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Introduction by Yafeng Xia, Long Island University

When *Mao's Last Revolution* by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals was published in 2006, I wrote that the book offers “a full-length narrative of the Cultural Revolution [from 1966 to 1976]... [and] is the first grand synthesis of the history” of the Cultural Revolution (CR). I also noted that “a real comprehensive and full-length narrative of the CR has yet to be published in Chinese.”¹

In early 2009, I was pleased to receive the book, *Mao Zedong yu wenge*, by Hu Angang, a professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing. The publication of the tome has become a flash point and reflects trends in the study of Mao Zedong and the CR in mainland China. Hu's central argument is that the Cultural Revolution was a political revolution initiated and led by Mao. It was the gravest tragedy in his long revolutionary career and a total failure. Without Mao Zedong, there was no CR. Without Mao's mistakes, there was no reform nor the opening to the outside world initiated and led by Deng Xiaoping. This is the political and historical logic of the evolution of modern China.(4)

How does the book differ from previous publications on the topic in Chinese? I think there are at least the following three distinctive aspects:

First, different from many publications in mainland China, which glossed over, covered up or even embellished Mao's offenses during the CR, Hu exposes Mao's crimes in great details. According to the author, the CR impaired the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), abolished rules and regulations of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which Mao personally established and approved, inflicted great sufferings to the Chinese people, whom Mao loved and protected, and destroyed Chinese cultural tradition, which Mao admired. (735) Mao was idiosyncratic, and his words didn't match his deeds. Mao was more a feudal autocrat in his political behavior than a Marxist. He launched endless political campaigns against and ruthlessly purged many of his closest comrades-in-arms. (7) Mao was heavily influenced by China's long tradition of feudal authoritarianism. He proclaimed himself “Qin Shihuang (the first emperor of Qin dynasty) plus [Karl] Marx”. In Mao's view, Qin Shihuang was a unifier of China and an absolute ruler. Mao read few Marxist classics and had only a vague understanding of Marxism. In contrast, he had a good command of Chinese traditional culture and ideas, especially the history of political struggles and court intrigues. (75-75, 781)

¹ Yafeng Xia's review of Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*

Second, Hu provides an incisive analysis of one of the main reason for Mao's CR— "the successor trap". On the one hand, it was imperative that Mao had a successor and he wanted to enhance his successor's power and prestige; on the other hand, Mao felt threatened when his successor became more and more powerful and respected. A "successor crisis" would suddenly erupt when Mao believed that his successor was on an equal footing with him. Due to mutual suspicion and lack of communications, one after another, Mao's successors turned into political opponents, and then victims of political struggle. This happened to Liu Shaoqi in 1966 and Lin Biao in 1971. Although Mao was the supreme leader of the ruling party, he needed an enemy. If there was no enemy, he would create one. (60) Endless political struggles in Mao's later life were closely related to the "successor crisis".

Third, the relationship between Premier Zhou Enlai and Mao has attracted the attention of many scholars, and it is a key issue in the study of the history of the PRC in general and the CR in particular. There are several models of the relationship: Zhou was a faithful follower of Mao, Zhou was a puppet of Mao, Zhou was a moderating force on Mao, which is the official and dominant version in mainland China. Several years ago, Gao Wenqian, a former CCP party historian and now a sojourner in the United States, published a revisionist account of Zhou Enlai's later life. According to Gao, Zhou was a tragic backroom schemer, a puppet of his master Mao, and a man who so rigorously observed a Confucian sense of duty that he did almost everything Mao asked him. Zhou was an eager participant of the Cultural Revolution. He protected people only after first checking with Mao, Mao's wife Jiang Qing and Mao's no. 2 Lin Biao. Gao argues that Zhou was often self-serving and impotent in face of Mao's paranoid machinations.² Because Zhou Enlai is still regarded as "the Beloved People's Premier" in the PRC and the appraisal of Zhou is a very sensitive political issue in mainland China, *Wannian Zhou Enlai* was an official banned book in China.

Hu echoes Gao's interpretation. Hu points out that without Zhou's support, Mao could not have kept the CR going as long as he wanted and Zhou found no higher goal than fealty to Mao. (125, 197) According to Hu, in assessing the damages caused by the CR, Mao was the chief culprit, and Zhou was Mao's enabler. (285) Hu writes that "Zhou Enlai played very complicated and self-contradictory role [during the CR]... Thus, his errors outweigh his achievements, not the other way around." (150) Hu's formulations and views of Zhou are a big step forward in comparison to prevalent views in mainland China and is a more objective and impartial appraisal of Zhou's role during the CR.

² Gao Wenqian's book was first published in Hong Kong (in Chinese). See Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai* [Zhou Enlai's Later Years] (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 2003); An English translation was published in 2007. See Gao, *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary, A Biography*. Translated by Peter Rand and Lawrence R. Sullivan (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2007).

To familiarize Western readers with recent Chinese scholarship on this important topic, *H-Diplo* invited four experts of the PRC to comment on the book. They offer both praise and criticism. They assess the success of the book from different perspectives and challenge some of Hu's specific interpretations. We learn from Hu's reply that he has been a policy adviser to the Chinese Central leadership for many years. The book was expanded from an internal edition of his National Conditions Reports to the Chinese leaders. He argues that "Studying history and learning from the past is for the purpose of creating better governance, easing all sorts of social contradictions and pacifying neighbors." He hopes that the Chinese leaders can avoid repeating Mao's mistakes in decision-making by reading this book.

Participants:

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To understand Mao Zedong and his comrades is to understand China and the Chinese Revolution. But so far scholars still cannot claim that they have accomplished this task, partly because we still do not know all that happened in the past. For one thing, some archives are still closed to researchers. Hu Angang's work on Mao and the Cultural Revolution is a welcome addition to the existing volumes in the sense that the book provides further information on what happened at the time, and the author's interpretation of why it happened adds to our understanding of Mao and his comrades. This review will focus on the latter question of why. But more specifically the reviewer will attempt a further understanding of Mao, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping. Finally, the reviewer will summarize the strengths and weaknesses of Hu's book.

Why Was the Cultural Revolution Possible?

Why did Mao start the Cultural Revolution? As Hu points out, officially the purpose was to consolidate the proletarian dictatorship, avoid capitalist restoration, and build socialism (5-6). This was summarized by Lin Biao, the then successor to Mao, in his speech at the Ninth National Conference of the Chinese Communist Party in April 1969. To some extent, this is true. Mao's target was Liu Shaoqi and his comrades because Mao believed that they represented a capitalist line of thought and way of doing things, hence the term "capitalist roaders" (走資派) to refer to Liu and his followers.

But this official purpose of the Cultural Revolution cannot be entirely true since if it were, Mao would have had first of all to define what proletarian dictatorship, capitalism, and socialism mean, and he would then have to find that Liu and his comrades were not really doing what he thought they were doing. He was at least not a traitor (叛徒), agent provocateur (内奸), and scab (工贼), as he was formally accused of; otherwise, how could he have worked together with Mao for several decades? So there must have been other purposes. For example, there must have been a power struggle as well, as many have observed. Mao was hungry for absolute power and was adamant on adhering to that power by all means possible.

In other words, Mao was an idealist and populist in the sense that he wanted to build a communist society, where workers, peasants, and soldiers were masters of the country. But he did not know exactly how that society would be governed, and the Cultural Revolution, when he incorporated ordinary workers and peasants into the governing structure, was an experiment. His efforts in collectivization in the rural areas in the 1950s, including the People's Commune and the Great Leap Forward, and his generous support to the third

world countries in the 1960s and 1970s, are additional examples.¹ More importantly, as Hu observes he was a dictator, following the traditional Chinese centralism, and a conspirator, following the traditional Chinese strategies of “divide and conquer,” and ruthlessly suppressing thoughts and practices that might compromise his power (6-7).

Why was Mao able to do so? Hu attributes this to two reasons: that it was impossible for Mao to know all that was happening, and that there was a lack of a democratic system of checks and balances in the Party (9-13). The first reason is questionable since after all Mao had all the means to get to the bottom of things, and he could have gathered all the information he wanted to get. The problem is that he ignored the information that contradicted what he wanted. The best example is Peng Dehuai’s report to him about the failures of the People’s Commune and the Great Leap Forward. He not only ignored the information Peng provided, but criticized Peng and fired him from his post as the Minister of Defense. This was typical of Mao’s ways of handling dissenters.²

Thus the main reason for Mao’s dictatorship is included in Hu’s secondpoint: the lack of a democratic system of checks and balances. But that’s a tautology: because there is no democracy, therefore he did not have all the information, and because he did not value all the information equally therefore there is dictatorship. It is too obvious. The two questions actually boil down to only one: the lack of a democratic system. There is no doubt that the tragedy of the Chinese communist revolution was that it did not set up a system that could guarantee that the Party or the state would not make mistakes like the Cultural Revolution.

A better question to ask is why the Party did not do so. The communist revolution succeeded partly because of its claim on democracy. But once the Party was in power, it practiced dictatorship instead. Why is that? One reason is that the Party and its leaders were path-dependent on what they did in the past, and there was little incentive, or at least not enough incentive, for institutional change. We will now compare what happened during the Cultural Revolution, as is illustrated in the book, with what happened in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. We will see then that the Cultural Revolution was a logical

¹ See also Xin Ziling, *Hong Taiyang de Yunluo: Qianqiu Gongzui Mao Zedong* [The Fall of the Red Sun: The Successes and Failures of Mao Zedong] (Hong Kong: Shuzuofang Press, 2007). This book offers a good description of Mao after the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949. The author wanted the book to be readable, so he does not have enough citations, which is a weakness, although the information still seems reliable. On the other hand, Hu’s book appears to have too many footnotes and the reader may feel frustrated at times by its redundancies and repetitions. I will further discuss this below.

² For some specific examples of Mao’s picking and choosing information that only fitted his taste concerning the Great Leap Forward and the famine in the 1960s, see Xin Ziling, *Hong Taiyang de Yunluo*.

conclusion to things that had already happened. We will do this by an analysis of the individual leaders of the revolution: Mao, Zhou, Liu, and Deng.

The Continuity of Mao's Thoughts and Strategies Regarding Dissenters

As mentioned earlier, the official purpose of the Cultural Revolution was to get rid of the “capitalist roaders.” We also mentioned that it represented Mao’s idealistic side. Indeed, if Mao had any integrity, it involved his consistent belief in the existence of a large number of class enemies, or enemies that were standing in his way to achieve what he believed to be the right path of the Chinese revolution. These enemies were not only the ones that came from outside the Party, like Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) or American imperialists and the Russian revisionists, but especially those from within the Party. Back in the 1920s and the 1930s, when the CCP was struggling to survive under the pressure of the KMT, Mao started a movement to eradicate the so-called anti-Bolsheviks (AB elements or AB 團), who were supposed to be KMT agents. Thousands of red army cadres and soldiers were wrongly killed as a result. In the red army unit that Mao was in charge of, over 4,400 of “AB elements” were killed, about 10% of the total troops in the unit he commanded.³

Mao maintained consistent vigilance against class enemies who he believed were blocking his way. This was true in his campaign against the intellectuals like Wang Shiwei in Yan’an in the 1940s, who complained about the undemocratic ways of doing things within the CCP. It was also true with the intellectuals and cadres in the anti-Rightist movement, and with Peng Dehuai and his comrades who criticized Mao for his failures in the People’s Commune at the end of 1950s that led to the subsequent famine. The most famous example is his belief that the famine in Xinyang, Henan province, was a result of sabotage by class enemies. These were the local cadres who were said to be remnants or representatives of the landlord class.⁴ Indeed, when Liu Shaoqi and his comrades tried to rectify the famine situation in the early 1960s by allowing some limited privatization in the rural area, they were immediately dubbed by Mao as “capitalist roaders.”⁵ It was logical then that Mao would start the Cultural Revolution in 1966, since he believed that much of the CCP was taken over by capitalist roaders. Some drastic changes had to be made, and he could do this only by mobilizing the broad masses of the people, and making a revolution from bottom up. For Mao it made sense.

³ Gao Hua, *Hong Taiyang Shi Zhenyang Shengqi de: Yan'an Zhengfeng de Lailongqumai* (How the Red Sun Had Risen: The Stories of the Yan’an Rectification Campaign) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000), 16-17.

⁴ See Yang Jisheng, *Mubei: Zhongguo Liushi Niandai Da Jihuang Jishi* (A report on the great famine in China in the 1960s) (Hong Kong: Tiandi Press, 2008), 67-68.

⁵ See chapter 22 of Xin Ziling, *Hong Taiyang de Yunluo*.

Mao's belief against capitalist roaders was consistent till his death in 1976. When he rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping in 1973, as possible successor to Zhou Enlai, he thought that Deng was able to carry on his course, believing in Deng's words that he would never reverse the verdict on the Cultural Revolution (永不翻案). When he later doubted Deng's words, he immediately deprived him of all his titles in 1976, as Hu points out (616-618, 634, 714). He thought that Deng could not be trusted and the capitalist roader was still walking the same old path (走資派還在走). Mao had a communist goal in mind (694-95). It was vague but it was certainly not capitalism. Whoever was standing in his way toward that goal would have to be ousted. It was a class struggle (599, 603-604), and it would go on forever until communism is realized.

The way to achieve this goal was ruthlessness. From his struggle against the "AB elements" in the 1920s and 1930s, his rectification campaign in the 1940s, the anti-Rightist movement in the 1950s, to the Cultural Revolution, Mao always believed in violence. His rationale was that to accomplish a goal, some sacrifices have to be made. He killed 4,500 "AB elements" but he saved the 40,000 red army troops, he said.⁶ During the Cultural Revolution, when he heard that some cadres were beaten up by the Red Guards or the rebels were killing each other, his reaction was a "great job!" (打得好). He thought that it was just a mistake if 'good' people beat up 'good' people. But if the 'good' people beat up the 'bad' people, the latter deserved it. And if the 'bad' people beat up the 'good' people, it was the latter's glory (176, 262). After all these class struggles, the violence in the Cultural Revolution was almost nothing in comparison with what he did in previous times. By doing so, Mao not only was able to pursue an idealistic course, but protect his supreme power as well.

The Continuity of Zhou, Liu, Deng

If one can trace Mao's thinking and ruthlessness to the early years of the revolution, we can also trace other leaders' later roles to their earlier roles in the same way. Back in his high school and college years, Zhou, for example, was already viewed as modest, mild, and honest, always ready to help friends and assist in public affairs.⁷ As for Zhou's role in the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaping has said something perceptive: If there were no Zhou, things would be worse. But if there were no Zhou, the Cultural Revolution would not last that long.⁸ In other words, Zhou was trying to keep a balance between Mao and his detractors. He had always wanted to help his comrades, but if he had to choose between

⁶ Gao Hua, *Hong Taiyang Shi Zhenyang Shengqi de*, 498.

⁷ See Gao Wenqian, *Wannian Zhou Enlai* (Zhou Enlai in his later years) (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 2003),

15.

⁸ *Ibid*, 208-209.

Mao and them, he would stand by Mao. But that did not win Mao's trust, as till his death, Mao still thought that Zhou was in fact in the same boat of Liu and Deng.⁹ Notwithstanding Mao's thoughts, Zhou's negative role was still larger than his positive role (過大于功), as Hu Angang points out (150, 204, 285). And Zhou's criticism of Liu and his comrades were just as ruthless as Mao's (see 315-16).

Yet Zhou was always like that in history. As one of the chief leaders of the CCP's Central Committee at the time, his position on Mao's and others' campaign against the "AB elements" in the 1920s and 1930s was that it was absolutely right and necessary, but the simplification (簡單化) and the expansion (擴大化) were wrong. He ended up as the most important supporter of Mao in his efforts to eliminate those who were against his policies in spite of the fact that he also tried to protect some of them.¹⁰ He continued in the same role before and during the Cultural Revolution, in spite of all his efforts to mitigate the harm done by Mao to the Party.

Liu Shaoqi's path can also be traced to earlier times of the revolution, a path that contributed to his own demise. As Hu Angang explains, Liu supported Mao in his criticism of Peng Zhen, a Politburo member and first secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the CCP, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (143), without realizing that he would be the next chief target after Peng. He made self-criticism when Mao directed his attack at him in Mao's own "big character poster," rather than resisting Mao and defending himself against the latter (194-99). He wanted to prove that he had always been Mao's supporter.

Indeed he was Mao's supporter since the 1930s, when Mao needed to establish his leadership position against the pro-Russian leaders like Wang Ming and more intellectual leaders like Zhang Wentian. Liu promoted Mao's status as a theorist as opposed to Wang Ming and Zhang Wentian.¹¹ In the 1950s, he supported Mao's Great Leap Forward and encouraged the local cadres to unrealistically raise their crop productions. Later he strongly supported Mao in his criticism of Peng Dehuai.¹² And he was one of the promoters of Mao's personality cult as well. His own inability to more fully disassociate himself from Mao and Mao's ways of doing things arguably led to his becoming one of the major victims of the Cultural Revolution. His own revolutionary path arguably led to his own tragedy. But the bigger tragedy is that most of the Party leaders were trapped in this path of traditional Chinese politics of centralism and dictatorship. The same applies to Deng Xiaoping.

As the paramount leader in the post-Mao China, Deng Xiaoping had an opportunity to change the traditional and undemocratic path the CCP had depended on in its revolutionary

⁹ *Ibid*, 569-570. See also Hu Angang, *Mao Zedong yu Wenge*, 487, 614-615.

¹⁰ Gao Hua, *Hong Taiyang Shi Zhenyang Shengqi de*, 34, 39, 63, 86.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 98-99, 220-221, 608-609.

¹² Xin Ziling, *Hong Taiyang de Yunluo*, chapters 16 and 17.

years. But he did not. Why not? In fact, he said that Mao's failure was his "feudalist" thought in dictating the work of the Party, including the way to choose his successor (556, 786). But Deng chose his own successor as well, and even two generations of successors. He talked about democracy and the reform of the political system (635), but only the kind of democracy or the system that would guarantee CCP rule. Deng sympathized with the demonstrators in the April 5 movement in 1976 to commemorate the death of Zhou Enlai, and went to the Tiananmen Square to see them. But on 4th of June 1989, he ordered troops to shoot the demonstrators, many of whom were college students.

The reason why Deng was able to break the path of economic reform but unable to break the path of political reform was that he was still thinking in the way Mao and his comrades thought in spite of his claims otherwise. Indeed, he was one of Mao's most favorite/reliable protégés for many years. For example, in the post-Mao effort to restore the names of the so-called Rightists, he said that the Party would not "redress the mishandled cases" (平反), but only correct some errors (改正). But this is a campaign that led to the deaths and suffering of hundreds of thousands of innocent people: 550,000 intellectuals and cadres were dubbed as Rightists and went through labor reform or other kinds of hardship. And that is only the official figure: the actual figures could be many more. Many died as a result. Their only crime was a few words of criticism of the Party's work. "Correcting" an error means that these people would not be compensated. Apparently, Deng understood that the Party was wrong; indeed, he was in charge of the anti-Rightist campaign and must have known it. But his thoughts did not deviate much politically from the revolutionary path that he and his comrades, especially Mao, Zhou, and Liu, had traversed. Although economically he had after all taken a capitalist road as Mao had feared, he still did not want to relinquish the CCP's power.

The above analysis of the path-dependency of Mao, Zhou, Liu, and Deng further explains why the Cultural Revolution was possible. The communist revolution and the events before and after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 helped establish Mao's status in the Party. Zhou, Liu, and Deng were part of that revolution that set up the undemocratic system and Mao's personality cult. The Cultural Revolution was the logical conclusion of the revolutionary movements that had happened before, just as the June 4 massacre of 1989 was the logical conclusion of Deng's thoughts on the exclusive power of the CCP. Until and unless the CCP acknowledges that ordinary people have the same political rights as the CCP Party members, and they themselves are no more right than other people, political repression of dissidents will continue.

Other Comments on the Book

Let us come back to some other matters of Hu's book. As I said earlier, one of the strengths of the book is the details the author provides and the copious notes. But the many redundancies and repetitions can be tiresome in reading. A more important weakness, though, is some of the ways the author narrates the story and his own theories.

The book was published in Hong Kong, but sometimes the reader feels that the author is still constrained by the ideology of the mainland. For example, Hu concludes that one of the lessons of the Cultural Revolution is that the Party needs to fully practice “democratic centralism” (12). After sixty years of the one party rule based on “democratic centralism,” this Hu, just like the other Hu (Jintao), still thinks it is not enough. That is astonishing to this reader. Of course, the author is entitled to his own opinions. But if he truly thinks that China still needs “democratic centralism,” he has to make an argument for it. He cannot assume that it is the only way for China.

Another ideological statement he makes is that before the Cultural Revolution, the CCP was “the most effective governing party in the world in terms of state government and social administration” (74). Does that effectiveness include the anti-Rightist movement, the Great Leap Forward, the great famine in early 1960s, etc.? Again if the author truly believes so, he has to make an argument and support it. It is not enough to say simply that the Party was doing a very good job, although there were flaws, sometimes even serious flaws, because of Chinese tradition and outside pressure, and to feel apologetic about it for the Party.

Similarly, the author makes other statements that cannot be supported. For example, when he mentions Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, or Lin Biao, the author uses words like 罪有應得，惡有惡報，沒有無懲罰的罪惡，多行不義必自斃 (a person’s punishment fits his/her crime; an evil person will suffer from his/her own evilness; there is no crime without punishment; one will get oneself killed if he or she does too many bad things) (472, 474, 575, 645, 633). These are wishful thinking rather than academic findings. Good people do not always get rewarded, and bad people do not always get punished.

Hu’s use of the word “people” (人民) is often problematic. He says that the April 5 movement awakened the Chinese people’s consciousness and they now wanted to end the Cultural Revolution (645). How does the author know that that was what “people” thought? Or even if they did think that way, did “people” actually matter that much? Did the power elites actually care what people thought, or did they actually care more about their own power? The author says that Deng and his comrades in 1975 represented “people” in fighting against the “Jiang Qing clique” (598). Which “people” elected Deng to represent them? He says that at the time, “the people of the whole country” (全國人民) began to know Deng Xiaoping and supported him more (601). Who were these “people?” And how does the author know that they supported Deng more than Mao’s wife? These conclusions incline more towards propaganda than academic work (see other similar use of the word “people” at pp. 615, 623-624, 637). His reference to Jiang Qing as a “crazy political dog” (政治瘋狗) is also inappropriate (606, 658).

Another inaccuracy of word use is Hu’s conclusion that “people all know that Zhou died because he was enraged (氣死的)” by Mao (p. 563). If that were the case, Zhou should have died in the 1920s and 1930s. And there were many times he should have died thereafter.

The most likely time would be when he was deprived of the power to lead the State Council during the Great Leap Forward, since Mao did not trust him in leading the movement and used another group of people instead, making his State Council useless.¹³ In Hu's book, one can also read that Zhou made self-criticism countless times, just as in the past several dozen years before the Cultural Revolution. He would have died many times.

At times, the author contradicts himself. At one place, the author says that Zhou represented a healthy and progressive force (422), but at another place, the author says that Zhou's negative influence exceeded his positive influence (285). How is that progressive? A more accurate description might be that Zhou was progressive sometimes but retrogressive at many other times. After all, he was in the power structure that was responsible for the calamities under CCP rule. For another example, the author says that Mao instructed the Politburo not to use soldiers and fire arms in dealing with the demonstrators in the April 5 movement, but on the same page, he says that these decisions were made by the Politburo since Mao was already unable to speak, and even had difficulty breathing (641). What actually happened then? The author does not explain.

These problems may be partly caused by the author's style of writing. Hu says at the beginning of the book that he would like to insert his comments into the narration of the story. He is mainly telling a story rather than making an analysis of the story he is telling. The former is more informal while the latter is more formal and academic. His style of writing makes it more like the former, but his copious notes make it more like the latter. In such a contradictory position, it is understandable then that the author is not always strictly careful in what he is saying.

Despite all the quibbles, the book is a welcome addition to the studies on Mao and the Chinese revolution.

¹³ See chapter 11 of Xin Ziling, *Hong Taiyang de Yunluo*.

In 1966, Mao Zedong encouraged college and high school students to take over the state and party apparatus. During the ten years of the Great Cultural Revolution, there was chaos and violence all over China. Many revolutionary elders, high-ranking officials, scholars, professors, authors, artists, and religious figures were purged. Countless innocent people were killed or committed suicide. Millions were persecuted. It was a tragedy in the Chinese history. The chaos and disaster was not over until Mao's death in October 1976.

The relationship between Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution is controversial. Although there is general agreement that Mao was responsible for the Cultural Revolution, there is considerable dispute concerning the effect of the Cultural Revolution on Mao's legacy. The interpretation of the Chinese Communist Party on the Cultural Revolution and Mao's role within it was written in an official document, "Resolution on Certain Issues in the History of Our Party since the Establishment of the People's Republic of China," issued in 1981. The document claimed that Mao Zedong was responsible for this tragedy, but he was a great man making mistakes and that the counterrevolutionary groups of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing were intended to use the political campaign to persecute high ranking officials and to overthrow Mao's government, manipulating the cultural movement and bringing serious disaster and turmoil to the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people. The Beijing government regards the Cultural Revolution as a grave fault by Mao Zedong whose contribution to history was seventy percent acceptable and thirty percent terrible. Using this formulation, the Chinese government claimed that the Cultural Revolution should not degrade Mao's previous position as a brave leader in fighting the Japanese, establishing the People's Republic of China, and constructing the ideological basis for the Chinese Communist Party. This allows the Chinese government to condemn both the Cultural Revolution and Mao's role within it, without calling into question the principles of the Chinese Communist Party.

In China, the study of the Cultural Revolution is still a sensitive topic. Few Chinese scholars are studying this topic. Official documents with regard to the Cultural Revolution are not open to the public. Many questions remain to be answered. Why did Mao initiate such a so-called revolution? Did Mao really want to establish a utopian society in China through this revolution? Did Mao have to use the Red Guards to get rid of his political opponents? What were Mao's real motivations? Roderick MacFarquhar, a Harvard historian, and Michael Schoenhals, a Swedish scholar, published a book in 2006, titled *Mao's Last Revolution*. They attempted to use this book to promote the study of Cultural Revolution in the West and encourage healthy debate over the Chinese official interpretation of the Cultural Revolution. It is a significant endeavor to establish the facts. The authors used newly available documents and memoirs in an effort to address some of the great questions of the era. The result was impressive.

Professor Hu Angang of Tsinghua University published his book in 2008, *Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution*, the most authoritative account on the Cultural Revolution ever

published in Chinese, using many published official and unofficial documents to support his arguments. This book is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 1, Introduction: Historical Lessons and Treasure

Chapter 2, Mao's Preparation for the "Great Cultural Revolution"

Chapter 3, Total Mobilization and an All-out Civil War, 1966-1969

Chapter 4, The Life-and-Death Struggle between Mao and Lin Biao, 1969-1973

Chapter 5, The Political Fight between Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Qing, 1973-1976

Chapter 6, Evaluations of the "Great Cultural Revolution"

With regard to the origins of the Cultural Revolution, Professor Hu claims that "the failure of the structure of the collective leadership in the Chinese Communist Party and the failure of the structure of the Chinese leadership receiving information" are the major causes of the Cultural Revolution (10-12). In the word of Hu, before the Cultural Revolution, Mao had unlimited power in the Chinese Communist Power and in the country, but he did not receive the same information about the Chinese society as other senior party leaders did. As a result, Mao made the wrong decision to launch the Cultural Revolution. Hu's argument differs from some historians' conclusions that Mao's motivation was to prohibit China from following Khrushchev's revisionist road and to establish a utopian society in China. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, for example, argue that Mao launched such a revolution to regain his political power among the Chinese Communist leaders during the power struggle in the 1960s.

The most interesting part of Hu's book is chapter 6. In this chapter, Hu discusses the economic, political, social, and international impact of the "Cultural Revolution", compares Mao with Joseph Stalin, identifies the problems of the structure resulting in Mao's errors, and regards Mao's failure as one of the sources of Deng Xiaoping's successful reforms. According to Hu, the Cultural Revolution contributed to China's economic development, social progress, and the rise of China's international status, although it contributed to the collapse of the state structure and party system. Unlike Stalin, Mao did not order the execution of his political rivals during the Cultural Revolution, and Mao's great errors came from the failure of the collective leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, which encouraged Deng Xiaoping to carry out the reforms of the party and state leadership, as indicated by Hu (736-94). Indeed, after the Cultural Revolution, especially after Deng Xiaoping came to power, the Beijing government blamed the Gang of Four for the negative results of the Cultural Revolution. It also believed that the Cultural Revolution was the result of what can happen when one person starts personal cult and maneuvers the masses in such a way that it damages the Chinese Communist Party and state systems. The result of this opinion is the agreement among the Chinese Communist elite that China must be ruled only by the powerful Chinese Communist Party, in which resolutions are made as a group and consistent with the rule of law.

On the whole, this book, treating the Cultural Revolution in great details, is well researched. It offers the most trustworthy and persuasive account of this important event in Chinese. This book has great value and provides a balanced and impartial explanation. Few researchers could handle this important issue as well as the author of this book. The book

is highly recommended for students of modern Chinese history in general and history of the Peoples' Republic of China in particular.

This book was written and published on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), to summarize the historical event through a thick description. Hu Angang's justification for writing a detailed documentation of the event is that a brief general description of past mistakes would be irresponsible to history.

Thus, the book provides a detailed description of the Cultural Revolution. It starts with a narration describing the political background and how Mao prepared for this Revolution and successfully launched it as a political movement. The ten-year long fight and struggle is told through events that link the main figures and players of the movement: Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, Wang Hongwen, and Mao's wife Jiang Qing.

Hu continues with a narrative on the main targets of the Cultural Revolution: Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping who were criticized and attacked, while Lin Biao and Wang Hongwen were groomed to be Mao's successors. Mao's wife Jiang Qing, though a junior party functionary before the Cultural Revolution, became the central figure and banner holder of the Cultural Revolution due to her special status. On the one hand, Jiang Qing would not have been in a powerful position for the Cultural Revolution without Mao Zedong; on the other hand, "without Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong would not have the political barking dog for starting the Cultural Revolution" (193). During the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing was in such a key position that she could even persecute and defeat the influential senior politician Zhou Enlai.

With a critical tone, the book clearly points out Mao's personal motivation to initiate the Cultural Revolution, and how he had been planning it since the early 1960s to take on his political rivals Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. It was the political disagreement, the conflict and the struggle between Mao and the two heavyweight political leaders Liu and Deng that eventually led to the decade-long revolution. In particular, "Mao's political conflicts with Liu Shaoqi became the direct cause for commencing the Revolution." (24) Hu's description of the pre-Cultural-Revolution era is novel in comparison with other works. Numerous publications maintain that "the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began as a campaign to root out 'bourgeois' influences in art and literature,"¹ which describes the phenomenon of the Cultural Revolution. However, Hu's work reveals more causes for the political movement by depicting the Revolution's multi-faceted background. According to Hu, Liu Shaoqi became the main victim of the Revolution because Mao was dissatisfied that there

¹ Edwin E. Moise, "The Cultural Revolution," *Modern China* (Pearson Educational Limited, 2008) 165-96.

appeared to be two chairmen in China – himself and Liu. Mao did not want to appear being at the same level as Liu, whom he considered a bourgeois element instead of a Marxist. Mao was disturbed by the fact that Liu was popular and increasingly gained more support and power.

The book reveals that, although Premier Zhou Enlai worked with Mao, Zhou and Mao's wife Jiang Qing turned out to be political foes. After many years of a quiet life as Mao's wife away from the public light, Jiang's role expanded from wife to Mao's political representative. Hu comments that, by using Jiang Qing, Mao set a bad example for his colleagues. The book delivers the judgement that involving one's wife in one's political fights is not considered a Marxist act, but a feudal dictator's conduct. In imitation of Mao, Lin Biao installed his own wife Ye Qun as his political representative.

At one point during the Cultural Revolution, when he was viewed as the front runner as Mao's successor, Lin Biao pleased Mao by saying that the damage of the Cultural Revolution was minimal, minimal, minimal, but the achievement was maximal, maximal, maximal. Lin Biao was considered the winner in the Revolution until he finally died in a mysterious plane crash in Mongolia. For a short time during the Cultural Revolution, Lin Biao was "Mao Zedong's close friend and comrade-in-arms." (403) It did not take long for Lin Biao to be labeled as an enemy. Mao's words were so powerful that "they could send Lin Biao either to Heaven or to Hell" (419). Mao and Lin disagreed over the question as to whether or not the position of the President of the PRC should be restored. Mao was against Lin Biao's suggestion of reinstating such a position. "Mao's fight with Lin Biao hurt Mao much more than Mao's fight with Liu Shaoqi." (404) Hu considers both Mao Zedong and Lin Biao losers in their political fights.

In grooming his successor, Mao promoted Wang Hongwen. "Drawing from the lessons of Lin Biao, Mao did not officially announce Wang Hongwen as his successor, but took time to train him and to deliberate." (556) Wang climbed fast "from an ordinary cadre in a factory in Shanghai to be the third in line – after Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai." (554)

In this book, Hu provides a fresh understanding of certain phenomena during the Cultural Revolution. Examining the underlying reasons for sending students to the countryside for re-education, he suggests that this was done to decentralize them and prevent them from getting too strong in the cities. For similar reasons, Mao changed his attitude toward the Red Guards from supporting them at the beginning of the Revolution to suppressing them later.

How can readers not become curious and fascinated in reading Hu's book when they get to know that "Mao Zedong and Lin Biao met the Red Guards at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution - on 18 August 1966 to activate them and engage them in the political movement of the Revolution"? (183) Millions of Red Guards from all over China traveled to Beijing to see Mao at rallies. However, the life cycle of the Red Guards, or the Red Guards movement, only took two years to complete the process of birth - rapid development - high peak - sudden fall - total collapse. Hu's book provides a fascinating narrative on the fate of

the Red Guards and their falling out of Mao's favor. It was Mao Zedong who could make the Red Guards fly high in the sky when necessary, but he could also send the Red Guards to hell and use them as a scapegoat.

In late 1968, Mao had been thinking hard how to get rid of the Red Guards - sending them to the countryside, to the peripheries, immersing them with peasants and workers. Hu's description of Mao's policy "down with the Red Guards" and "disintegrating the Red Guards" offers new insights into the Red Guard phenomenon: other publications do not sufficiently discuss Mao's strategy toward the Red Guards. According to David Davies, the Red Guards were closely associated with the "chaos" of the Cultural Revolution. After they were sent to remote areas to live with farmers, they became known as *zhi-qing* (short for *zhishi qingnian*, "educated youth") who experienced the tough and hard life in the countryside, in response to Mao's strategy of receiving re-education from the peasants.² It is interesting to note that according to Hu, Mao strategically sent the Red Guards to the countryside with a political objective, while the *zhi-qing* period has been explained by some Chinese and foreign China scholars as a strategy used by the party for economic reasons - to "alleviate the burden of surplus labor in the cities following the first years of the Cultural Revolution." Davies explains the decision to send the youth to the countryside in economic terms as a way to deal with unemployment. In the political terms of Maoist rhetoric, the Red Guards were sent to the countryside because "the *zhi-qing* should go to the countryside for revolutionary re-education."³ The Chinese youth at that time understood their fate as "privileged urban students 'sent down' to learn from the peasants,"⁴ i.e., to receive re-education. They did not understand it as a means to solve the employment problem as mentioned by Davies. Hu's discussion of sending the youth to remote areas as a political strategy to decentralize the Red Guards gives the issue a new dimension and raises it to a new level.

² David J. Davies, "Visible Zhiqing: The Visual Culture of Nostalgia among China's Zhiqing Generation," Ching Kwan Lee and Guobin Yang ed., *Re-Envisioning the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford University Press, 2007), 166-92.

³ *Ibid.*, 187-88.

⁴ Lin Chun, "Toward a Chinese Feminism - A Personal Story," Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom eds., *Twentieth Century China* (Routledge, 2003), 66-80.

Hu offers an overview of the various political decisions and events that influenced and guided the whole nation. For example, Hu points out that Liu Shaoqi was unjustly charged and persecuted, and that Liu's case was the most unfair case in the history of the People's Republic of China. Hu criticizes Mao Zedong, Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai for allowing this to happen. "As colleagues of Liu Shaoqi for more than 40 years, Mao Zedong, Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai are responsible for the mistreatment of Liu Shaoqi" (292).

In particular, Hu examines the Cultural Revolution from a vantage point of the top circle of the politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, rather than describing the Revolution in general terms. Reading Hu's book is exciting, thrilling and fascinating due to its vivid chronological accounts of the events linked with the key figures. It is a mixture of history, politics, journalism, and sociology, presented through qualitative research and an analytical approach that is supported by, and combined with, quantitative data.

Hu clearly states that the Cultural Revolution was initiated and advocated by Mao Zedong, and defines the Cultural Revolution as Mao's tragedy. The author also stresses the logic behind the conclusion that without Mao's mistakes there would not be Deng's economic reform. Thus, the Cultural Revolution is viewed as a result of Mao's failed leadership in his later years; at the same time, it is viewed as a historically positive event that gave Deng Xiaoping the chance to turn the nation towards a new direction. Based on these understandings, the book criticizes Mao for unleashing the Cultural Revolution, and reveals the cruelty of the political events.

Hu comes to the conclusion that Mao took a direction opposite to his own advocated ideas: he was not a Marxist, but an imitator of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty who launched a movement to persecute intellectuals and burn their books two millennia ago. Instead of implementing political unity, Mao was a separatist; instead of being open to his close comrade-in-arms, he plotted against them; instead of correcting his political allies' mistakes, he conducted cruel fights and attacks. In summary, the Cultural Revolution is considered an "all-out civil war". (7) Hu's book offers an abundance of material for discussions and debates for students and scholars in political studies, social sciences, cultural studies and international relations, for China watchers and for anyone interested in modern China. In view of the thick description and enormous amount of information, this book will be useful for scholars and students conducting research on the Cultural Revolution for verification or debate.

A fine work of original scholarship, *Mao Zedong yu wenge* excels as a somber narrative and an example of mature analysis. Reaching beyond the usual mode of outlining historical description, this recent study of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution thoroughly scrutinizes the complex origins, fluid character, and disastrous consequences of this unprecedented political movement—a reversal almost dooming the Chinese Communist Party and its rule in China. Hu Angang impressively synthesizes historical methodology and current theories of political science. Using thought-provoking and ingenious insights, Hu offers a rich panorama of the Cultural Revolution's entire course. The effort Hu made to recapture this ten-year phase of vicissitudes for all its damage has a clear purpose: it shows that history serves as a mirror that reveals lessons for contemporary Chinese and their posterity.

A work of historical interpretation hardly stands valid and viable without a solid foundation of primary sources and Hu's book has that. Hu draws on a well-spring of archival records and official documents that have surfaced over the past decades. He skillfully and arduously interweaves first hand information and supportive literature into an absorbing fabric that combines storytelling with critical analysis. For factual fortification, Hu supplies statistical illustrations as well as glossaries of major events and characters. For example, his chart indicating the high-ranking cadre that Mao ruthlessly purged and grudgingly reinstated across the time-span between 1969 and 1975 helps to explain the proportion of the Cultural Revolution's ruinous effects (815-19). Thus well researched and facilitated, Hu's inquiry appears well grounded, reliable, and edifying.

Viewing the Cultural Revolution as an inexcusable tragedy of Mao's own choice, Hu has the courage and acumen to expose this tragic incident for the Chinese nation as an inevitable gamble that Mao himself consciously conceived and tenaciously nursed. The Cultural Revolution was by no means an aberration—however harmful—that plagued Mao during his revolutionary life and career. Mao was the type of leader who was highly "sensitive to various challenges and to the political attitudes of his fellow comrades," argues Hu. Given his revolutionary experience, ideological conviction, political orientation, age and personal mentality, Mao habitually immersed himself in a "crisis hallucination" (24) that he perceived as life-death junctures during the course of the Chinese Communist revolution. After the Chinese Communist Party came to power, this hallucination reached a new height as Mao reoriented his revolutionary theory and practice to deal with the duress of external threats and internal problems. Together with U.S. hostilities toward "Red China," Hu points out, Mao judged the converse transmutations taking place in the Soviet Union and the Communist world (i.e. Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and its impact on the Socialist bloc and the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations from brother-in-arms to enemies at each other's throats) since the early 1960s as possibly subversive of Chinese Communist power and liable to produce an encore of the Soviet coup in China. Driven by his sense of crisis, Mao suspected and exaggerated the danger, for he imagined that there existed "agents of imperialism" and "Khrushchev-type" personalities from within and without the ranks of the

Chinese Communist Party who represented a new class to be battled and purged through continuous revolution.

In Hu's analysis, Mao's theory of class struggle proved erroneous because it lacked clear evidence-based classification of who belonged to the adversarial class while aiming to "chase for enemies" by way of subjective imagination. (37) Yet, Mao, upon so artificial a footing, set unchecked into motion one purge after another of real and imaged adversaries. For evidence, Hu notes that the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957 persecuted Chinese intellectuals in large number and silenced any critical voice—constructive or not—from within and without the Chinese Communist Party, while the Lushan Conference of 1959 set a dreadful precedent to stifle whatever criticism and suggestions emanated from the Chinese Communist leadership. And Mao could have his way because the apparatus of the Chinese Communist power lacked any institutional device to counterbalance Mao's absolute authority as the unrivaled life-time paragon of the Chinese Communist leadership.

Due to his limited perspective and paranoiac mentality, Mao translated into the phenomenon on class struggle any disagreements or differences inside the Chinese Communist regime over his handling of China's economic reconstruction. Thus, as Hu points out, Mao took issue with the arduous effort that those moderate leaders like Liu Shaoqi (Mao's second in command and designated successor) and Deng Xiaoping undertook for economic restoration following the disastrous Great Leap Forward of 1958. Seen from Mao's lens, what Liu and Deng were able to accomplish revealed that they represented another power center with extensive organizational, social, and political underpinnings from top to bottom. Mao preoccupied himself with the fear that this clique, already "deviant" to the verge of undoing his correct political line, would change the color of "Red China" as soon as he passed away. In Mao's judgment, the only remedy to prevent this imagined danger was to wreak an unprecedented nationwide upheaval as a purge based on his theory of class struggle and continuous revolution.

In order to groom public opinion for the coming showdown, Hu reveals, Mao set to launch assaults in the realms of culture—especially arts and humanities—for the purpose of repudiating all "poisonous thoughts" and ridding the country of those allegedly not in conformity with the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. In so doing, Hu argues, Mao politicized the issue of cultural and academic natures, and "directly attacked the intelligentsia elites, indirectly attacked political elites, and prepared public opinion for waging the Cultural Revolution." (53) All along, Mao worked to build a cult of personality that reinforced his image as an all mighty leader, forever beyond reproach. Despite already being senile by 1966, Mao had the stage ready for the Cultural Revolution that consumed the last decade of his life.

Hu illuminates that Mao intended to seek order from disorder and to establish a new ideal party-state system by destroying the old one together with all the "counter-revolutionary"—counter-Mao to be exact-- ideological and human resources it embodied. Yet, contrary to Mao's expectations, the Cultural Revolution yielded nothing constructive due to a radical practice of Mao's erroneous theories. Instead, it became an out-of-control

vicious movement of self-destruction and self-negation that only ceased to spin ten years later with the death of its only prime-mover.

Hu dissects the reasons behind this chaotic era by dividing the period into three phases. During the first one from 1966 to 1969, Mao mobilized the Chinese masses across the country as well as the Chinese communists at the grass-roots and declared “an all-out civil war” (107) against the existing power structure and all vestiges of old cultures and their transponders in Chinese society. In so doing, Mao exhibited the irony of a top Chinese Communist leader determined to devastate a Communist regime that he had led in founding. By allying with the ultra-leftists, respectively headed by Lin Biao (Mao’s instrumental lieutenant in the People’s Liberation Army) and Jiang Qing (Mao’s wife), and forcing the cooperation of the moderates represented by Zhou Enlai in order to eradicate the Liu Shaoqi clique from all levels of the power hierarchy, Mao split the party rank and file while breaking down China’s state machinery.

In consequence, Mao created what Hu called “a governance vacuum” (297) and, based on his cult of personality, elevated himself to the singular decision-maker who could wield his personal will as to the policies and laws beyond doubt. Thus, the extralegal organizations like “the Red Guards” of college and high school students that Mao supported as his instrument for the Cultural Revolution scourged everywhere and plunged China into a “reign of terror.” And the revolutionary forces of the Chinese masses that Mao had called on fell into bloody factional battles in a contest to prove legitimacy and seize power. The Chinese nation split violently. China became so lawless and anarchical that, in order to maintain control, Mao eventually had to reverse himself and rely on the military intervention to ruthlessly suppress what he had unleashed. In addition, Liu Shaoqi and many elite leaders at various levels of authority were denounced as perceived threats, many on the basis of naming names and false charges without proof. They were not only deposed but lost their freedom. Many were physically abused (Liu, as a case in point died a miserable death in detention) and their families were implicated. To Mao, however, the end justified the means. By 1969, Mao removed the Liu Shaoqi clique, appointed Lin Biao his successor, and had his theory of continuous class struggle and his authoritarian position legitimized by the new rubber-stamping national party congress.

Yet, no unity and stability seemed possible after 1969. Mao quickly fell afoul of Lin Biao, and descended onto the course of exterminating another antagonist regime after Liu Shaoqi’s. Thus, the Cultural Revolution entered a second phase that finally tumbled in 1973. As for causes behind this second phase, Hu first highlights Mao’s paranoia: at the zenith of his political power, Mao was afraid of allowing anyone to stand on an equal footing with him lest another threat be nourished. To this end, therefore, he worked to create a subtle balance among the three forces inside the new Chinese Communist leadership: Lin Biao’s military faction, Jiang Qing’s clique of ultra-leftist diehards, and Zhou Enlai’s moderate group. For the same objective, Mao also hankered for a permanent alteration of the state system; this involved abolishing the position of president that Liu Shaoqi had previously held. It was on this issue that Lin Biao—and his allies—contested. Their opposition caused Mao to suspect Lin of ambition for supremacy.

A second factor behind the Mao-Lin strife, Hu notes, was Mao's theory of continuous revolution, which called for non-stop searches for—if none found, then creating—enemies inside the Communist Party and society. Lin fit this bill in Mao's mindset. To counter the Lin circle, Mao relied on the Jiang Qing faction—that had already been competing with Lin's military faction since 1969—and sought support from Zhou Enlai's moderates. Very much aware of Mao's mental condition, Lin refused to capitulate. And as a last resort, Lin's son even made an attempt on Mao's life. When the assassination failed, the Lin family fled by air and their plane crashed in the Republic of Mongolia. While flabbergasting the Chinese people, the Lin Biao Affair took a heavy mental and physical toll on the old Mao, who thereafter became afflicted with lingering diseases, and in effect gave hardly deniable testimony that the Cultural Revolution went wrong in both theory and practice. To improvise on a remedy, Mao again reversed—and unwillingly forced—himself into permitting limited redress to some of the mistakes that the Cultural Revolution created. Hence, as indicated by Hu, Zhou Enlai and the moderates, with Mao's consent, could reinstate some of the deposed cadres and undertake some partial restoration of China's normality.

In 1973, with Deng Xiaoping's comeback into the center of the Chinese Communist party and government, Hu argues that the Cultural Revolution entered its third phase. With Mao's consent and the fatally-ill Zhou's support, Deng initiated a plan of rectification and a series of reforms in China's capsized economy and public order as well as cultural life and political structure. Positive results pleased the Chinese public but annoyed Jiang Qing and those diehard radicals. However, Deng had to take a great political risk for his overhaul agenda because, except for Jiang Qing and ultra-leftists' resistance, it was Mao's "likes and dislikes that decided everything." (601) Both Deng and his radical foes relied on Mao as supreme referee. And Mao would never allow Deng's efforts to advance far enough to undermine his Cultural Revolution. Ill and feeble, Mao still held his command even in seclusion. He directed the Center only through his liaison Mao Yuanxin, who was his favorite nephew and Jiang Qing's anti-Deng confidante. The possibility that Deng's reforms would doom the Cultural Revolution expressly re-evoked Mao's paranoia and intractability. After Deng declined Mao's request to endorse the Cultural Revolution, his political destiny was sealed and he was toppled in early 1976. Nonetheless, ten years of mayhem drove the Chinese people beyond forbearance and into protest, as in the case of the anti-ultra-leftist Tiananmen Protest Movement in April 1976 following Zhou's death. And Mao's death in September brought the Cultural Revolution to its demise and Jiang Qing and her radical cohorts to their disgrace.

With all its appalling effects, Hu adds, the Cultural Revolution cost China an opportunity for economic development: in national economy and comprehensive national capacity, for instance, China lagged far behind the countries in its vicinity that had stayed at almost the same level. On the other hand, this ten-year nightmare served as "the mother of Deng Xiaoping's subsequent reforms" (788) that put China on the road towards modernization and normalization. As lessons were learned, the government and party institutions underwent reconstruction and normalization: the life-long tenure at leadership position was abolished, collective decision-making system established, and political stability emphasized.

Exhaustively researched, brilliantly narrated, and deeply analytical, *Mao Zedong yu wenge* deserves commendation as a valuable work prominent within the current Chinese-language literature on the history of the Cultural Revolution. Despite its numerous strengths, this book could have provided more examination of the social basis for the rise of ultra-leftists and extralegal organizations such as the Red Guards. It should also have made clearer whether the Maoist phenomenon emerged because of the innate flaws of the Chinese Communist institutions that developed in history. Nevertheless, the book is significant and enlightening.

Author's Response by Angang Hu, Tsinghua University

Taking history as a mirror can aid in the judgment of not only the rise and fall of dynasties but also successes or failures today. This is China's political tradition and political culture. Studying history and learning from the past is for the purpose of creating better governance, easing social contradictions, and pacifying neighbors.

It is very difficult to write a history of contemporary China, and it is even more difficult to write a history of the "Great Cultural Revolution." First, the Communist Party of China passed a political resolution in 1981,¹ which was based on the principle of "generality instead of going into details,"² proposed by Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun in view of the political context at that time. The resolution is 34,000 Chinese characters in length but devotes only 6,500 or less than one-fifth of the entire text to the Cultural Revolution. Second, Chinese scholars have published a number of treatises and monographs on the

¹ "Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on a number of Historical Issues since the Founding of the People's Republic of China", adopted unanimously at the 6th plenary meeting of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP on 27 June 1981.

² Chen Yun told the people drafting the Resolutions that "I agree with Comrade Deng Xiaoping, who put forward the view that the "Revolutions" should be general instead of attending to details. See Li Yue: "Textual Research to the Sources of Several Famous Sayings by Chen Yun," *Zhonghua ernv* [Sons and Daughters of China], No. 217 (June 2005), p. 13.

subject.³ But these treatises and monographs are superficial, lacking either general histories or panoramic views of political, economic and social areas. These works lack detailed notes and interpretations, academic sourcing and referencing. They show little interest either in observing academic standards, or utilizing an analytical framework based on social sciences theories and professional quantitative analyses. With the recent release of more and more documentation, scholars are able to go into details rather than remaining at the general level of interpretation. Making full use of the available materials and data, we are able to draw a complete and accurate picture of the ten-year Cultural Revolution and to re-evaluate the major events, important figures, and their political and social impact. With the fusion of social science theories and the employment of diversified research methods, we can also put forward a theoretical framework for analyzing the Cultural Revolution so as to make empirical analyses, profound studies, verify assumptions, and make the post assessment and quantitative evaluation of the major policies and their impacts. This is a very challenging task, which might result in something original, especially in the study of the decision-making mechanism of policy in contemporary China. In fact, the Cultural Revolution provides the best case for new studies because it is made up of a string of major historical events.

Mao Zedong yu wenge is not my pre-established goal of academic study. I never thought that I would have written this book. Although I like history, I am not a historian. I am an economist, an expert in the study of contemporary China and in public policies. My

³ Such as Jin Chunming and Yu Nan, eds., *Chedi fouding wenhua dageming shijiang* [Ten Lectures on Thoroughly Negating “the Great Cultural Revolution”] (Beijing: Jiefangjun Wenyi Chubanshe, 1985); Liu Suinian and Wu Qungan, eds., *Wenhua dageming shiqi de guomin jingji* [National Economy during “the Great Cultural Revolution”] (Haoerbin: Heilongjiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1986), Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, *1966-1976: Wenhua dageming shinian shi*, [1966-1976: A History of the Great Cultural Revolution] (Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 1986), Wang Nianyi, *Dadonglun de niandai* [Years of Great Turmoil] (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988, 2005); Wang Zhiming, *Zhonghuarenming gongheguo jishi: neilun zhouqi* [Record of the People’s Republic of China – Sudden Eruption of Internal Turmoil, 1965-1969] (Beijing: Hongqi Chubanshe, 1994); Jin Chunming, *“Wenhua dageming” shigao* [Manuscript of the History of the “Great Cultural Revolution”] (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1995); Xi Xuan and Jin Chunming, *Wenhua dageming jianshi* [A Brief History of “the Great Cultural Revolution”] (Beijing: Zhongyang Dangshi Chubanshe, 1996, 2005, 2006); Zhang Hua and Su Caiqing, eds., *Huishou “wenge”: Zhongguo shinian wenge fenxi yu fansi* [Review of “the Great Cultural Revolution” – Analysis and Reflection on the Ten-year Cultural Revolution] (Beijing: Zhonggong Dangshi Chubanshe, 2000).

principal area of study is China's macro economy, aiming at providing a fairly systematic and comprehensive knowledge of economic development, especially the challenges of major developments. As a policy adviser to senior Chinese leaders, I provide background material, plan designs, and offer policy consultations for mapping out the state's long-term development strategy, five-year developmental planning and major developmental policies. I participated in designing the 10th five-year plan (2001) and the 11th five-year plan (2006), the Chinese state's medium- and long-term program for education reform and development 2010-2020 (2010), and the medium- and long-term program of personnel development 2010-2020 (2010). Currently, I am participating in the design of the 12th five-year development program. It is such direct involvement in the study of the background of development, in public policy debates and major policy consultation, that has made me strongly believe that "success in policy decisions is the biggest success and the failure in major policy decisions is the biggest failure."⁴ It is, therefore, more important to ensure the success of major policy decisions than to try to avoid major policy blunders. This is one of the core issues in China's political economy. But how to avoid blunders in major policy decisions? This requires not only "learning by doing and doing by learning," adopting a method, which is known in Chinese as "to cross a river by feeling the stones," but also the understanding of major policy decisions in the past, especially learning from historical lessons and offering further improvement in decision-making mechanisms, based on the democratic centralism that best fits to China's national conditions.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I summed up and evaluated three policy blunders committed by Mao Zedong when I studied China's economic development and economic policies: the first is the lesson from "the Great Leap Forward"; the second is the lessons learned from the Cultural Revolution; and the third is the lessons from the population policy.⁵ Since then, I have been tracing all the changes in national economic policies, their impacts and post-evaluations centering round this core issue of the decision-making mechanism. In my *Jingji bodong baogao*,⁶ I went into great detail in using a quantitative analysis of the mechanism that accounted for the economic policy failure in the Great Leap Forward and its consequences. In May 2005, I completed a book manuscript, entitled

⁴ Hu Angang, *Zhongguo zhengzhi jingji shilun* [History of China's Political Economics, 1949-1976] (Beijing, Tsinghua Daxue Chubanshe, 2007).

⁵ Compiled by *China Science Newspaper*, mainly written by Hu Angang, *Guoqing baogao* [National Conditions and Decision-making] (Beijing, 1990); Guo Qing and Hu Angang, *Zhongguo gongyehua wenti chutan* [Preliminary Exploration into China's Industrialization] (Beijing: Zhongguo Kexue Jishu Chubanshe, 1991); Hu Angang, *Zhongguo: Zouxiang ershiyi shiji* [China: To the 21st Century] (Beijing: Zhongguo Huanjing Chubanshe, 1991).

⁶ See *Jingji bodong baogao* [Report on Economic Fluctuation] (Shenyang, Liaoning Renmin Chubanshe, 1994).

*Zhongguo Zhengzhi jingjin shilun, 1949-1976.*⁷ Then, I expanded chapter 6 into another book, entitled, *Wenhua dageming shilun* [*On the History of the Great Cultural Revolution*] (in four volumes), which was published internally as part of *Guoqing baogao* [the National Conditions Report] (special edition) in late 2005 and early 2006. The book was delivered to the top Chinese leadership and provincial and ministerial leaders as a must-read in “taking history as a mirror.” It received an unexpected response. The book enabled leaders to learn from history and provided them with a live lesson from the failure of Mao Zedong in decision-making in his late years. As some leaders said, in governing such a huge, complicated and changing country, none of us is entitled to repeat Mao Zedong’s mistakes.

After that, I went on to add more contents to the internal edition, and the book was then published in Hong Kong in November 2008. After the book was published, I received four reviews in English commissioned for H-Diplo by Professor Yafeng Xia and Professor Tang Shaojie’s review in Chinese⁸. I accordingly corrected my mistakes in citations and factual errors and made explanations or notes to their queries. Here I would like to express my thanks to them for their comments and criticisms and suggestions. I went on to read more literature, dug up more information and strengthened my theoretical analysis. The second edition of the book, running up about 790,000 Chinese characters, was published in the name of the Center for National Conditions Studies in July 2010. Again it was delivered to Chinese policy-makers and provincial party secretaries (the main sources of Chinese political leaders) for reference. It was sent to China’s National Library and major universities’ libraries in China for storage as a non-official publication. It was also sent to the U.S. Library of Congress and the Harvard-Yenching Library.

Although the Cultural Revolution took place in China and lasted for ten years and all Chinese age 50 or older personally experienced it, academic study of the historical event takes place outside of China. An example is Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals’s *Mao’s Last Revolution*, which contains a wealth of references having 752 pages and 1,962 notes. It can be regarded as an encyclopedia for the study of the “Great Cultural revolution” outside China. I read the book only after I completed mine and therefore did not have the opportunity to quote from the book. What makes me pleased is that I, as a Chinese scholar, have also written a book of originality⁹, with 826 pages and 2,768 notes. I have also made specialized quantitative analyses. Also included in the book are 34 tables

⁷ This book was published in 2007. See Hu, *Zhongguo Zhengzhi jingji shilun*.

⁸ Tang Shaojie is a professor at Tsinghua University. For his review, please see, “‘No Cutoff, Still in Disorder’ – On Hu Angang’s *Mao Zedong yu wenge*,” *Ershiyi shiji* [21st Century], Hong Kong, No. 116 (December 2009).

⁹ Guoqiang Zheng notes that the book is “an outstanding work of originality,” with both stringent narrations and in-depth analysis.

and charts in the text and appendixes, 7 illustrations and 18 boxes¹⁰. It is the first quantitative study of the history of the Cultural Revolution, and noted that the economic losses amounted to a quarter to one-fifth of the simulated GDP of 1976, and that the losses in export amounted to 40-80% of the total export for 1976 (747-53), which offer strong support to the important conclusions of my qualitative analysis. This is, by and large, identical with the line of thought and methods I used to study contemporary China. It demonstrates the particular features of my own in the study of history.

Learning from the past is for the purpose of creating a better future. I study the history of the Cultural Revolution for the purpose of promoting a historical process of making China's decision-making mechanisms more democratic, scientific and institutionalized. Future generations will discover and study this period of "new history." As opposed to overseas studies, I wrote the book as part of the China's National Conditions Report, with readership not expected in academic circles at home and abroad but rather the policy decision makers and important Party, Government and army officials. In writing the book, I put myself in their shoes and provided them with a complete picture about the root causes, historical logic and impact of the policy blunders made by Mao Zedong, making it a real mirror of history. I offer a series of 'Questions and Answers,' based on my understanding of their questions, needs, and interests.¹¹ In the following pages, I'd like to highlight several features of the book:

First of all, the book is based on a unique analytical framework on the political policy-making mechanism in China. I note two asymmetries: the asymmetry and uncertainties of information and knowledge of the leadership collective, which have a direct bearing on the policymakers in their information structure and policy decisions; and the asymmetry and uncertainties of the powers of the leadership collective, which have a direct bearing on the policy making mechanism and on the policy makers with regard to what extent they share information and the policy decisions they have made. My conclusion is that the mistakes made by Mao in his late years (as I see it during the entire Cultural Revolution) all originated from the two interactive failures: the failure in information structure and the failure in policy decision-making structure (9-12). This differs from previous analyses of the Cultural Revolution, which tended to be purely descriptive without theoretical explanations. I analyze empirically how Mao Zedong failed in information and policy decision-making on the basis of a given theoretical analytical framework, which runs from the beginning to the end of the book. This analytical framework is not only creative in policy decision-making theories but also truly conforms to China's policy decision-making mechanism and process. I fully appreciate the policy decision-making mechanism – the democratic centralism of the CCP. It is not only a good system but also a system best suited

¹⁰ The second edition of the book has run up to 790,000 Chinese characters, nearly 150,000 more than the first edition.

¹¹ The questions raised in the book are in bold letters, very clear to the reader, who will get to know how the author answers these queries.

to the Chinese conditions, because the system itself can minimize the asymmetries in the two aspects. It has enabled me to explain, from a historical perspective, the fundamental reason why Mao and his leadership collective were successful in policy decision-making when Mao founded the system and took the lead in observing the system, and the fundamental reason why Mao failed in his policy decision-making when he took the lead in violating the system. That was the case not only in the Cultural Revolution but also during the Great Leap Forward.¹² This analysis rises above the extremely shallow version of a “power struggle”. By using this framework, I can also explain the fundamental reason why Deng Xiaoping was successful in making the policy decisions of reform when he did not cast away this system and rather reconstructed and improved it. My conclusion is that only by implementing democratic centralism in an all-round way is it possible for the CCP to succeed in policy decision-making; otherwise, discomfitures will be inevitable. This is the basic conclusion I arrived at after summing up the successful experiences and the lessons of the setbacks of the CCP during its 60 years in power. It will be further investigated in the future.

Second, the innovative part of the book is the quantitative evaluation of the political decisions made during the Cultural Revolution. The evaluations cover the economic, social and political areas, and the international status of China (See sections 6.2 to 6.5 in chapter 6). This is also quite different from previous qualitative descriptions. It allows “the data to speak” (about 18 charts and tables) and “the facts to testify” (about 6 diagrams). It explains the event from the perspective of opportunity cost: what would have occurred if the Cultural Revolution didn’t happen; what impact would this have had on China’s economic growth. My conclusion is that, without the Cultural Revolution, China would have entered the economic take-off stage in the middle of the 1960s instead of post -1978. This analysis is much more accurate and detailed, as well as more professional and scientific, than the careless, rough, and non-scientific “30 [percent wrong] versus 70 [percent right]” evaluation.¹³ For Chinese readers, especially officials of the Party, government and army, the introduction of a quantitative policy evaluation is very useful in improving the policy decision-making mechanism. The most recent successful case is the third party evaluation of the 11th five-year development program in October 2005. It aroused full attention from the policy-makers, who decided to incorporate the evaluation into chapter 48 of the development program (officially approved by the National People’s Congress in March

¹² For more detailed analysis, see Hu, *Zhongguo Zhengzhi jingji shilun*, especially chapter 5.

¹³ The “30-70” evaluation was put forward by Mao Zedong as a self-evaluation. On 24 May 1977, Deng Xiaoping relayed what Mao said: “It would be good enough and not bad at all for a person to get the ‘30-70’ evaluation. I would be very happy, very satisfied if ‘such evaluation’ is given to me.” Deng Xiaoping, “Two ‘whatevers’ does not conform to Maxism,” 24 May 1977, *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* [Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), vol. II, 38.

2006).¹⁴ In August 2008, we conducted a mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the 11th five-year development program. That will prevent mistakes. Even if mistakes occur, they will easily be corrected and we can avoid “repeating mistakes” like those during the Cultural Revolution. (71)

Third, the book conducts a historical investigation of the institutional arrangements by the CCP in several decades. Its purpose is to explain how Mao sabotaged democratic centralism before the Cultural Revolution and how the hitherto effective checks and balances system failed. (60-70) This further helps to explain why Mao was able to launch the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, the book also describes how Mao went further to undermine the democratic centralism during the Cultural Revolution and established his autocratic rule; this, in turn, accounts for why the Cultural Revolution lasted for ten years and did not end until the natural death of Mao. I think the mistakes made by Mao in his late years are the inevitable results of his abrogation of the ‘good’ system and his implementation of the ‘bad’ system. (777-79) The practical significance of the analysis is to inform the current Chinese policy makers to inherit and maintain the system which proved to be good in history, and constantly improve and create better systems. This shows that the modernization of state institutions is the institutional basis for the modernization of the country, and the modernization of the state policy decision-making system is the policy decision-making basis for the modernization of the institutions of the state. This modernization is a gradual process, where improvement and adaptation are necessary but not the opposite. It is not a process that can be cut and started from the scratch all over again as Mao did (p. 75 and note 240 in Chapter 2).

Fourth, the book follows historical logic to explain that the improvement in China’s policy decision-making mechanism is a process of learning from t experience, especially the lessons of their predecessors. The failure of Mao in the Cultural Revolution in his late years is the mother of the success of Deng Xiaoping’s reform. Deng’s greatness lies in the fact that he “turned bad things into good ones”, transforming the serious political and economic crisis into a major opportunity for reform, opening and development. He carried out a series of institutional rebuilding and innovation processes starting with the leadership system and policy decision-making mechanism. (788-93). This shows that history is a process of development, and there must be “something good” and “something bad”. But, just as Mao said, “In given conditions, a bad thing can lead to good results and a good thing

¹⁴ The 11th Five-Year Outlined Program for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China”, “Approved at the fourth Session of the 14th National People’s Congress (NPC) on 14 March 2006”. Chapter 48 stipulates: “When the program is implemented during the medium term, a mid-term evaluation on the implementation of the program will be carried out. The mid-term evaluation report will be submitted to the Standing Committee of the NPC. If the program needs modification according to the evaluation, it must be submitted to the Standing Committee of the NPC for approval.

to bad results.”¹⁵ The book is a self-reflection and self-summation of a serious Chinese scholar, with the purpose of turning bad things into good. The tremendous success of China’s reform was achieved by Deng and his followers after turning bad things into good ones. The deeper we understand past failures, the more likely it is that we will be successful in the future. That is why our Chinese forefathers always took history as a mirror.¹⁶ It was so in the past and it is at the present; and so shall it be in the future.

In sum, I hope to play a good leadership role in the study of the Cultural Revolution in China’s social science circles, making the study strictly scientific, realistic and factual, accountable to the readers, to the future generations and to history. In the future, I will continue to work on the book, making revisions and modifications as necessary. There might be a third edition, a fourth edition... I will try to transcend the ego and leave a truly good work devoted to the study of the Cultural Revolution that can withstand the test of time. I welcome comments and feedback from general readers and experts alike.

¹⁵ Mao Zedong, *Guanyu zhengque chuli renmin neibu maodun* [On Correctly Handling Contradictions among the People] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1957), 34,

¹⁶ For Sima Guang (1019-1086), a famous historian in the Northern Song Dynasty, the purpose of compiling history books is “to use the rise and fall of history as a mirror to judge what is right and what is wrong today” and “to use the past as a mirror to aid in good governance.” So comes the title of the book, *Zizhi Tongjian* [Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government].

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