

## On Mao's Contradictions

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The emergence of China as the world's economic powerhouse has shifted the centre of the global market eastwards. [1] The PRC's growth rates are the envy of elites everywhere, its commodities circulating even in the tiniest Andean street markets, its leaders courted by governments strong and weak. These developments have ignited endless discussion on the country and its future. The mainstream media are essentially concerned with the extent to which Beijing is catering to the economic needs of Washington, while think-tankers worry that China will sooner or later mount a systematic challenge to the political wisdom of the West.

Academic debate, meanwhile, usually concentrates on the exact nature and the mechanics of contemporary capitalism in China. The optimists of the intellect argue that its essence is determined by the CCP's continued grip on power, seeing China's pro-market turn as a version of the Bolsheviks' New Economic Policy; in more delirious moments, they argue that China's leaders will use their new economic strength to build a socialism purer than anything previously attempted, based on proper development of the productive forces and not the tin-pot communes of the past. Others, by contrast, hold that a more accurate name for the ruling party would not even require a change of initials—Communist is easily replaced with Capitalist. A third view insists that the Chinese future is simply not foreseeable; it is too soon to predict it with any certainty.

Meanwhile debates also rage about the country's revolutionary past. China has not been exempt from the wider trend that accompanied the global victory of the American system, in which histories were re-written, monarchism and religion seen once more in a positive light, and any idea of radical change was trashed. Mao Zedong has been central to this process. In the PRC itself, trashy memoirs of the tabloid school have appeared, supplied by Mao's doctor, secretaries, etc.; all very much in the Chinese tradition of 'wild history', otherwise known as gossip. In the West, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday—the former a Red Guard whose Communist parents suffered during the Cultural Revolution, the latter a one-time uncritical defender of Kim Il Sung Thought—joined the fray five years ago with *Mao: the Unknown Story*. This focused on Mao's conspicuous imperfections (political and sexual), exaggerating them to fantastical heights and advancing moral criteria for political leaders that they would never apply to a Roosevelt or a Kennedy. The result of ten years' research, funded by a huge advance from Bertelsmann's Anglo-American operation, this tendentious and in parts fabricated account was presented as unmatched scholarship by publishing and media conglomerates all over the world—the *Guardian* hyping it as 'The Book That Shook the World'. Portraying the Great Helmsman as a monster worse than Hitler, Stalin or anyone else, it was designed to finish Mao off once and for all.

Scholars, however, were generally dismissive of the Chang-Halliday soap-opera script. Some of what it contained had been written about at least two decades earlier, and many of the 'unknown' revelations, where not totally dependent on tittle-tattle, were neither sourced nor proven. Much material was lifted from the archives of Mao's factional opponents in Taiwan and Moscow, and therefore hard to take seriously. Likewise the use of celebrity interviewees whose knowledge of Mao, leave alone China, was limited—Lech Wałęsa being one of many. The sensationalist, denunciatory style was, ironically, reminiscent of the language Mao himself deployed against his opponents during the Cultural Revolution. Further contributions to the demonization literature have followed, including *Mao's Great Famine* (2010) by Frank Dikötter. The best antidote to date is a

collection edited by Gregor Benton and Lin Chun, *Was Mao Really a Monster?* (2010), which gathers measured responses by distinguished scholars in the US, UK and China.

And Mao himself? His images are for sale, popular in China and not just with tourists, his ideas on protracted war used frequently for 'guerrilla marketing'. His fate, like that of Che, seems now to be that of a treasured commodity—all that is missing is a Chinese equivalent of the *Motorcycle Diaries*. (Perhaps, unbeknownst to us, Zhang Yimou is working on *The Thoughtful Swimmer*.) Rebecca Karl's important new biography seeks to contextualize Mao within the history of his time, aiming to restore a degree of sanity in discussing his life and role, warts and all, as the father of modern China; and simultaneously to rescue the history of the Chinese Revolution from its detractors in the West and at home. Her model: Lukács's compressed 1924 intellectual biography of Lenin as theoretician and practitioner.

Karl's scholarly and readable account is far from uncritical, but she insists that the rise of Mao, Maoism and 'Mao Zedong Thought' cannot be understood without considering the 20<sup>th</sup>-century world in which these emerged, and taking account of the role played by the imperialisms that presided over China's destiny during the first half of the century. To present Mao as a rootless monster or an amoral country bumpkin is a grotesque distortion of Chinese history. Karl charts the triumph of Maoism and discusses its aftermath with a steely clarity, based on meticulous research and the stubbornness of facts. No amount of re-writing history will make them disappear.

Mao Zedong was born to a well-off peasant farmer in Hunan province, subsequently the site of his celebrated investigation of the local peasant movement. Mao and his two younger brothers were given a taste of peasant life as they transported manure to fertilize their father's paddy fields. The father was a semi-literate boor, neither liked nor respected by Mao from an early age. His mother, very different in character, was a strong-minded woman who instilled in all three sons the idea of improving the world through action. Mao alone was sent to school, where he imbibed the Confucian classics by memorizing them, a style of education common in many parts of Asia then and even now. But it was not until he moved to the provincial capital, Changsha, in mid-1911 that his provincial world-view began to change.

The revolution of October 1911 toppled the Manchu dynasty, and Sun Yatsen declared China a republic. But the country remained fragmented; outside the large cities, warlords dominated the landscape. An attempt in late 1916 by Yuan Shikai to enthrone himself and disband the Republic was defeated. The effect on the intelligentsia and students was electric, radicalizing many, Mao among them. It was at the Fourth Provincial School, a teacher-training institute, that he first encountered thinkers who were engaging with Western political philosophies. The New People's Study Society expanded his intellectual universe and his circle of friends, many of whom would later become CCP militants. Already widely read in the Chinese classics, especially novels and poetry, Mao now moved on towards liberalism via Western philosophy. He was greatly inspired by his favourite teacher, Yang Changji, a philosophy graduate from Edinburgh who had subsequently studied Kant at Heidelberg. By the time Mao graduated in 1918, Yang had been offered a chair in philosophy at Beida (Beijing University). He took Mao with him. The intellectual ferment that had gripped the country since 1911 had shown few signs of abating; disputes between different philosophical currents dominated cultural life in the cities. Cai Hesen, a close friend of Mao's, had ended up in Paris from where he wrote lengthy letters describing the impact of the Russian Revolution on Europe and underlining the links between theory and practice—accounts which helped to radicalize Mao.

Mao secured a job in the library at Beida. Here he met Professors Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, the editors of *New Youth*, a widely read radical, literary-philosophical journal that defended science, democracy and internationalism while systematically subjecting Confucian ideas and the servility they encouraged to a sharp critique. The two men had translated some of Lenin's and Kautsky's

writings into Chinese, and were clearly moving in a radical direction. The journal defended the Bolsheviks and compared them favourably to some of the local Republican revolutionaries of 1911. It was here that Mao published his first text, on the importance of physical education, in 1917—and it was through Chen's and Li's study circles that he became a communist. Despite Mao's efforts to impress them, according to Karl, 'the only person on whom he made a deep impression was Professor Yang's daughter, Yang Kaihui, who later became his first wife and mother of several of his children.' It was here too that Mao developed his distinctive writing style, often concise and sharp, sometimes lyrical, that was to have a deep impact on the struggles that lay ahead. Though far more poetic than Lenin, Mao's talents as an essayist and pamphleteer were similar to those of the Bolshevik leader.

Mao was no longer in Beijing when the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement began in 1919. Earlier that year his mother had become seriously ill, and he had moved back to Changsha. Here he was employed as a school-teacher and set up the *Xiang River Review*, unmistakably modelled on *New Youth*. Its tone was strongly anti-imperialist. It was critical of the country's spineless leaders and its sharply worded polemics often hit the mark, resulting in the magazine's suppression by the provincial strongman. Karl points out that the most striking commentaries he wrote in the *Review* were related to the suicide of a local woman, Miss Zhao, in protest against a forced marriage. Mao described the condition of women in society as one of 'daily rape', defended women's emancipation and argued that it could only take place after a complete overhaul of Chinese society—a view echoed by Lu Xun who, responding to the storm aroused by a Chinese production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in Shanghai, posed the question: if a Chinese Nora were to leave home, where might she find refuge?

In July 1921, unknown to all except those involved, the Chinese Communist Party was created in Shanghai, a merger of cells that existed in different parts of the country; 12 delegates represented 57 communists. Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao couldn't make it, but were named as co-founders. Mao represented the tiny cell in Hunan that included his wife. The man from the Comintern who observed and advised them was Maring, a dedicated Dutch Communist (real name: Henk Sneevliet) who had played an important and inspiring role in organizing trade unions in Holland, and had in 1912 moved to the Dutch East Indies, assisting in the creation of what would later become the Indonesian Communist Party. The CCP's founding moment in Shanghai had little immediate impact, but the comrades returned to their homes determined to recruit workers and intellectuals to the new party. Mao now regarded himself as a professional revolutionary, a foot soldier in the service of the Party and the revolution.

He spent the next year and a half unionizing coal miners and railway and printing-press workers in Hunan, before being summoned to Shanghai to join the Party's Central Committee. In 1924, the Comintern instructed the CCP—over-ruling the Party's own leadership—to merge with Sun Yatsen's GMD. Mao was despatched to Canton to work with the Nationalists, leaving his wife and two young children in Changsha. Her pleadings were of no avail. Mao left his wife a letter in verse:

*Waving farewell, I embark on my journey.  
The desolate glances we exchange make things worse...  
From henceforth everywhere I go I'm alone.  
I beg you to sever the tangled ties of emotion.  
I am now a rootless wanderer.  
And have nothing more to do with the whispering of lovers.*

Karl is insightful on the disjuncture between Communist theory and practice on the question of women. While the CCP's programme defended the liberation of women, once inside the Party they were confined largely to menial and maternal duties. For many the Party became the substitute for a family. Yang's family was radical, but most women who joined the CCP 'were formally disinherited

by their families'. This made their inner-party disappointments more acute. China was not unique in this regard: a similar situation existed in Europe and elsewhere.

In 1925, the outbreak of small peasant uprisings and a large urban strike-wave presented China's Communists with a fundamental choice: to fight alone, to offer a credible political leadership to the new wave of struggles or to tame them by continuing to work within and under the 'left wing' of the GMD? Up to this stage the Comintern had insisted that the Communists subordinate narrow class interests in favour of a united front with the GMD against warlordism and banditry, and in defence of bourgeois democracy. Borodin, a senior Comintern agent (whose character was well drawn in André Malraux's *The Conquerors*) had half-jokingly told the CCP leaders to see themselves as 'coolies' in the service of the national bourgeoisie. Moscow poured in money and established military links with the Nationalists—a course that was to prove disastrously mistaken when the GMD turned against their Communist allies in 1927.

In agreeing to the Comintern strategy Chen Duxiu, the Party's General-Secretary, went against his own political instincts. He did not have the self-confidence or the political strength to resist Moscow, later writing of his own weaknesses: 'I, who had no decisiveness of character, could not insistently maintain my proposal. I respected international discipline and the majority of the Central Committee.' Might another leader have acted differently? It was the tragedy of the infant CCP that it was never given the time needed to develop its own policies, at a critical moment in the country's history. Even before the Third International—created in Moscow in 1919, against the advice of the far-sighted Rosa Luxemburg—had been transformed into a crude instrument of Soviet foreign policy, it was heavily dominated by the victorious Bolsheviks. The international prestige they enjoyed amongst the oppressed could not substitute for their superficial knowledge of Asia. Sadly, much of what they wrote and said was treated with scriptural deference, regardless of the concrete situation in different countries.

Later, and in relation to the 1927 Chinese debacle, Trotsky would describe the Third International as the 'first bureaucracy of the revolution raising itself above the insurgent people and conducting its own "revolutionary" policy instead of the policy of the revolution.' Whether the 1925–27 Chinese revolution would have succeeded without Comintern interference remains an intriguing counterfactual. Had it done so, the country would have been united against Japanese imperialism, which would have made the occupation difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. This would have had far-reaching consequences, and not only for the Far East.

The Shanghai massacres of 1927, instigated by the GMD's new paramount leader Chiang Kai-shek, led to the virtual liquidation of local Communists and allied trade unions in the city. Politically and militarily disarmed by the Comintern and its own weaknesses, the CCP was now pushed into a sudden change of gear by Moscow, anxious to salvage the situation—partially for internal reasons, as the Chinese question had become embroiled in factional disputes between Stalin/Bukharin and Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Stalin desperately needed a victory, but the insurrections that followed in Canton and Changsha were easily crushed by a united GMD; indeed, the horrific brutalities in the Hunanese capital were carried out by the Nationalists' 'left wing'. The rout of the CCP was now complete. Moscow ordered another change of leadership. Chen Duxiu had already been removed. His successor Li Lisan was dumped in favour of a Moscow stooge, Wang Ming. He lasted four years. The cumulative result of Comintern policies from 1922 onwards is clear: from 1927–32, as Liu Shaoqi reported to the Party Congress in 1945, the revolutionaries had lost over ninety per cent of their membership.

As Karl observes, 'from the very bleak view of 1927, all seemed lost'. How did the CCP, whipped by successive defeats and on the verge of extinction, succeed in liberating the entire country, unifying it for the first time in a century and a half, and transforming its social and economic structure,

within little more than twenty years? The Communist victory of 1949 was the result of military and social policies that were set into motion after the defeats of the 1920s, and which marked a sharp break with past practice. Karl describes the flight of Communist cadres from Chiang's White Terror in 1927, and Mao's experiences thereafter in fending off GMD armies through guerrilla warfare. In 1930, after months of hard travelling and fighting, the embryonic Red Army set up base in Jiangxi, establishing what came to be called the Jiangxi Soviet. Here the CCP carried out literacy campaigns among the peasants and encouraged them to reorganize their village and redistribute land themselves. Party policies were to be rooted in 'meticulous analysis of the rhythms and structures of everyday peasant life', in the words Karl uses to describe Mao's 'Xunwu Report' of 1930.

Besieged by GMD forces, the CCP decided to abandon Jiangxi in 1934, starting the famous Long March to Yan'an. It was during the Long March, at the 1935 Zunyi Conference, that Mao's grouping took total power inside the CCP. He would now play a critical role in re-organizing the Party. The new leadership took two key decisions: a move to the countryside to rebuild and recuperate and, in effect, to ignore Moscow in practice while paying lip service in theory. An early test had come before Zunyi when the Comintern, embarking on its Third Period ultra-leftism, proclaimed that a new 'revolutionary high tide' was on its way. The Russian word *pod'em* denoted 'upsurge' or 'advance'. After a great deal of thought and discussion, Zhou Enlai translated it into Chinese as *gao-chao* or 'rising tide'. Mao, in poetic mode, responded in January 1930 with a pamphlet, *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*, in which he interpreted the Comintern phrase as follows:

It is like a ship far out at sea whose masthead can already be seen from the shore; it is like the morning sun in the east whose shimmering rays are visible from a high mountain top; it is like a child about to be born moving restlessly in its mother's womb.

The message was obvious. Nothing was going to happen immediately, but passivity in the face of defeat was not an option either. The poor peasants would henceforth replenish the Party, and from their ranks three mighty branches of the Red Army would be created. Apart from the fact that there was no other solution, this long gestation enabled Mao and his comrades to develop support mechanisms in the countryside that would remain for a long time to come. As has already been argued in these pages, these links explain and differentiate the trajectory of Chinese Communism from that of its Russian counterpart.

A unified China had been the big prize awaiting the nationalists and their friends abroad, but the Japanese invasion of 1937 and ensuing brutal occupation had exposed the weaknesses of orthodox Nationalism. A corrupt and collaborationist GMD had discredited itself, Chiang famously comparing the Japanese occupiers favourably to the Communists: the former were a curable disease, the latter a cancer that had to be destroyed. After 1941, the Nationalist armies began to haemorrhage soldiers and officers to the advancing Communist armies and partisans, under the joint political-military command of Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Peng Dehuai. The strategy Mao had laid out in such texts as 'On Guerrilla Warfare' (1937) and 'On Protracted War' (1938) was reaping rewards. From 1946 onwards, Chiang Kai-shek and the hard core of his demoralized army were pushed southwards, until they fled to Taiwan in late 1949—with the country's reserves and numerous other treasures they had looted from museums and the vaults of the Forbidden City. After two decades in the countryside, the Communists returned to the cities to be greeted as liberators by huge crowds in Beijing, Shanghai and Canton.

As Karl observes, the country the CCP inherited had first been wrecked by the Japanese and later by the civil war: commerce had been destroyed, the national currency was now worthless, a barter economy was taking root. 'Portions of the urban intelligentsia and technologically proficient elites had fled with the GMD, leaving cities without administration and institutions without management.' The decay and defeat of the old order had left behind a desolate countryside, and there was massive

unemployment in the cities. The tasks facing Mao and his comrades were enormous. No theory, however sophisticated, can offer a catechism of solutions to deal with such a crisis. The Party–army built by Mao and the cluster around him played a huge part in restoring a semblance of order in the early 1950s. Help from elsewhere was limited: the USSR was itself in ruins, though aid and technicians were grudgingly provided after Mao’s first visit to Moscow in 1949–50.

In Washington, Truman and, later, the Dulles brothers thoughtlessly assumed that Mao’s victory had strengthened the Communist monolith, and that henceforth China would be little more than Stalin’s satrapy. But before the realization of their error dawned, they attempted a costly and risky containment. With UN cover, General MacArthur moved to prevent the Korean Communists from taking power over the whole peninsula, which had been liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. The Communists were driven to the North, and thousands of civilians were massacred in the process. When full-scale war began in 1950, Chinese leaders went to aid the besieged North Koreans. Their help was decisive. Commanded by Peng Dehuai, a brilliant military strategist, the Chinese expeditionary force drove the Americans back to the South, securing the PRC’s borders. US military bases, however, remained in South Korea to protect clients, while North Korea survived, mutating slowly into a kind of Stalinist Ruritania.

Karl gives admirably succinct accounts of the main tensions and debates that ran through the Maoist period—the opposition between bureaucracy and revolution, disagreements over developmental paths, relations between Party, army and masses. Political thought is always at the centre of the discussion. Maoist theory, where it differed completely from Stalinist orthodoxy, could be summarized thus: mass revolutionary consciousness plus mass activity equals self-emancipation and social transformation. It was derived from daily contact with the people during the protracted war against Japan and the GMD. The ‘mass line’ as argued by Mao privileged ‘the masses’ in helping to both refine and define theory. The implication was that the masses could overcome all obstacles. This was fine in relation to war—though even here the GMD’s defeat would have been unthinkable without the Japanese invasion—but was such a practice possible in peacetime? Can mass activity override the problems posed by material socio-economic structures such as a weak industrial base? Karl rejects the charge of ‘voluntarism’ that many critics—friendly and otherwise—have levelled against Maoism, preferring to stress the way in which Mao’s thought ‘reversed the determinations’ of orthodox Marxism. But here her case is at its weakest, as the subsequent evolution of China was to reveal.

The Great Leap Forward that led to the 1959–61 famine and the death of at least 15–20 million peasants was certainly the result of voluntarism. In a push for self-reliance, rural areas were partially industrialized in uncoordinated, uneven fashion, while Mao’s exhortation to overtake the US and UK in steel production brought forth a rash of backyard furnaces, which withdrew huge quantities of labour from the fields. The awful consequences were unintended, unlike the famines in British colonial times in Ireland and Bengal; but this was no consolation for the families of those who perished. Mao was shaken when he finally heard of the scale of the disaster, but it was too late to do anything by then. How was it that Mao and his colleagues were so easily deceived by fake statistics despatched by pliant Party bureaucrats in the countryside to show that the Great Leap was going well? Karl writes that ‘Maoism gone horribly awry was at the root of the problems’, but the process through which this took place remains underexplored.

One of the tragedies of world communism was that most of the parties it spawned came of age and became mass organizations during the 1930s and 40s. By this time the early traditions of dissent and debate within the Bolshevik Party had been suppressed and most of their participants—including 90 per cent of those who served Lenin’s Central Committee—brutally exterminated. The model that new Communists imbibed was the one they encountered in Moscow: a social dictatorship of the Party/bureaucracy that was master of all public life and sustained by institutionalized networks of

repression. This was the system put in place when they came to power or even within parties active in the capitalist and colonial worlds. The stifling of debate weakened both Party and state. Karl documents instances of this within the CCP even before it had taken power, such as the Party Rectification campaign of 1941–42, which she sees as the ‘beginnings of the Mao cult’. In the 1950s, there were repeated attempts to root out ‘counter-revolutionaries’, most notably in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957–58. However, the post-revolutionary Chinese leadership largely avoided Stalinist-style purges and mass killings of their own cadres and members. As Karl observes, ‘unlike the Stalinist purges, where a knock at the door after midnight heralded doom, in Maoist China, doom came through words, in newspapers and wall posters.’ One reason for the difference was that most of the slavish pro-Comintern leaders had already been removed—the last of them defeated by a clash of arms prior to the Long March.

Mao’s version of the Stalinist structure was supposedly based on the collective popular will, aroused by the revolution. But how long can such structures survive without mediations—representative institutions through which different interpretations of the popular will can be discussed and voted upon? This has nothing to do with mimicking the West, but is actually the most efficient and painless method of putting the people in touch with their rulers via elected representatives who are permanently accountable and can be recalled by the electors at any time. Had such a system existed, the famine would not have taken place and the backyard furnaces might have been dismantled soon after the experiment began. What might the ‘popular will’ have said about the mountains of corpses that decorated the countryside after the mass famine?

When the Party leaders eventually gathered at Lushan in late 1959 to discuss the ongoing tragedy, they were in self-critical mode, including Mao. But it was his old comrade from Hunan, Peng Dehuai, who confronted Mao and his commandist methods, which had isolated the Party from the people. For this he was removed from all his posts and exiled; Lin Biao replaced him as Defence Minister. Nonetheless, one important outcome of the calamity—soon exacerbated by the Sino-Soviet split—was that the party leadership effectively sidelined Mao. His revenge came in 1966 when, in characteristic style, he appealed to the country’s youth to ‘bombard the Party headquarters’ with criticisms, to ‘create great disorder under the heavens’ so as to ‘restore order’. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a striking demonstration of the ‘mass line’. Mao became the god-emperor of the movement, with Lin Biao as his loyal deputy; the Little Red Book became the movement’s only catechism.

The principal aim was to take back power—though Karl also highlights the anti-bureaucratic impulse behind it, as well as the ‘attempt to seize politics—the power of culture and mass speech for revolution.’ Mao had discarded his responsibility for securing an enduring political structure for China and allowed his judgement to be superseded by the passions, emergencies and triumphs of the power struggle. In the process he and his followers dehumanized their opponents: senior Party leaders, except for Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao, were denounced as ‘capitalist-roaders’; Liu Shaoqi was mistreated; Peng Zhen, the once-powerful Mayor of Beijing, and numerous others were publicly denigrated in front of large crowds; Deng Xiaoping was sent to repair tractors in rural Jiangxi. Hysterical children confronted their parents and denounced them as traitors; teachers and professors were humiliated, universities closed down, ancient treasures publicly destroyed; and Mao was back at the helm.

Examples of the mindless militancy and fanaticism of the GPCR are too numerous to recount, but its contradictory aspects are usually underplayed. When I interviewed some ex-Red Guards in Hong Kong, they described how they had felt liberated and had soon moved on from the Little Red Book and read, written and circulated critical texts that challenged Mao and found his works insufficient. Sending urban dwellers to the countryside undoubtedly gave this generation an idea of how ordinary people there lived and worked. Karl emphasizes the exhilarating effect of this new-found mobility on

many thousands of young people. Much of this made a deep impact, as films and novels subsequently revealed.

But in the summer of 1967, Mao called in the army to restore order, performing an about-face when the revolutionary upsurge began to pose a threat to the CCP itself. Mao's final years were marked by a series of developments signalling a turn in favour of the 'capitalist-roaders' at home and the 'paper tigers' abroad: rapprochement with Washington and Nixon's visit in 1972, followed by the return of Deng Xiaoping—the cat with many lives—to political office in 1974. These paved the way for the great transformation that was to follow after Mao's death. Karl concludes by exploring the fate of Mao's legacies, hailed in Party ideology but reversed in political and economic practice. She observes that 'only in repudiating Maoism and everything Mao stood for is it possible for the current Communist Party leaders to retain Mao as their fig leaf of legitimacy.' One of the merits of Karl's book is that it permits a serious discussion of all these issues. It will be interesting to see how it is received in China, where the official view is that Mao's achievements far outweigh his mistakes—by a ratio of 70:30, according to the official Central Committee report of 1981. As Chinese capitalism proceeds further, creating even more social and economic disparities, perhaps some of Mao's ideas might be deployed by the insurgent masses as they seek to storm the heavens once again.

**Tariq Ali**

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**P.S.**

\* From New Left Review 66, November-December 2010:

[http://newleftreview.org/?view=2874&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=nlr66](http://newleftreview.org/?view=2874&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=nlr66)

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**Footnotes**

[1] Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, Duke University Press: Durham, nc 2010, \$21.95, paperback 216 pp, 978 0 8223 4795 8