up, Beijing was eager to seek advice and recommendations from foreign experts on China's economic development. In a much-acclaimed book, *Unlikely Partners: Chinese Reformers, Western Economists, and the Making of Global China*, Julian Gewirtz gave the place of honor to foreign economists from the United States, Hungary, Great Britain, West Germany, and Brazil, among others. The chapter Days on the River, describing the Bashan Conference of 1985, makes for fascinating reading. Nevertheless, at present writing, the great hope that many reviewers of this book expressed regarding the

continuity of collaboration between China's leaders and Western scholars and experts in shaping the future must be cast in doubt.

II. Utopian Dreams—Theory and Practice

A Brief Note on the Utopian Literature

Thomas More published his Utopia in 1516 and gave the name of a new literary genre. Thomas More was a very well-known scholar, a friend of Erasmus, Colet, and Lyly, and a high-ranking official in the court of Henry VIII in England. He served first as a member of the parliament, then a Privy Councilor of the king in 1518, a speaker of the House of Commons in 1525, ending up in the position of Lord Chancellor.

More lived in a time of great turmoil with the emerging nation-states at war among themselves and with the Church. Henry VIII was ambitious and capricious, his court rife with intrigues and factions, all competing for the favors of the personal monarch. He was heading toward conflict because of his desire to divorce his first wife Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. In this deadly confrontation with the Pope, More was caught in the middle. By refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the English Church,[8] More was forced to give up his Chancellorship, and imprisoned in the Tower of London for seven months, before he was beheaded in 1535.

Broadly speaking, for readers in our time, the most serious problem with Utopia is no doubt that it deprives individuals of their personal liberty. There are so many things the Utopians could not do. They could not travel around Utopia without a special permit, and they had virtually no privacy. In this sense, it indeed comes close to George Orwell's 1984 with his telescreen in every room and the slogan "Big Brother is Watching You." Everyone "has his eyes on you so you are particularly forced to get on with your job and make some proper use of your spear time."[9]

There is much debate as to how Thomas More's Utopia is related to communism. Paul Turner firmly believes that Utopia should be taken as a blueprint however provisional of "a perfect society" that is a communist society.[10] To this writer, this is a moot question, for inevitably almost all utopian schemes share some features that contemporary readers will understand as being communistic.

Since More's time, many thinkers have written about their utopias to demonstrate their different theories of happiness and perfection. It is not necessary to cite all the works. It suffices to refer to a few of the more well-known treatises such as Francis Bacon's New Atlantis (1627), Gulliver's Travels (1726) and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888). Then there appeared in the 19th century a series of socialistic projects such as those of Saint Simon, Robert Owen, etc. They were ridiculed by Karl Marx and his followers as utopian socialism in the sense that they appeal to moral commitments. In contrast, Karl Marx prided himself that his scientific socialism need only rely on the working out of the historical development of capitalism. Ironically, it should be noted that Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1931) and George Orwell's 1984 (1949) are works of our time, and they speak to our fears and hopelessness so forcefully that the long tradition which had begun with More seemed to have ended with what some scholars refer to as anti-utopian literature.

Kang Youwei and His Great Community

The Great Community by Kang Youwei was no doubt the first and most famous piece of utopian literature for 20th century China. Kang was also the leading reformer of the late Qing, dedicating his life to keeping the Qing emperor on the throne in a constitutional monarchical polity. In his double role, he set a pattern for many of his contemporaries and the men and women of younger generations following him, notwithstanding their diverse personalities and political commitments. This is a pattern yet to be broken in a hundred years.

Kang wrote his great work in India. After some weeks of traveling, he and his daughter, Tongbi, settled in Darjeeling, the well-known resort for British administrators in India at that time, at the foot of the Himalayas. He not only drew upon Confucian learning and Buddhist ideas, but had access to some examples of Western utopian literature, which were translated into Chinese. Among these Western works, Kang was impressed by Étienne Cabet's Voyage to Icaria, which had been published in 1840, John Fryer's Homely Words to Aid Government, published in Chinese in 1885, and Edmund Bellamy's Looking Backward, published in the United States in 1888 and available in a Chinese version in 1892.[11]

As a utopian work, Kang's Great Community was indeed grand, in terms of both its breadth and depth. Thomas More, who gave the name to this new genre of literature by his publication of Utopia in 1516, is by comparison very much more modest, and in his attitude and policy regarding women

much more conservative. As for Robert Owen and Charles Fourier and other 19th century socialist utopian projects, they are indeed a simple enterprise.[12]

Li Dazhao and the Victory of Bolshevism

Kang Youwei was not the only utopian thinker who drew upon traditional Chinese thought. Li Dazhao's ideas were an amalgam of fervent nationalistic sentiment and Marxism as manifested in his comments on the October Revolution in Soviet Russia.

The founding of the Republic of China ushered in a new era in name, but not in reality. It did not bring peace and prosperity to the country or its people. The political situation was highly unstable. The death of Yuan Shih-kai only served to make for rampant warlordism, which threatened to tear the nation asunder and encouraged encroachment by the Western powers and Japan. Sun Yat-sen was struggling to keep the nationalist revolution alive in the South against the warlords in control of the Central government in Beijing. The economic and social conditions of the people further deteriorated, making millions destitute and leaving them without hope of survival. Against this dismal background, it is not surprising that the intellectuals were highly agitated and desperately searching for means to guarantee the salvation of the nation. Thus, many, if not all, schools of thought and political ideologies popular at that time in the Western world were brought into China, competing for the allegiance of the Chinese intellectuals. They included, among others: nationalism, socialism, communism, anarchism, and populism and the democratic ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. The great May Fourth Movement was in part a product of this intellectual ferment and the disillusioning news from the Paris Peace Conference that the Powers conceded to Japan the rights that Germany had enjoyed in Shantung. What made the failure in the Paris Peace Conference so humiliating and shocking was that the Chinese people had hoped that the Great Powers would have redressed the injustice China had suffered at the hands of Japan in a fair settlement at the end of the war. In the language of Professor Chow Tse-tsung in *The May Fourth Movement*:

> Consequently, when the war ended on November 11, 1918, the Chinese people were jubilant. A three-day holiday was declared by the government, and there were heartfelt celebrations… The hope of the new Chinese intellectual leaders went even further. In celebrating the Allies' victory on November 17, a large number of students and teachers joined the parade of almost sixty thousand in Peking.

> They believed that the Allies' victory was a real one of democracy over despotism and militarism, and of workers and plain people over their oppressors. They thought that the war had destroyed the ideas and practice of secret diplomacy, violation of law, military intervention in politics, and dictatorship. They also assumed that the territory and interests seized by Germany in China since 1898 would be restored, and that the Sino-Japanese treaties and agreements concluded under duress during the war would be readjusted at the ensuing peace conference.[13]

In this period of great intellectual excitement and pressing political, economic and social crisis, it would seem that Marxism had no appeal, for it did not meet the needs of China at that time. In fact, that was the case. As a study of Li Dazhao puts it:

> …The reason for the lack of interest in Marxism is not difficult to discern and has been frequently noted: in the period before the October Revolution, Marxism, in its pre-Leninist form, presupposed the existence of capitalist economic relations and a well-developed urban proletariat. In the absence of these conditions Marxism could not yet serve as a guide to meaningful political action.[14]

On the cultural front, the question of socialism seemed to be even further removed from the relevant issues confronting the intelligentsia. They were concerned with the problem of transforming traditional cultural values, and looked to the existing democratic institutions and scientific culture of the advanced countries of the West for inspiration. They would not look to the revolutionary political movements in the West that opposed the existing order.[15] The advocacy of democracy and science by Chen Duxiu, the founder of the influential journal New Youth (Xin Qingnian) in 1915 and later the first Secretary-General of the Chinese Communist Party, as the cure for the disease that China had been subject to testified to this situation. Chen's commitment was absolute. There could not be any compromise with Confucianism. It was futile to think, Chen argued, that there could be a fruitful synthesis combining Confucianism with the Western model.[16]

How then to account for the fact that China did not choose the road of democratic rule, but instead turned to communism? The answer is obviously complicated. Yet it could be plausibly argued that part of the reason must be the October Revolution in Russia which made Marxism seductive to the Chinese intellectuals, and, in the hands of Li Dazhao and later Mao Zedong, a simplistic interpretation of Marxism as class struggle became the dominant idea, with terrible consequences.

Li Dazhao was born in 1888 in a village in Lo-ting County in the province of Hopei. His parents died when he was young, and he was brought up by his grandparents. When the 1911 revolution took place, Li was studying in Tianjin at the Peiyang College of Law and Political Science, where he stayed from 1907 to 1913. He was greatly inspired and hoped for a new beginning for China. Yet he was quickly disillusioned.

In 1913, Li left for Japan and studied at Waseda University where he was first exposed to Marxism. Upon his return to China, he was appointed by Cai Yuanpei, the well-known educator and Chancellor of Beijing University, the chief librarian and professor of economics. Chen Duxiu, who had been serving as the dean of the School of Letters recommended him. It was during this time that Li began to gather a group of young intellectuals around him in a study group on Marxism. They met in his office secretly and included Qu Qiubai and Mao Zedong.

Given his training in traditional Chinese philosophy and his early learning of modern Western ideas, Li opted for the position of being a nationalistic thinker yet optimistic in the face of the deepening crisis in China. In an essay entitled "Spring" written in 1916 in Japan, he gave a well-thought-out presentation of his thinking for China and how it could emerge from decay and collapse. Comparing China to an old man, he nevertheless asserted that just as nations had risen and fallen, China could be rejuvenated if the youth of China

> should pledge themselves to show the world not whether old China is going to live or die but that we are busily paving the way for the resurgence of a young China…Whether or not we can stand up in the world depends not on the survival of old China but on its resurrection as young China; for life is a cycle of birth and death and our problem is not one of national survival but of being born again and recovering the springtime of our nation.[17]

To put it differently, a weak and decrepit China is not a burden but an asset in the nation's rebirth.

Nevertheless, it was not until the October Revolution in Russia that Li Dazhao was firm in his belief that a solution for China had been found. In his essay "The Victory of Bolshevism" in *New Youth* in 1918, seven months after Lenin had seized power in Russia, Li hailed that revolution as the beginning of a new era for mankind. To quote him: "Every place in the world will see the victorious flag of Bolshevism, and hear the triumphal song of Bolshevism. The bell of humanitarianism is sounding. The dawn of freedom has arrived."[18]

This as it may be, Li did not give up his conviction of nationalist rejuvenation through the self-sacrificing spirit of the youth. As a practical measure, he urged the youth to go to the villages, working alongside the peasants and educating them, very much as the Russian youth had done in the era of the Populism movement. He also predicted, as Meisner puts it "anticipating Mao Zedong almost by a decade", that the Chinese revolution would be a peasant revolution, primarily because

> Our China is a rural nation and most of the laboring class is made up of peasants. If they are not liberated, then our whole nation will not be liberated; their sufferings are the sufferings of our whole nation; their ignorance is the ignorance of our whole nation; the advantages and defects of their lives are the advantages and defects of all our politics. Go out and develop them and cause them to know [that they should] demand liberation, speak out about their sufferings, throw off their ignorance and be people who will themselves plan their own lives.[19]

Almost at the same time that Li wrote "Youth and the Villages," he also presented his ideas of Marxism more systematically. He was critical and impatient with the deterministic aspects of Marxism, which, as he saw it, insisted that a fairly highly developed capitalist system with a robust proletarian class was necessary before a Marxist revolution was possible. Thus, not much could be done right then and China was condemned to wait for economic conditions to mature. By the same reasoning, Li was attracted to the idea of class struggle, taking it as the "golden thread", "tying together the various parts of Marxist doctrine."[20] For him, "the theory of class struggle, moreover, was an inevitable manifestation of the universal drive toward progressive self-expansion in both biological and social phenomena." It was not alien to the Chinese intellectual milieu at the time he was writing.[21]

When Lenin decided to exploit the possibility of a communist revolution in China, his agent first met with Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao in Shanghai and guided the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. It is not necessary to trace here the struggle, defeat and final success in capturing power in 1949-50 of that Party in China when Mao Zedong solemnly declared that "the Chinese people has stood up" at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing. Li Dazhao, however, was not fortunate enough to survive the revolution. He was murdered by Zhang Zuolin, the powerful warlord in North East China who seized the Russian embassy in 1927 and ordered Li be hanged. Li died a martyr at the age of thirty-nine.

Mao Zedong and His Untenable Projects

Compared to Thomas More and Kang Youwei, Mao Zedong came from a humbler background—the peasant class of Hunan. Yet he had, in a conventional sense, reached the farthest, first becoming the supreme leader of the Chinese Communist Party, and then of the nation, imposing his revolutionary utopian blueprint to remake China and the Chinese people and serving as an inspiring spiritual leader of the poor masses in third world countries.

Mao Zedong was born in 1893 in the village of Shao Shan, in Hsiang T'an hsien, Hunan. As a teenager, he liked reading, though he detested the classics and was not happy working on his father's farm, longing to go to the big city to learn about the larger world. He managed to do just that at the age of 19 and was enrolled at Changsha Middle School from 1912 to 1918. There he studied with a Neo-Kantian philosopher, and married his daughter, Yan Kaihui. In 1930, when Mao was engaged in political revolutionary activities, his wife was captured and executed by a warlord. Mao grieved deeply.

During the years in Changsha, Mao began to read the *New Youth* and admired the articles written by Hu Shih and Chen Tu-hsiu, replacing his earlier idols Kang Youwei and Liang Chi-chao. As he told Snow in 1936:

> At this time my mind was a curious mixture of liberalism, democratic reformism, and utopian socialism. I had somewhat vague passions for 'nineteen century democracy,' utopianism, and old fashion liberalism. I was definitely anti-militarist and anti-imperialist.[22]

More learning, change and adaptation in ideological thinking were still ahead of him. In his long and colorful career as an intellectual turned revolutionary, Mao clearly needed to adapt his ideas to the circumstances in which he worked. In Beijing, he participated in Li Dazhou's workshop in Marxism. His activities with the student movement in Hunan in the previous years qualified him as a founding member of the Communist Party. During the years of merging between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the nascent Chinese Communist Party, he worked in the Rural Affairs Department and published his famous investigative report on the peasant movement in Hunan just before the split of the precarious alliance. When Chiang Kai-shek purged the Chinese Communist Party in 1927, Mao survived, and was ordered to attack Changsha but he failed. After the failure, he took his men, left for Jiangxi and established the Jiangxi Soviet. In the late 1920s, under

the pressure of Chiang's troops, he led the party in "the Long March" and set up his headquarters in Yan'an (延安).

For the purpose of this brief article, a critical question is how Mao rose to his position of supremacy in Yan'an, not only as a military and party leader, but in the cultural and ideological domains as well, in particular against the domination of the Third International and Stalin.

In his rise, Mao had the help of several younger Chinese Marxist theoreticians who had worked under him and were promoted by him, among them Ai Siqi, Chen Boda and Hu Chao-mo. During late 1937 or early 1938, Mao gathered seven or eight philosophers around him for the purpose of studying Marxism-Leninism. The group was later expanded and in September 1938 the Society for the New Philosophy was founded under the leadership of Ai Siqi. Plainly, Mao needed all the intellectual support he could get at that time as he was beginning to formulate his ideas as a Marxian philosopher.[23] Chen Po Da and Hu Chao-mo were appointed as Mao's political secretaries in the early 1940s and were of great help to him.

By the spring of 1942, Mao was apparently set to present himself as a Marxist philosopher and impose his ideas on literature and art on the Party hierarchy and the people under his jurisdiction. On May 2, Mao delivered a speech at the formal launch of the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art to an audience of about one hundred persons. On May 23, there was a summary speech of what later came to be known as the "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, which, however, was not published until October 19, 1943 in the Liberation Daily.[24] The new campaign was to be directed at two sets of problems: on the bureaucratic front, the targets were to be subjectivism, sectarianism, and commandism; in the cultural world, realism, sentimentalism, and satire."[25] And the basic strategy was to "resolve party conflicts by group pressures and intensive study, rather by purges or physical violence," a method Mao had used in 1939-40.

In his talks, Mao laid down his guidelines with absolute authority, indulging in his not so polite language for emphasis. Briefly, literature and art must serve the political goals of the Chinese Communist Party, they are only tools, and among other things, the worker-peasant-soldier orientation must be the guiding principle. Creative freedom was a sham slogan of the bourgeoisie, and likewise all the talk of humanism and the theory of human nature. Nor should the legacy of the New Culture Movement of the May Fourth era be tolerated. Along this line of reasoning, it is not surprising that Mao should say that the "intellectuals are the most ignorant and filthy," and must learn

from the proletariats and be reformed and remolded by them. Accordingly, the writers could not, of course, imitate the satirical style of Lu Xun's short and sharp essays; instead, they must only write of the bright side of life in Yan'an.[26]

As it turned out, the rectification movement was more protracted, taking three years to complete and involving in the later stages much coercion and violence. In this process, the intellectuals, especially those who had left for Yan'an from the areas controlled by the Chinese Nationalist Party were to bear the brunt.

The relationship between the Party and the intellectuals in Yan'an was apparently all mutual admiration and goodwill on both sides for a few short years. The young intellectuals, just like Edgar Snow and his cohort journalists from the Western countries, were amazed and deeply impressed by the openness, dedication and hard work of the Party leaders and cadres in making a new China. On the other hand, the Party needed new talents and idealism. Before long, however, the mutual admiration and goodwill wore thin. Laments and complaints about life in the Yan'an area began to be heard. Ding Ling, the editor of the literary page of Liberation Daily in Yan'an, not only championed the essay style of Lu Xun, which Mao thought was *passé*, her reflection on women's situation and inequality definitely made Mao uneasy. Xiao Jun, a well-respected writer, turned out to be indifferent to Party discipline. And Wang Shiwei, the young and ideal author of the Wild Lilies, gave voice to great doubt in the direction of the revolutionary endeavor. They were swiftly punished. Ding Ting was released from her position and suffered long years of exile in her later career. Wang Shiwei suffered the cruelest fate: he was persecuted, made to confess his mistakes time and again and executed in 1947 when the Communist forces withdrew from Yan'an.

As for the Party cadres, if they were from the peasant background, they tended to pass the test more easily, but not by much. Yet in the later stages of reevaluation of the loyalty of the cadres and what was referred to as the "rescue campaign," that is, to help erroneous comrades return to the right path and regain the trust of the Party, many cadres in Yan'an and in other border areas were purged.

After three years of intense struggle, Mao achieved what he had set out to do. He not only defeated Wang Ming, the last of his rivals for Party leadership who had represented the Communist International and his cohort of returned students from Russia, he also got rid of the lingering influence

of humanism and liberal ideas from the era of the May Fourth Movement. Marxism was sinified and supreme power was concentrated in Mao's hands.

As Chou Yang, Mao's trusted aide and a powerful official in the cultural and ideological field elaborated in 1951,

> Comrade Mao Zedong's Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art pushed modern literature forward into a new epoch. If it is said that the May Fourth Movement was the first revolution in the history of modern Chinese Literature, then the publication of the Talks and the consequent changes in literary undertakings can be said to be the second, and even more sweeping and profound, literary revolution.[27]

An American scholar, Boyd Compton, in his introduction to a collection of documents pertaining to the rectification movement, has this to say:

> Since the 1942-44 Cheng Feng Movement, a Mao cult has grown in China with a strong family resemblance to both the emperor cult in Imperial China and the Stalin cult in Russia.[28]

All-powerful as Mao was after the rectification movement, it still took ten more years, and much manipulation and pressure for Mao to turn against the Soviet Russia model and impose his utopian ideas on the whole nation. Briefly speaking, after the birth of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Beijing adopted the model of Soviet Russia, not only in constitutional law and government structure, but in economic and social development as well. But, beginning in 1955, Mao decided that a basic shift was due. He vigorously urged the speedy completion of the collectivization of agriculture and a new initiative in industrialization. To ensure this ambitious task, the cooperation of intellectuals, scientists, engineers and other professionals was desperately needed. Thus came the call by Mao Zedong of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956 and the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. It is not possible to discuss them in detail in this brief paper. Suffice it to say that the former encouraged and urged the intellectuals to freely express their ideas concerning their work and to criticize the defects of the Party. From all accounts, it would seem that Mao was confident that the intellectuals had been sufficiently re-formed and re-educated and that they were sufficiently loyal to the Party to be trusted with the tasks assigned them. It turned out, however, to be very different from what Mao had expected. In the words of Professor Stuart Schram:

> One aspect of the sea change in Mao's mind and thought that took place at this time was, as just noted, a sharp reversal of his attitude toward the intellectuals. By the harsh, and to his mind, negative and destructive

> criticisms, the scholars and writers participating in the 'great blooming and contending' of early 1957 had cast doubt on Mao's own judgment in pressing ahead with these policies in the face of opposition from many of his senior comrades, and thereby, in Mao's view, undermined his prestige and authority. He therefore turned savagely against them. Henceforth, apart from training new, red intellectuals of good class origin, Mao Tse-tung would rely on the enthusiasm and creativity of the masses.[29]

In early 1958, in the midst of the Great Leap Forward, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party adopted a resolution for the establishment of people's communes in rural China. In a basic sense, the organization of the people's communes can be seen as a decision to cut short the "socialist move into the communist era." Both practical and doctrinal considerations were involved. They were prompted by the urge to solve some pressing problems in economic development, yet the shape they finally took was controlled by the need to satisfy the ideological requirements of Chinese communism. As Professor Cohen puts it, the intention of the Party leadership in 1958 was

> To overcome the hurdle of the big material-technical obstacle separating China from the 'transition to communism' by stressing super collectivism, the more primitive view of communism…Mao's plan was to downgrade the importance of productive forces—that is, a highly industrialized economy—as the main precondition for communism by calling for the establishment of new relations of production—that is a highly collectivized economy.[30]

Or as another scholar suggests:

> Economically, the aim of the communes was to speed up the development of the country by providing an administrative framework for the organization of human resources to replace scarce machines, and by providing for the cultivation of land in units large enough to facilitate the introduction of tractors and other machinery. Politically, their purpose was to strengthen the control of the state over the life of the individual, by combining the governmental administrative, economic, and military apparatus into a single entity on the basic level, and by weakening rival organizations such as the family….[31]

On a visit to the Qiliying People's Commune in Henan, Mao was reported to be highly impressed by the development of the people's commune movement there.[32] Thus the organization of the people's communes throughout the country proceeded in an atmosphere of utmost militancy, and before long, it was announced that there were 23,384 people's communes in the country, taking in 90.4 per cent of all the peasant households in China.[33] Mao summed it up as follows:

> Apart from their other characteristics, China's 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities: they are, first of all poor, and secondly blank. That may seem to be a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it, the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it.[34]

What an echo of Li Dazhao's thesis that a weak and decrepit China need not be a burden at all!

Mao's utopian model, however, met with failure almost immediately. Numerous studies of this period give estimates of the number of people who died of starvation. As Jasper Becker reported in his book, *The Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*, Chen Yizi, the former head of the Institute for Chinese Economic Structural Reform told him that based on a survey of rural China some 43-46 million people died, while Yang Jisheng in his well-known work, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962*, opted for 36 million deaths. Both estimates were more than double the official estimate of 17 million.

Devastating as it was, Mao was not conceding defeat. He managed to return to recapture political power by launching the Great Cultural Revolution. In this frenetic effort to completely demolish what was taken to be traditional or foreign, society was turned upside down and even the basic trust between persons was destroyed. The Red Guards were encouraged to rebel, attacking Party and government authorities and private persons, especially well-known scholars, artists and writers. For all practical purposes, education and training were suspended. It was not until the situation was getting out of control and the country was descending into chaos, that Mao ordered the army to intervene and restored China to a semblance of normalcy. An estimated 36 million persons were persecuted as class enemies and 750,000 to 1.5 million people died.[35]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in a debate of what motivated the Great Cultural Revolution. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, in their study *Mao's Last Revolution* argued quite ingeniously that

> The Cultural Revolution was declaredly Mao's attempt to vaccinate his people against the Soviet disease. But more importantly, it was his last best effort to define and perpetuate a distinct Chinese essence in the modern world. His was truly the last stand of Chinese conservatism.[36]

Or as Robert Lifton summarized it, in his book *Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, by using the red guards,

young and pure, the Cultural Revolution was Mao's attempt to purify the Chinese revolution.

Was Mao a great Marxian theorist? Hardly so. In the words of Leszek Kolakowski:

> Measured by European standards the ideological document of Maoism, and especially the theoretical writings of Mao himself, appear in fact extremely primitive and clumsy, sometimes even childish…[37]

Kolakowski went on to say, rightly so that Maoism is 'first and foremost a collection of practical precepts, which in some ways have proved highly effective in the Chinese situation'.[38]

By the end of his life, did Mao think of himself as Rousseau's lawgiver? The Lord of Misrule as Spence portrayed him?[39] Or ruling according to the "The Way of Heaven" as described in Chung-tzu?[40]

The Neo-Maoist Groups

Mao died on September 9, 1976, but his utopian dream lives on. As Professor Qian Liqun of Beijing University puts it: "What [Mao] left to posterity is a complicated yet rich legacy, a fruit hard to consume, but impossible to discard… His shade lingers in all corners of contemporary Chinese society."[41] The Party leadership under Deng Xiaoping decided early on that they could not dispense with the legacy of Mao. They would, of course, move on with economic reforms, despite the opposition of the more conservative segment in the Party, linking up with the Western world in the quest for a more efficient economic development model and new technologies. Yet, as to political power, they absolutely would not compromise, tolerating no dissent or opposition from any quarter. It is difficult to judge if they could indeed, through economic reforms alone, bring about social stability and a sense of fairness and equality. Looking back, it seems that they were destined to fail, for with absolute power came widespread and glaring abuse of power and corruption. The rule of law was simply impossible to realize. The leaders of the Party and state, the capitalists and bankers, and their sons and daughters ruled supreme and they displayed a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption.

Against this background, it came as no surprise that Mao's utopian dream would raise its head sooner or later. In China, under Deng, the rich got richer

and more powerful, and the poor remained poor and powerless. It was such an unjust society that to call it socialist or communist can only be a farce.

To express their dissatisfaction with the situation, many groups of young men and women began experimenting with social media as a new instrument for mobilization and recruitment and agitated for radical change along the lines of Mao's ideas and policy. Drawing support from the conservative segment of the Party and government, most of them retired officials or academic researchers, they were highly critical of Deng's economic development model, labeling it capitalist or neo-liberalist. By its nature, they argued, it must favor the rich and the powerful and hurt the poor. Moreover, it could only be a Trojan horse for the Western nations to subvert China through their long-term strategy of "peaceful transformation." Deng and his supporters, especially the so-called liberal economists and enterprise managers, were nothing more than the tool of Western monopolistic capitalism. For many of the new radicals, it was a fight to the bitter end, both theoretically as well as in the realm of practical policy. They believed that they were the spokesmen of truth and represented the interests of the poor and downtrodden. "They found intellectual homes on websites like the Red Song Society, New Workers, Left Bank, Maoflag, China Workers Net, Protagonist and Utopia" and they "cross-posted articles, co-sponsoring events and created a vibrant community, both online and off."[42]

For an illustration, a brief analysis of Utopia will be instructive. As the author of *China's New Red Guards* describes it, the two co-founders of the Utopia website were Yang Fan and Han Deqiang, the former a son of a high-ranking Party official and an economist who had become disillusioned with Deng's economic reform, and the latter a full-time political supervisor and deputy party secretary at the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (Beihang) after his graduation from university with a degree in management engineering in 1989. Both realized the value of social media as an instrument for change when they met in 1999. The third person who played an important role in the early stage of Utopia was Fan Jinggang, a former student of Han. Fan had been a co-founder of a student group calling itself the "New Youth Study Group" which was persecuted by the Ministry of State Security. It was suspected that Fan informed on them, either voluntarily or because he was forced to do so. He then changed his name from Fan Erjun to Fan Jinggang and teamed up with his former teacher in Utopia.[43]

In the beginning, Yang and Han decided to "start with a 'book bar,' a physical meeting space for lectures and for selling socialist and left-leaning

books and magazines. Their website would also carry original articles and promote upcoming events."[44]

On September 6, 2003, the Beijing Utopia Cultural Communications Corporation Limited opened its doors in northwest Beijing, just next to Beihang. The name Utopia was Han's idea. As the State Administration for Industry and Commerce had refused to approve his first choice of *wutuobang*, a direct phonetic translation of the English word "utopia", he changed it to *wuyou zhixiang* "Land of Utopia." On September 14, 2003, the inaugural event presided over by Yang Fan was a four-hour lecture dealing with the disparities of wealth and the rise of China's nouveau riche. It was soon followed by regular seminars charging entry fees. They attracted many well-known academics, writers and artists as well as former government officials, not to speak of the students who jammed the lecture hall. For many of the students it was the first time in their lives that they heard such weighty issues debated and discussed with such passion and conviction.

For the first several years, Utopia was not that much concerned with international affairs or combating "hostile forces" subverting China; it was far more concerned with domestic issues, such as rural taxation, the rights of migrant workers and the decline of the state-owned economy. Yet the rising tide of nationalism, especially against the USA provided an input for Utopia and other leftist groups.[45] They got caught up in a milieu of exaggerated pride with China's prowess and fear of conspiracy by Western nations to undermine their great country. *China Can Say No*, a collection of essays published in 1996, quickly became a bestseller testifying to the shifting mood. Reform-minded scholars and experts, critical of the ruling Party and government as they were, did not escape their censure. For example, in March 2006 a meeting at the invitation of Gao Shangquan, Chairperson of the China Society of Economic Reform and attended by twenty fairly influential intellectuals, including the free-market economists Wu Jinglian and Zhang Weiying, sociologist Sun Liping and legal scholar He Weifang, was held in Beijing's Western Hills. In frank conversation they expressed their concern that the left was on the rise, and the ideal of liberal democracy was on the defensive. When their transcript was leaked and published, first abroad and then on the Utopia and Maoflag websites, it proved for the left that indeed a conspiracy in China, acting in collusion if not under the direction of the Western nations, was a fact.[46]

Again, in the year 2011, Utopia went after Mao Yushi and Xin Ziling for their criticism of Mao Zedong. Mao Yushi was a liberal economist who had been expelled from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Xin Ziling