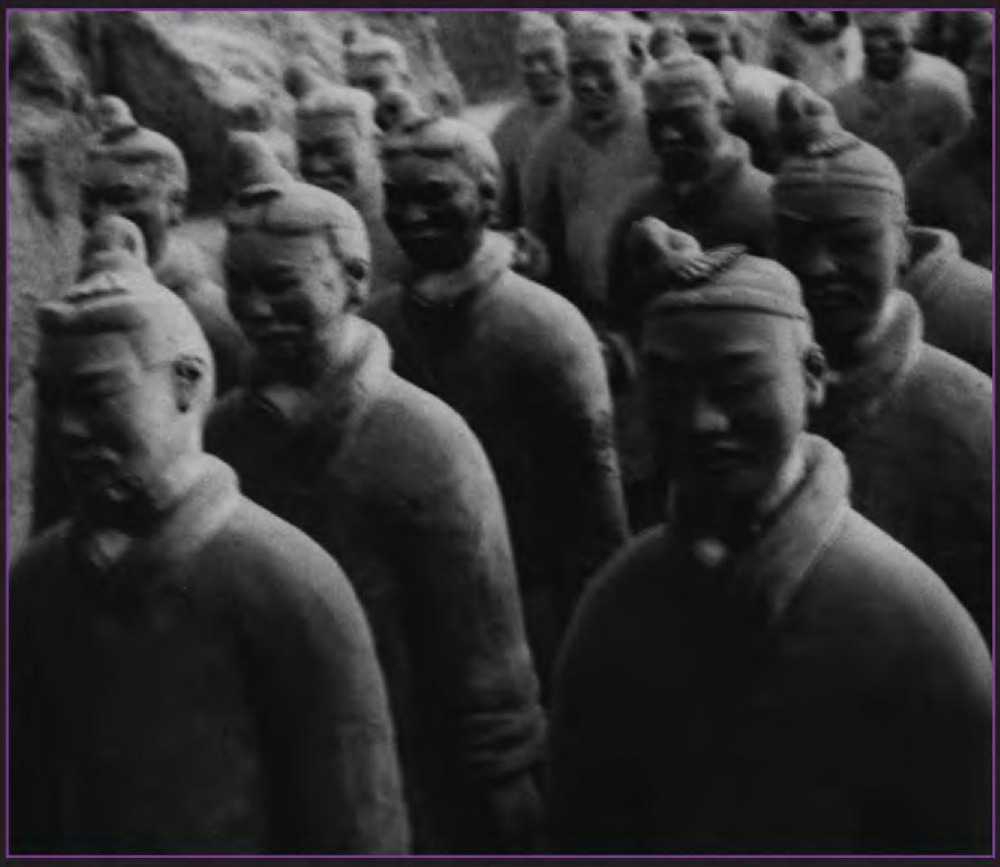
CHINA

A MACRO HISTORY



RAY HUANG

TURN OF THE CENTURY EDITION

Turn of the Century Edition

CHINA

A MACRO

HISTORY

RAY HUANG

An East Gate Book

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

An East Gate Book

First published 1997 by M.E. Sharpe

Published 2015 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Illustration by the author.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Huang, Ray.
China : a macrohistory / Ray Huang.—Rev. ed.
p. cm.
"An East gate book."
Includes index.
ISBN 1-56324-730-5 (cloth : alk. paper).
ISBN 1-56324-731-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. China—History. I. Title.
DS735.H785 1997
951—dc21
96-51941
CIP

ISBN 13: 9781563247316 (pbk)
ISBN 13: 9781563247309 (hbk)

Contents

Maps and Chronological Charts

Map Sketches

Chronological Charts

This page intentionally left blank

Preface to the Turn of the Century Edition

China: A Macro History was first published in November 1988. Most of the material was drafted two or three years earlier. My trip to Harbin in 1987 (see below) enabled me to put some finishing touches on it. Suffice it to say that the book is ten years old. Pressure has built up to revise it.

Indeed, a great deal has taken place in the past decade. Only six months after the book came off press, there was the Tiananmen massacre or incident, depending on how you look at it. Since then there has been the annual debate on China's trade status in Congress. Issues over human rights have been raised often. China's arms sales and copyright infringements caused further disputes. Last year, the presidential election in Taiwan became a point of contention. The firing of missiles into the Formosan strait by the People's Liberation Army created momentary international tensions. But the Chinese economy continued to make double-digit advances. All over the country, millions of new personal computers have appeared, many linked to the internet. There is sufficient material for not only revising one book, but also for writing several new ones.

All this creates a serious dilemma for me and for *China: A Macro History.*

The reader must keep in mind that the concept of a "macrohistory" is similar to what is called a "mega-trend"; it deals with the general direction, not all the specific details. If I have mentioned that "a medieval town can change its skyline rapidly and dramatically, often in just

a few years" (p. xxi), but "behind the main thoroughfare of the city, the back alleys remain unpaved and contain water puddles even during the dry season" (p. xxiii), the description should also apply to speedy construction and growth and the difficulties of coordination in numerous other areas.

Furthermore, the latest policy of the United States toward China is that of engagement. Instead of bombarding Chinese officials with numerous questions to which they cannot find adequate answers, the Clinton administration, apparently with congressional support, wishes to maintain a candid dialogue with the Chinese leadership, asking them to define China's nascent power in the forthcoming century. This is to admit that their power is legitimate and inevitable, and we welcome it to steer a clear course in harmony with our own pursuit. If anyone leafs through my original text and pays attention to the sentence "for the broadminded reader, the Chinese success is at once an American accomplishment" (p. 294), he or she should realize that the author could not have supported this policy with more fervent enthusiasm.

But *China: A Macro History* is by no means a political tract. It draws this conclusion with historical justification and consistency. The text cites the Confucian doctrine of "self-restraint and mutual deference" eight times, spread over a historical span of more than 2,500 years. It recognizes that China has made a "breakthrough" and the Chinese revolution is "reaching a settlement"; but with all this the country and people will continue to face problems, to the extent that "no one can enumerate all such future prospects" (p. 294). For verification of what is said, *China: A Macro History* encourages its readers to take the perspective of an enlightened tourist to see the places for themselves and to compare the text with visual images.

With all this in view, I really do not need to prepare a revision. Why should I water down a thesis, which is currently in vogue, and add diversions to it whose connections with macro-history are far from certain at this point?

But before reaching a final decision, further clarification of the author's standpoint might be useful.

A half century ago when I invoked the Refugee Relief Act to apply for permanent residence in the United States, my feelings toward Chinese affairs were negative and uncertain. (U.S. citizenship was taken eighteen years later.) Dazed by our losing of the civil war, cut off from my mother and sister, and aggravated by what seemed to be a Sino-Soviet combi-

nation set on disturbing the peace of the world, I had reason to feel pessimistic.

But decades later, like everybody else's, my view toward China and the Chinese, the country of my origin and my people, has taken more than one drastic turn. For her part, China herself has made astounding changes. My modification of attitude was not done without a considerable soul-searching, however. In pursuit of my studies, I too paid a price.

First, as a student of history at the University of Michigan, I had to study Chinese history in the Western format. For the first time in my life I began to realize that the same material could be rearranged so differently. Especially when I read late Professor John K. Fairbank's eye opener, *The United States and China,* I was amazed by the amount of information it incorporated, some already familiar to me and some completely unheard of, and, above all, I was struck by a great number of items which we had taken for granted while in China but given new meanings by the dean of modern Chinese history.

After receiving my Ph.D., I worked, through the good offices of Professor William Theodore de Bary, for a half year in 1967 for the Ming Biographical Project under the editorship of Professor L. Carrington Goodrich. In Kent Hall at Columbia University, I was greatly encouraged and inspired by Fu Hsien-sheng, as we called Professor Goodrich. Still reacting to what seemed to be the senseless turmoil in China, I, like many Chinese emigrés at the time, felt troubled and ashamed by the dismal news repeatedly coming from the other side of the Pacific. But Goodrich, who as a six-year old had endured along with his missionary parents the horrifying siege in Beijing by the Boxers, never lost his faith in the goodness of the Chinese people and the admirable qualities of China's cultural tradition. He could turn angry if anyone's questions on those qualities went too far or were unreasonably and unfairly harsh.

Still, my greatest opportunity came in 1972. A few months after Nixon and Zhou Enlai toasted each other in the Great Hall of the People, I took my family to Cambridge, England, when I was to assist Dr. Joseph Needham on his ambitious research project on the history of science in China. I had already been in correspondence with him for several years. Needham, then Master of Gonville and Caius College, was puzzled by the question of why China, historically a forerunner among the world's great civilizations, would somewhere between 1450

and 1600 begin to slip, until she was completely outdistanced by Western Europe. The Master was renowned as a sinophile. But this question of his was entirely objective. My work was to seek answers within the socioeconomic arena.

Burdened with his own research still in progress and the administrative matters of Caius, Needham encouraged me to read by myself everything and anything on file in his office, including "leads and tips" from his friends and colleagues that were in any way connected with his "big riddle." Only on each Saturday afternoon would he and I meet to talk things over, usually with a walk along the banks of the Cam River which rarely lasted for less than an hour and a half.

The Master was a full head taller than I; yet he adjusted the pace of his long legs to suit mine. With endless curiosity and enthusiasm that was occasionally mixed with pedantry, he would stop here and there to admire the plants and flowers en route, caressing the petals and pronouncing their names in Latin. At other times he would explain to me how the Roman Road cut through the town and where Cromwell trotted his horse to Huntingdon, 20 miles away. Gradually I sensed that he built up his system mainly through an inductive rather than deductive method. Eventually the thousands of strands of loose ends had to be tied together. On one of those occasions he told me that as he saw it, in the Western world, Reformation, Renaissance, and the development of capitalism come as a "package." One thing leads to another.

In his file cabinet were numerous kinds of leads, some neatly typed, others handwritten. There was Wittfogel's theory of hydraulic society. There was archaeologist Cheng Te-kun's proposal that Needham should line up ten major inventions in the world, construct a profile of the socioeconomic environment for each case, and then make analyses and comparisons. But the piece that caught my attention most was the comment by Homer Dubs, the translator of the *Han-shu.* He considered that Dr. Needham had asked the wrong question: You are asking why modern science did *not* originate in China, aren't you? *But a negative question would not bring forth a positive answer.* He never elaborated further. The piece of advice ended there.

But such episodes and bits of enlightenment eventually led me to burrow deeply into the question of how capitalism made its start in Western Europe, not to follow the steps of Marx or Weber, nor even of Dobb or Braudel, but all by ourselves, starting from the grain market on the Ouse River and the first turnpike built in East Anglia. Thereafter

I made five more trips to Europe. In time I lost the financial support of the National Science Foundation because my preliminary grant had been made on the basis that I would concentrate on China. The administrators of the Foundation were quite sympathetic with my amended proposal and willing to gamble on my work; but the reviewing panel turned it down. Two panelists considered it presumptuous for someone to say that in order to fully understand modern Chinese history one must at first visualize what is missing in that country, yet before one can canvas the records of Western Europe for an answer one must also profess to know a lot about China. One of them charged me with having abandoned the original purpose of my research, to which I had no adequate defense.

Since my findings now form a part of this present book (the references are again cited in the bibliography) there is no need to tell the story in full here. But in brief, capitalism is a confusing and abused word. In reality, as the world enters the modern era, most countries under internal and external pressure need to reconstruct themselves by substituting the mode of governance rooted in agrarian experience with a new set of rules based on commerce. Since commercial distribution focuses on exchange, all economic and social components within the society must accordingly be made interchangeable before the law.

This is always easier said than done. The renewal process could affect the top and bottom layers, and inevitably it is necessary to recondition the institutional links between them. Comprehensive destruction is often the order; and it may take decades to bring the work to completion. With few exceptions, the movement, mass in scale, starts with ideological agitations but ends with an economic settlement. Egalitarianism, needed for stirring up the zeal and impetus of the movement, in the end has to satisfy itself with no more than a pledge for equal opportunity. A rational balance of the nascent and surviving social and economic forces under a new set of laws is to be held supreme; it marks the conclusion of the struggle.

Moral judgment on individuals is of doubtful value, and sometimes it may obscure truth or mislead the search for it, because the primary process under review is the working of a melting pot; in it the impersonal factors must at first be given full recognition. In the early part of the present century Maurice Ashley wrote a book entitled *Oliver Cromwell: The Conservative Dictator.* His relentless indictment of the Lord Protector went into great detail. But later he established himself

as a Cromwell authority by reversing his position with a work of far more vision, *The Greatness of Oliver Cromwell.*

Similarly, until World War I, Alphonse Aulard and Albert Mathiez were locked in an intense debate on who was the hero and who was the villain of the French Revolution—Danton or Robespierre? But after Georges Lefebvre, few would have the patience to bear with such stereotypes. Lefebvre said that while moralists give praise and hand out condemnations, they fail to offer adequate explanations as to what happened. In other words, they are championing their brand of idealism at the expense of fact-finding.

I have a book on all this (see the bibliographic note). But *China: A Macro History* takes full advantage of my years of exploring and browsing.

In 1974, still busy with my search for clues from worldwide experience that might help to explain what happened in China, I began to sense, vaguely at first, that the protracted revolution in China was about to have run its course, because what was occurring in that country appeared to come gradually closer to the Western precedents. With the assistance of the National Council on the U.S.-China Trade, I organized a "Trade-with-China Seminar" on the College of New Paltz campus where I taught. The idea was to make an attempt to prepare our undergraduates with courses in language, history, economics, and business administration to take advantage of the imminent opening door to China. The meeting was held, discussion took place, but the aftermath was utterly disappointing. One of my colleagues would not abandon his interest in Mao Zedong thought; another argued that China must put her emphasis on agriculture first before venturing seriously into industry and commerce. The vice president in charge of public services of a large corporation whom I had asked for help invited me to lunch. When I asked him to pry China open with trade, "A poor agricultural country," he answered in a sad tone, "there aren't too many things to trade for."

In the meanwhile our student enrollment in Chinese studies dwindled. The college first removed my courses in Chinese history from the distribution requirement toward graduation, and then it closed the Chinese studies program altogether. On a spring day in 1979 I received notification of the termination of my teaching job.

The only thing good about it is that since then I have been able to concentrate on my writing without seeking anyone's prior approval,

even though many times on meager rations. Before Doug Merwin came along, I had collected quite a few rejection slips.

Oh yes, there was the students' demonstration at Tiananmen.

Since *China: A Macro History* was published only months before the bloodletting, and I was in China in 1987, a reviewer for *Chinese-American Forum* of Maryland charged me for being "insensitive" toward the students who had been making demands on and off for some time. What was unknown to him was that by then convinced that China's revolution was running in the right course and the fulfillment of its objective was in sight, I indeed had not paid much attention to the sporadic demonstrations prior to 1989. But the events at Tiananmen did disturb me.

I was afraid that a mass demonstration at this point, with neither a specific aim nor a clearly defined platform, would do more harm than good. Furthermore, having some knowledge of the public psychology of the Chinese, I had to fight the premonition that the students were courting disaster when their holdout on the square extended over weeks. In mid-May I finally wrote an appeal of 7,000 words, urging the demonstrators to narrow down their aim and to seek an early settlement. After I conferred with Liang Heng, the publisher of *The Chinese Intellectual* in New York, the article was mailed to Dai Qing of the *Guangming Daily* in Beijing on May 17, in the hope that she might be able to publish it. But before we ever heard from her, there came the stacatto blasts of machineguns and tongues of flame on troop carriers, transmitted on every TV set. As a result, the Sino-American relationship was strained for years.

We knew that Dai Qing did go to the Square to ask the hunger-strikers to return to their campuses. We knew that regardless, she was imprisoned afterward. For some time Liang Heng and I were afraid that my unsolicited manuscript might have caused her trouble. But to my surprise she came to my home for a visit three years ago, expressing no displeasure for my sending her the suspicious message at an inopportune moment. I could never claim that she and I agree on everything, yet she was gracious enough to read both *China: A Macro History* and my book on capitalism and tried to place them with mainland Chinese publishers, as if she still owed me something for distributing my writing to Chinese readers. (As it turned out, my publisher in Taipei had made a prior arrangement with another house.)

Indeed, compared with the sacrifices of others, the few bruises I suf-

fered here and squawkings heard there are not even worth mentioning. But I have at least gone through an endurance test. To this day *China: A Macro History* is still the only book in the field upholding the *long-term rationality of history* in its full length. As an eyewitness to the Chinese revolution, I can testify that an ideal solution satisfying every individual is impossible. The present outcome has already surprised and shocked numerous early participants. As a foreign observer, I have also gone to the remotest corners of the world to seek criteria for comparison. What happens now is a settlement. Some forty years ago when I became a serious student of history, I had not the faintest idea that I would write the present book. But when all the bits of information are melded into a grand synthesis, the result carries the unmistakable message that we all need to accept the final arbitration of history. For this reason, I do not wish to put forth any disclaimer to diminish the usefulness of this volume.

China: A Macro History has already been adapted for class reading in many colleges and academies. The Chinese version, since its publication in Taipei in late 1993, continues to circulate well. Its Japanese translation has gone into a second printing. The Korean edition, having been in preparation for some time, will come out soon. I have just seen the proofs of the mainland Chinese edition in simplified characters. Mr. Shen Changwen, formerly of Sanlian publishers and the *Dushu Monthly,* has been trying hard for years to bring forth such an edition. As editor of *Dushu,* he also reprinted chapter 20 in the August 1993 issue of his eminent magazine.

Grateful for such assistance and support, and in view of their difficulties, technical and otherwise, Doug and I decided not to disturb the text of the original issue, including the preface to the 1988 edition, except for a few minor corrections that apply to the earlier chapters only. Additions such as this preface and a short bibliographical essay are incorporated to strengthen and support what was said in the original. The epilogue of the 1990 edition is omitted, because its content is now combined with the new conclusion, "Observations at the Closing of the Century," which at this moment appears only with the American edition.

I thank my friends at M.E. Sharpe for their effort to make this edition more attractive.

R.H.
August 21, 1996

Original Preface to the 1988 Edition

This is a book of current interest.

I have just returned from a short visit to China, my country of origin, after an absence of thirty-eight years. The last time that I was in Manchuria was in the spring of 1946. Then a junior staff officer in Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army, I was with the troops pushing toward Harbin, recently evacuated by the Soviets. On the way we were blocked by Marshal Lin Biao's forces and learned firsthand and with horror what a "human sea attack" was like. Forty one years later, I finally made it to the city, this time as a guest speaker addressing a historians' convention.

In Beijing I was treated to a duck dinner by General Cheng Zihua, a hero of the Long March whose hands had both been, rather freakishly, deformed by a single rifle bullet. In Harbin I was entertained by Professor Xu Lanxu, president of Heilongjiang University. During the banquet I had the good fortune to be seated close to Mr. Zhang Xianglin, commissioner of Cultural Affairs of Heilongjiang. When I revealed to him my Kuomintang (Nationalist) background he told me that that was also the party affiliation of his elder brother. But in 1946 he himself was mobilizing the local population for the Northeast Union Democratic Army, later a part of the People's Liberation Army. Our comparing of notes about the old days went on so well that he promised to call on me during his forthcoming trip to the United States, so that we could continue. The lieutenant-governor of Heilongjiang in charge of education, Mr. Jing Baiwen, took me for a ride across town.

When I said that I was a graduate of the Kuomintang's Central Military Academy, generally known as Whampoa, he lost no time in telling me that so were both his parents. Mrs. Jing in particular holds the rare distinction of having been with the Women's Detachment in Wuhun. It must be noted that throughout the history of the academy it issued no more than 200 diplomas to female cadets, all from the Class of 1927. I then added that my father, Huang Zhenbai, was a member of the Allied Association, the revolutionary group organized by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in the pre-Republican era that was the forerunner of the Kuomintang. Mr. Jing responded that so was his grandfather.

With our revolutionary genealogy spelled out and laid down, reminiscence inevitably led to nostalgia. It seemed that we, like our forefathers before us, had grossly underestimated the length and breadth and complexity of a business called revolution. But looking back, how enchanting it was. With a full head of thick hair shining under the morning sun and regardless of what political indoctrination was in one's head, one could indulge in thinking that world affairs could be reshaped to his liking with just a little exertion on his part. A little more effort is all it takes! Decades later, the effort and exertion have given way to misery and nightmare, and our simple naïveté has been transformed into a labyrinth of confusion. Few of us, even the most undaunted, could have come out of it unperturbed, if still unscathed.

Yet 1987 is not another year of disillusionment. All indications are that the longest revolution in the world has come to a fruitful conclusion. China is now experiencing a genuine reign of peace, for the first time in her modern history. Time has assuaged the agony that came with war and upheaval. Foes of the past can now regard one another with not only sympathy but also admiration because they begin to see the long-term rationality of history, which has superseded revolutionary rhetoric of all kinds, and is by itself larger than the worlds of Mao and Chiang combined. It is in the same spirit that I, a non-Marxist historian and a naturalized citizen of the United States, can feel comfortable speaking before an assembly of scholars coming from all parts of China.

For me there is no better assurance of a settlement than a rendezvous I had with former friends of my youthful years. In 1938 I worked for a tabloid in Changsha called the *War of Resistance.* Its editor-

in-chief was playwright Tian Han, whose "Volunteers' March" is now the national anthem of the People's Republic. But during the months I was with the paper Uncle Tian, participating in the general mobilization in Wuhan, had left the editorial responsibility to Liao Mosha, who was also my roommate. In those days we shared the business with scissors and paste along with bits of street-side reporting in addition to proofreading in the composing room without bothering to clarify who was responsible for what. Another worker in the office, still in his early teens, was Tian Hainan, Tian Han's son. As war with Japan engulfed the inland provinces, *War of Resistance* ceased publication and we parted ways. But Hainan and I went together to enroll in the military academy, then in exile in Chengdu.

About thirty years later, I learned to my dismay that Uncle Tian had died in prison, succumbing as one of the early victims of the Cultural Revolution. Mosha had achieved the prominence of being one of the three satirical writers whose joint column in a journal enraged Chairman Mao and had touched off the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the first place. But for years to come, no one knew of Liao's whereabouts. Until his release from farm labor in 1979 few were even aware that he was still alive. (He is the only survivor of the three.) Upon graduation from the military academy, Hainan and I served as platoon leaders in the same 14th Nationalist Division, and later we were transferred together to the Chinese Army in India. But after V-J Day he voluntarily went over to Kalgan and subsequently made substantial contributions to the People's Liberation Army by designing training programs for its artillery and armored forces. Unfortunately, as his father was under criticism he too fell into disgrace and found himself imprisoned. Although rehabilitated a dozen years later, his early discharge from the service has hardly rectified an act of injustice which caused him and his family to suffer so much.

During our reunion in Beijing all the barriers of the past vanished. We could talk about the old days as well as recent days without any urge to evade an issue or dodge an answer. Amazingly, we managed to recapture a great deal of the "lost decades" in a matter of hours. The differences between and among ourselves were neutralized by the common understanding that after all, life is far more complicated than any of us had anticipated. I congratulated Mosha for having become such a celebrity, now that his name appears around the world in all the

textbooks on the history of contemporary China. He replied nonchalantly: "Jiang Qing made it so." Hainan told me that he is determined to brush up on his English. He must be thinking that there are pursuits other than the armed forces.

Both of them looked younger than their age. How could they be so serene, to be able to shake off with scorn the ill-treatment that they had so wrongly received, instead of sinking themselves in self-pity and rancor? Then I remembered that revolution is a mass movement, and as such it provides little room for individual justice. Once one becomes reconciled with the historical act, one need not be contentious with the agents of history.

In any case, the release of a volume called the *Chronology of the Major Events Concerning the Chinese Communist Party,* also occurring during my stay in Beijing, should soothe somewhat those whose bitter memories of the troublesome past decades have not yet subsided. This book never spares praise of Mao Zedong wherever it is due; but it also lays the blame for the Cultural Revolution at the feet of the chairman himself. He planned the sequence of events and set traps for his comrades-at-arms. Those whose loved ones died or suffered for the Nationalist cause may feel equally comforted. In the past, partisan Communist propaganda created the impression that the Kuomintang forces, achieving nothing but evil deeds and aiming at preserving their own strength only, dealt with the Japanese halfheartedly. This volume puts the total Chinese casualties as a result of the war with Japan at twenty-one million. Of that number, 600,000 came from the Communist armed forces, while six million were civilians in the territories under their control. What is not stated bears silent testimony to the role played by the Nationalist Army; it could not have been inactive or minor. Turning back to Mao, the *Chronology* points out that his tomb was constructed against his expressed wish, thus arguing that his memorial in front of the Tiananmen Square should never have been built.

In my memory, no Chinese regime, imperial or republican, ancient or modern, has ever spoken of its leader with such candor and shown so much willingness to rectify itself. Incidentally, because the *Chronology* was prepared by the Party's history section, it should exert some influence on Chinese politics in the foreseeable future.

The openness is not universal, however. I cannot say that I never ran into strained situations during my weeks in China. The hard line ideology was still there. Back in New York and still under the spell of

jet lag, I was awakened every morning by my wife Gayle; she wanted me to watch with her NBC's "Today" show, which had sent the Pauley-Gumbel-Scott team to China for a whole week. After saying many good things about China and the Chinese, at the conclusion of the program the host and hostess wondered why so many people were still afraid to speak up, and along the same line, why so many middle-echelon bureaucrats had to block the path of free communication, knowing that the eyes of the world were on them.

Indeed, why? This book does not endeavor to answer all the questions. Instead, it provides background information that may lead to a variety of answers. If it does not come specifically to a point on the contemporary scene, it should enable the reader to form his or her own opinions on general areas.

When we say that the Chinese revolution has come to a conclusion, we mean only that the period of trying to solve problems with bloodshed and violence has ended. In no sense do we suggest that China is entering into a problem-free era. On the contrary, at this moment China is facing an immense number of problems, many of them of an unprecedented scope.

An inspiring scene that any tourist in China cannot possibly overlook these days is the construction boom. In the cities, buildings were at first erected in blocks, then on whole acres, and lately they are even beginning to till up entire square miles. A medieval town can change its skyline rapidly and dramatically, often in just a few years. Most of the high rises are not commercial buildings, but public housing for government workers. The apartments are leased to the tenants at nominal fees. My friend Liao Mosha's family, for instance, occupies an apartment situated only two blocks from Tiananmen Square. It has two bedrooms, a sitting-room/study, a dining room, a kitchen that is only large enough for one person to freely turn around in, and a washroom that is equipped with a wash basin and a toilet bowl but no bathtub. There is a separate entrance. The monthly rent, including heating and other utilities, is sixty yuan *renminbi,* or at the current exchange rate something close to U.S.$16.

One may wonder how the land is requisitioned, what happens if the tenant is delinquent in the monthly payment or should lose his job, whether the right to occupancy is inheritable or not, what liabilities the contractors have in case of building hazards. Frankly, not all these

questions can be answered. In most cases they have not even been raised. The fact is that behind every issue there is the government; and the bureaucrats are having a hard time making decisions. The latest I heard in Beijing is that the housing authorities are contemplating raising rents to a level adequate to provide building maintenance, and that alone may hike some payments to six or seven times the current level—a line of action that is likely to run into resistance if not technical difficulties.

This dilemma is only one of the obstacles to the "going private" movement, which alone can alleviate the bureaucratic burden.

When construction is undertaken on such an unprecedented scale, inevitably there is congestion and imbalance. We have heard complaints about broken windows and dirty corridors in high-rise buildings, of coal piled up in the yard, depriving children of their only playground, of hotels three or four years old already beginning to show signs of wear and tear, and of everywhere public utilities and services being taxed to the breaking point. No wonder. Shanghai alone has three million bicycles. Every day its bus service handles fifteen million riders. More and more waste, in millions of tons, has to be discharged through the city's sewage system. Modernization has come to China en masse. (That is why tourists, paying their way with foreign exchange, have to be treated as a privileged group.)

Decades ago when I traveled on the Beijing-Tianjin Railway, I saw mountains of rubbish piled up, unmarked graves crowding the patches of vegetable gardens, and shanties whose tarpaulin tops had to be weighted down with rocks in order to withstand the dust storms of North China. This time I could see that most of the eyesores are gone. Some of the shanties are still there, but only rarely. Stretching into Manchuria, the clusters of red brick houses with chimneys and Western-style roof tiles, some with TV antennas, warm the visitor's heart. The fields are large and integrated. One can imagine the great human cost that the population has paid for all this—the end product of collectivity and discipline. Still, deviation has not been entirely rooted out. Not too far from the railroad tracks signs are posted which give warning: Taking topsoil from this spot is strictly forbidden.

In some cases the sprucing up of the cities is only superficial. The unbroken line of trees arrayed along both sides of the highway leading from Harbin to its airport, mile after mile with equal height and spacing, is an impressive sight indeed. I cannot recall ever seeing anything

like it anywhere else in the world. But behind the main thoroughfare of the city, the back alleys remain unpaved and contain water puddles even during the dry season. Orderliness as a social discipline also lessens when the stage is less public. The trams and buses in the national capital are always crowded. Passengers along the thoroughfares nevertheless queue up at the stops. But on Wangfujing Dajie, a mere two blocks away from the Beijing Hotel, it is everyone for himself; one has to fight his way aboard, the chaos providing an excellent hunting ground for pickpockets. Even though I had been forewarned of the situation, one that was not unfamiliar to me decades ago, I found reliving the experience difficult; I had thought that such things had been wiped clean by the revolution.

Yet, as discomfiting as the minor unpleasantness and inconveniences are, they are nothing compared to the red tape thrown around every transaction by the bureaucrats who, finding the changing world no less perplexing than we do, have to stick to their unchanging organizational logic in order to survive. It is not difficult to imagine the extent of irregularities in practice.

In sum, the China that we are dealing with is more a phenomenon and a movement than a settled entity. Robust with energy and never averted from experiment, it is by no means devoid of self-contradictions. We know that the mass has been stirred up, but we are not so sure where it is heading. Under the circumstances, it is most difficult to wrap up what one sees and hears with an opinionated theme. One is likely to be carried away by his first impression and sentiments.

The Institute for Development of the Research Center for Rural Development in Beijing is a very curious organization. It was started in 1979 by a group of young intellectuals who had been sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. Convinced that rural China is the prime mover of the country's progress, they undertook to study and research the subject. In time they received financial aid from the Ford Foundation. The work expanded and several members traveled overseas to gain experience. Finally, four years ago, their publications attracted the attention of the State Council, which invited them to become a part of that governmental organization. They accepted, and with a work force of fifty persons, they continue to conduct field studies and publish research bulletins. Their office is rented from, of all the possible landlords, the People's Liberation Army.

Some members of the institute had read my historical interpretation of the current developments in *Chinese Intellectual* and expressed interest in my work. I, in turn, became convinced that their approach to problems could widen my vision as a historian. A mutual friend in New York wrote to introduce us. On a September day four senior members from the institute, all in their thirties, came to my hotel for lunch.

No doubt about it, their chief concern about contemporary China is with the primary accumulation of capital, which has to be developed from the agrarian sector. They describe the policy of the Chinese government in the past as "a pair of scissors." On the one side it collected foodstuff from the peasantry at low prices; on the other it sold the same to city dwellers at abnormally low prices. In this way it managed to keep both farm wages and industrial wages at a very low level, thus achieving forced savings. What remains unsaid is that the plant and equipment currently in use are also the product of this national sacrifice, which, indirectly, has fueled the present construction boom. But, according to one author, the potential of this belt-tightening has already been used up. Another author goes so far as to say that the policy to deny the peasants freedom of movement, if it had not been discontinued, would have caused general uprisings.

They are unanimous in holding that the subsequent policy of contracting individual farmers for production is a move in the right direction. After the initial benefits, the well-to-do peasants can also move on to take up auxiliary trades and start rural industries, creating further opportunities. Within the short span of the six years between 1979 and 1985, the institute's publication points out, one out of every five Chinese peasants has "relocated himself, taken a new vocation, or changed his social status." Of course, numerous new problems arise in the course of these changes. Within the same time span, China's urban population registered a net increase of 127 million. The current trend to develop rural industries at a high debt ratio, while accelerating growth, tends also to subject the macro-economy to recessional influences. Mr. Wang Qishan, head of the institute, showed some concern over the reemergence of the disparity between the rich and the poor; but there is more concern about the unsettled property rights and the lack of coordination among the various projects amid the flurry of economic activities.

Our discussion confirmed a basic belief of mine: From the historian's point of view a breakthrough has been achieved by China.

The nation is shifting from the outdated agrarian-bureaucratic management to a mode of management by commercial principles, imperfect as it is at this point. Its whole domain is moving toward being mathematically managed, although just what the math is has yet to be determined. In such a milieu, the polemics over whether the Chinese are still within the fold of Communism or are on the threshold of capitalism become virtually meaningless. Those verbal archetypes of yesterday bear little semblance to current developments; their proponents' claims to exclusivity are even more absurd. We cannot see how the public sector of the national economy, so profound and so substantial, will or can fade into the background. On the other hand, private and semiprivate capital, just now being vigorously promoted and widely fostered to fill a vacuum, to form a secondary line and to provide services, are not being created in order to be taken over either. Above all, the current program, so massive and stupendous, will soon demonstrate its own characteristics. Future readjustments, therefore, are likely to be dictated more by technical instinct than ideological direction.

But, how can an issue of such paramount importance manage to escape wider discussion? How can thousands and millions of workers be engaged in this epoch-making task without being specifically told about it? I believe that the responsibility to speak up falls on historians of China, especially those of us who reside overseas unencumbered by any doctrinal line. In fact, a dispute over ideology is unnecessary. A recounting of Chinese history that makes a valid connection between the traditions of the past and the programs of the present is enough.

This book intends to accomplish just that.

Chinese history differs from the history of other peoples and other parts of the world because of an important factor: its vast multitudes. Its cross-section is denser. Owing to China's great mass, inner movement takes more time to be transmitted from one end to another. Its peasantry can only be maneuvered in blocks. Presiding over the land mass of the East Asian continent, the center of gravity of this enormous entity seems always to have been wrapped in some form of mysticism. In the imperial period as well as in the very recent past, practical problems had to be translated into abstract notions in order to be disseminated. In turn, at the local level the message had once again to be rendered into everyday language. Sometimes form counted more

than substance. For the bureaucracy operating under such a system, truth resided with authority; both had to move from the top downward.

In military affairs, too, geographical imperatives dictated that quantity outweigh quality. Sieges of walled cities often featured an endurance contest of some kind. Thus for general organization the Chinese tended to look to homogeneity and uniformity, and things unusual were rarely regarded with favor. The impracticality of reaching a ramified division of labor inhibited technical analysis and the development of civil law. The national economy followed the lead of tax administration. The state had reason to hold the entire country as a conglomeration of village communities wherein the ideal citizen was the small self-cultivator. The demand for simplicity precluded any sustained drive to promote local interests of a specific kind. For governance the bureaucrats relied on the penal code, whose essence changed little over two thousand years. When that was not enough, social discipline under the guidance of patriarchal authorities did the rest. Yet, as the ideal situation could rarely be maintained, the worst features of the system often precipitated in the village cells, with usurious exploitation and peasant indebtedness running rampant.

What can the historian do?

In view of the latest developments, I intend to reexamine the annals and chronicles with a longer vision and broader perspective, but to keep the aforementioned prototype in mind as a checklist. This approach forms the basis of *macro*history.

This is not to reduce the entire body of Chinese history to an uninspiring capsule and label it "Oriental despotism" or "authoritarian tradition." (To my mind, authors prone to use such terminology take too much time to express their own emotional reaction to historical development, at the expense of in-depth studies.) As the following chapters show, once accepting the above generalization as a condition imposed by the physical environment, the historian will see the heroes and heroines on the stage in an entirely different light. Indeed, despots there are too, and their lackeys. But on the whole the story will dispute the notion that the Chinese are completely happy with this setting and wish to perpetuate it. Even in different times and under different circumstances, they sought alternatives, albeit usually without success.

In fact, dynasties collapsed and emperors and ministers died tragically, sometimes taking along with them the women in their lives, because they were unable to live up to the requirements outlined in the

foregoing paragraphs. In constructing this study I have found that one can enumerate all the major and minor dynasties, cite the outstanding events, and name personalities of significance, while never abridging their intriguing dimensions and variety, and even branching out to discourse on philosophy and literature without leaving the everlasting conflict. This is to say that a volume built out of the unique features of the China theater can adequately embrace the entire length of Chinese history in an interesting sequence; it does not need to be a collection of anecdotes.

This book proceeds in such a fashion. Most of its contents run in parallel with those laid down by the traditional writers; but additional cases of illustration are also provided. When it comes to the exercising of the historian's judgment, we are our own masters. We alone benefit from the hindsight of the late twentieth century.

Essentially, this is to give a technical (not an ideological) emphasis to Chinese history and to update it to 1987. More than anything else, this perspective enables us to appreciate the enormous scope and profound meaning of the Chinese revolution, now that it is drawing to a close.

The reader must realize that by the end of the nineteenth century the traditional state and society left little to be salvaged. As a result, the Chinese revolution had to run a protracted and embittered course. In the end the bottom stratum of Chinese society had to be uprooted and turned over, pulling everything along with it, until a rational system of land utilization was in place. Egalitarianism, which in the past had been thought to be the utmost goal, happens to be only part of the motivation of the participants. In the end the historical purpose of the revolution is to break up the cellular structure of the villages so that a new state of interchangeability can be attained. Theoretically, at the end of the struggle the entire populace will have some equal opportunity for betterment. For the nation as a whole, nevertheless, the net benefit resides in the hope that soon its affairs can be monetarily managed, thus breaking the handicap of millenniums. Knowing what is likely in the past, I dare say that the final outcome is irreversible. It carries the convincing power of history.

Of course I could not have written this book in several weeks' time. In fact, it took more than several years to produce. Ever since I landed on the West Coast the second time in the autumn of 1952, I have been concerning myself with questions of Chinese history. (My first visit to the United States, to study military science at Fort Leavenworth, took

place immediately after my tour of duty in Manchuria in 1946.) Later, for fourteen years as an instructor at SUNY New Paltz, I periodically revised my lecture notes on the basic Chinese history course to keep pace with the latest developments. So, the study and reflection of several decades have gone into this volume.

By definition, any historical work is incomplete. For what it is worth, this little book represents no more than one man's observations of a large volume of events viewed from a crucial point in time, with its natural fallacies and limitations. But at its completion all the joy is mine because I believe that without erudite pretension of any kind, it will be accessible to the general reader, including beginners and tourists.

Aware of all possible inferences, I must say here that my cheerful note about the recent developments on the mainland bears no direct connection with my observations on Taiwan, which appear at the end of this book. Although it is not the role of the historian to make political predictions, under the present conditions I do not see how the "one country, two-systems" solution offered by the Chinese leaders can turn out to be anything else but a form of confederation. This belief is consistent with my publications on mainland China as well as in Taiwan.

Doug Merwin of M.E. Sharpe Inc. has spent a considerable amount of time improving the presentation of this book, for which I am grateful. But I alone am responsible for its errors and inadequacies.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank the American Council of Learned Societies for supplying airplane tickets for the travel mentioned in the opening paragraph, and the China Fund, which provided the ground support. The opinions I have expressed, of course, bear no connection with my gracious sponsors.

R.H.
October 15, 1987

CHINA
A MACRO
HISTORY

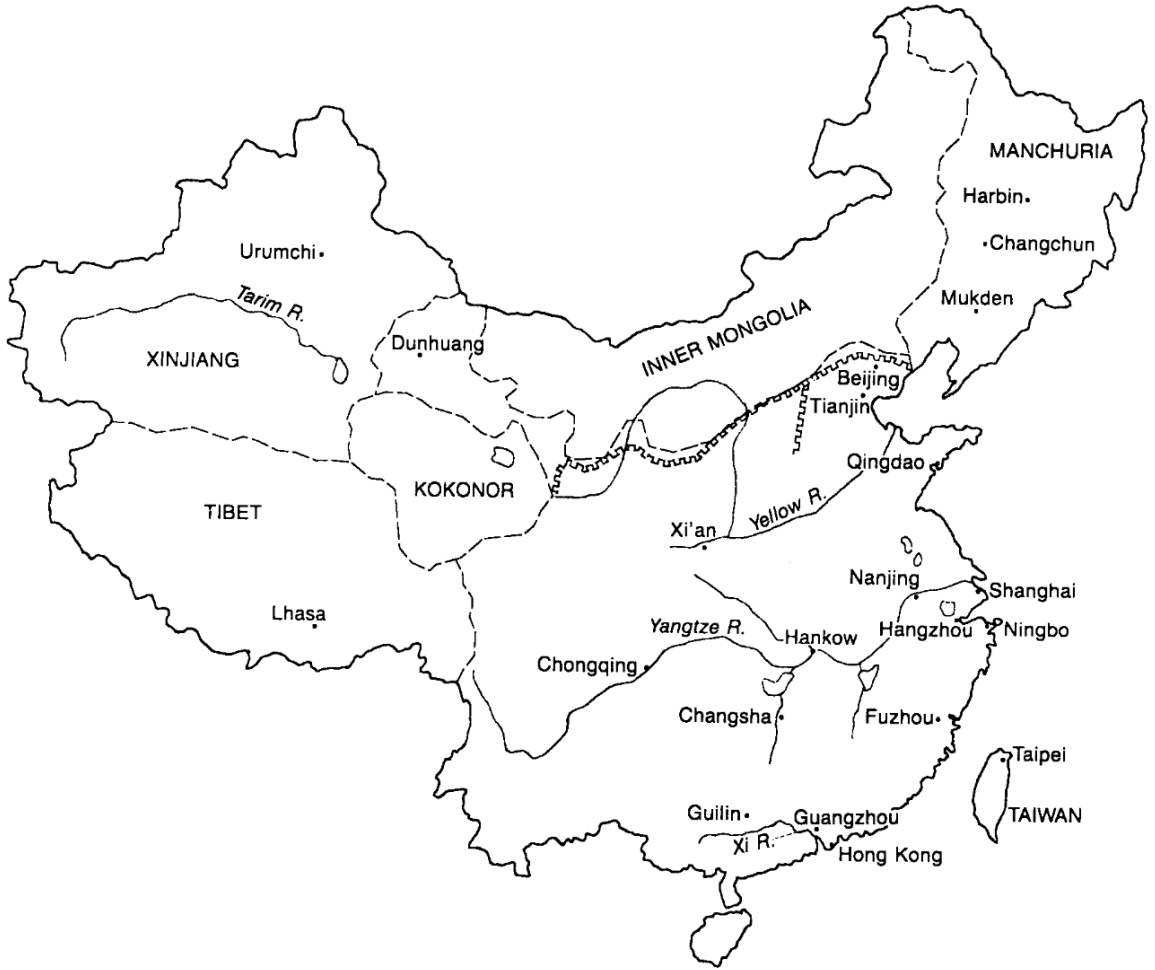



image
not
available

recent date) a Tang emperor's beautiful concubine, Yang Guifei, is said to have bathed. The then sovereign was a man of artistic inclinations; in fact he was the reputed originator of the Chinese opera. The woman he loved, who made Huaqing a memorable spot by dipping into the spring, was an accomplished musician and dancer. But their story ended tragically. When in 755 a frontier general staged a rebellion and turned his army against the capital in the name of "purifying the entourage around the throne," imperial troops refused to fight unless something was done about Yang Guifei. Besieged, the monarch allowed his favorite concubine to be strangled to death. The fun-loving emperor, now heartbroken, went into exile and ended his reign by abdicating to his son. The loneliness and remorse of his remaining years are captured by an imaginative contemporary poet, Bai Juyi, whose rhymed lines recount the slow drum-beating and bell-ringing inside the palace compound, where the sleepless Tang Ming-huang, as the retired emperor is known posthumously, watched lightning bugs flicker by and, for another day, autumn leaves piled up in the yard unraked, while he himself sank deeper in a sorrow that nothing in this world could mitigate. The long poem was recited by school boys in China until our own time in the 1920s and early 1930s, to testify that the Chinese educational system even during the imperial period, while armor-plated with moral value, did not completely ignore romance and sensitivity; if it had, the "Song of Eternal Grief" would never have been allowed to pass down to disturb the unsettled minds of the young citizenry of the new Republic. The story of Huaqing Hot Spring and Yang Guifei also reassures us that regardless of ideological indoctrination, the inner reservoir of emotionality basic to human nature is always there, be we Chinese or Westerner, ancient or modern.

Not far away from the hot spring is the place where Chiang Kai-shek was captured during the Xi'an Incident in 1936. In the early morning of December 12 the troops of Zhang Xueliang, the "Young Marshal," stormed the resort headquarters of the Generalissimo to prevail on him to end the "annihilation campaign" against the Communists so that the nation could turn its full force against the invading Japanese. When the coup succeeded, it changed the complexion of Chinese politics and indirectly affected the course of world history as well. To a certain extent we may still feel today the repercussions of this incident of a half century ago. But on that day of "double twelfth," after the small-arms fire had died down, the commander-in-chief of the

been a variation of the hieroglyphic. Certain decorative motifs appearing on prehistorical Chinese pottery were said to bear an unmistakable resemblance to those found in Central Asia and the Near East. Since then, this theory of "monogenesis" has been challenged by a host of scholars from both China and other countries. The Chinese writing system is now held to be unique, down to such fundamentals as the numerals. Pottery wares that are superficially similar should not blind us to the great differences. Chinese metallurgy, even with its primitively developed specimens, shows a unique technological approach that does not suggest imitation. The major food plants in ancient China and the prehistorical Near East point to separate agricultural origins as well. Anthropologists and archaeologists nowadays can even elaborate on the several regional origins stretching from Manchuria to the Pearl River that contributed to China's ancient civilization.

But while the pendulum swings in favor of the theory of the independent origin of Chinese civilization, it does not empower anyone to say for sure that the case is closed. What we can conclude with confidence is that regardless of its origin, native or foreign, this civilization bears a strong mark of geography. Whether the Chinese owe a great deal or relatively little to the early inventors elsewhere does not substantially alter the story. The rudiments of Chinese culture began to show distinctive characteristics as soon as the climate and soil of the eastern Asian continent had an opportunity to act on the food plants and thus affect the destiny of its residents, and it has remained so ever since (see below, chapters 2 and 3). For this reason, the loess land is particularly noteworthy.

The development of radiocarbon techniques after World War II has helped to date many Neolithic sites in China to 4000 B.C. and earlier. Written Chinese history, however, doesn't go back nearly so far. The earliest "dynasty" on record is a ruling house called the Xia, which, if verifiable, would extend the upper ceilings of Chinese history to about 2000 B.C. But until today, aside from certain archaeological sites, which because of their radiocarbonic dates, could possibly be related to the Xia, the many interesting stories about the dynasty found in the classical records are still awaiting verification. Skeptics never accept such tales as authentic history; they have been arguing that if such a dynasty existed, some written references should have been found along with the artifacts. Those who have faith in early historiography are not

discouraged by the lack of such solid evidence. Some of them believe that written Chinese could have dated back to 2000 B.C., but because the earliest specimens of writing were done on silk and bamboo, they are likely to have perished. The current version of the Xia is a part of the written history; it has survived because it was passed down to us by oral tradition and by the work of numerous scribes who successively copied it down, at first in books made of bamboo sticks. Neither side can sustain its argument with finality.

As things stand today, the first page of Chinese history that has archaeological backing bears the relatively late date of 1600 B.C. at the founding of the Shang dynasty, the two capital cities of which, along with a number of the burial sites of its kings, have been excavated. Not only has its writing survived, but it is engraved on tens of thousands of animal bone fragments called oracle bones.

The major Shang sites are located in today's Henan Province, until recent days not an area of general interest to tourists. Historically the entire region is referred to as the "Eastern Plain," forming a westward axis with the loess table land on which Xi'an occupies a prominent position. The designation of the Shang as a "dynasty" is not a misnomer, as the genealogy of the ruling house exists and the succession of the kings is known to have taken place by and large from brother to brother and, on fewer occasions, from father to son, always within the extended family. But otherwise the Shang appear to be a people who, with their mastery of bronze technology, assumed overlordship over many other peoples on the strength of their military superiority and religious cohesion. The extant bronze objects of the Shang, with few exceptions, are weapons and sacrificial vessels. They were produced in centralized manufacturing plants under state sponsorship.

Many Shang characteristics would have marked it as being closer to other cultures on a similar standing rather than as being distinctly Chinese. For example, although it was a patriarchal society, the Shang allowed its aristocratic women a degree of freedom and equality with men not attained by the daughters of China many centuries and even millenniums later. The Shang people were cheerful and robust, and they consumed large quantities of alcoholic beverages. They practiced human sacrifice and felt no qualms about it, as they routinely and unsentimentally recorded such deeds on the oracle bones. They were able to dispatch an army of 3,000 men on a marching expedition of 100 days. And this army could be augmented by forces contributed by

Index

D

E