

Confucius versus Mao

Chinese Political Traditions, by Franklin W. Houn, *Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965. 130 pp. \$3.75.*

The Thought Revolution, by Tung Chi-ping and Humphrey Evans, *New York: Coward-McCann, 1966. 254 pp. \$5.00.*

Red China Today, by Hugo Portisch, *Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966. 383 pp. \$6.95.*

Formosa: A Study in Chinese History, by W. G. Goddard, *East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966. 229 pp. \$7.50.*

IN RECENT YEARS, many books have been written in Western languages on the existing Communist system in mainland China. Generally speaking, these works express two different schools of thought. One school considers that the socio-political programs in mainland China today are not alien to the Chinese but are a reaction to Western imperialism and a renovation of traditional values under a Marxist mask. The second school holds that Mao and his

party are not only in opposition to the historic values of China but are working consistently for the total elimination of the age-old social and political institutions. If we read carefully these four volumes under review, we shall see that all four of the authors are committed to this second school of thought.

Chinese Political Traditions by Franklin W. Houn provides a wide range of socio-political aspects of traditional China, including the concept of civil obedience, the scope of governmental functions, the nature of the monarch, the maintenance of a unitary state, and the role of public opinion. Also, he discusses the decision-making procedures, the censorial system, intellectual and religious freedom, and the meaning and impact of Confucian philosophy. Most importantly, he points out that although traditional China was ruled by a monarchical order for centuries, the emperors could seldom exercise unlimited power or absolute control. Chapter III provides special treatment on this subject which I consider excellent. The political philosophy of Confucianism contains strong democratic elements. As Mr. Houn says,

Confucius did not regard the government as an end in itself but insisted that it seek to promote the welfare and happiness of the people. Since he believed in neither statism nor laissez-faire philosophy, he conceived the role of the government in a way very similar to modern advocates of a welfare state. To him a government should be concerned not only with the material welfare of its citizens but with their moral and cultural well-being.

Against this historical background, the author maintains that, "Contrary to a popular belief encouraged by some scholars, the Communist monolithic system on the Chinese mainland today is not a continuation of the Chinese political tradition."

This verdict rendered by Professor Houn is well supported by two other books: *The Thought Revolution* by

Tung and Evans and *Red China Today* by Hugo Portisch. The former gives us the first behind-the-scenes story of university life and education in Communist China as told by a student (Tung himself) who grew up under the Communist regime and defected to the West. In these pages, the young Chinese Communist student presents a terrifying account of an educational program which seeks to make students into abject tools of the totalitarian system. Its suppression of sex, love, and individual thought, its diabolical policy of encouraging students to inform on one another, its brainwashing system, known as being "struggled against," characterize a socio-political formation which runs counter not only to the traditional values of the Chinese heritage, but also to the basic qualities of human nature. Students are taught to eat without food, to treat diseases without medicine. Political regimentation has gone to a fanatic degree. The result is frequently the type of failure we witness in the present case of Tung who served briefly as assistant cultural attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Burundi and fled to the West for freedom in 1964. From this book, we can see very clearly that the basic weakness of the Communist system in China lies in its false relationship to human nature. Anything which works against human nature can hardly last long, no matter how strong the political control may be.

The validity of this finding can also be found in Hugo Portisch's *Red China Today*. Mr. Portisch, editor-in-chief of the Vienna *Kurier*, provides in these pages an eyewitness report based on extensive travel through the closed society. By train, auto, buggy, and on foot, he journeys, with the constant assistance of the China Travel Service and the indispensable help of an interpreter, through Canton, Wuhan, Peking, Shanyang, Anshan, Fushan, Changchun, Nanking, and Shanghai. Through personal experience, he found that Communist China is a "fettered giant." For all the political and economic programs, the country remains weak and the people

poor. "Viewed objectively, it must be admitted that the standard of living in China is still one of the lowest in the world." The communes simply do not work. The "Great Leap," as the author puts it, "created further upheaval: the whole population was dangerously exhausted. Families were broken up because of the separation of married couples and of parents and their children. . . . However, these negative social effects were insignificant compared with the political damage that was done." Thought control, or brainwashing, is severe. "Those who try to avoid denouncing their friends and relatives must fear that they will be denounced because they have failed to expose faults known to them. The harshness of this system is apparent." However, political indoctrination becomes superficial when the people are concerned with the daily struggle for mere existence and can think only with their stomachs. All this causes Mr. Portisch to conclude that, "Two thousand years of Confucian thinking, two thousand years of Taoism (or rather fatalism), and eighteen hundred years of Buddhism cannot be uprooted from the minds and hearts of the Chinese in sixteen years." (p. 169) The book, on the whole, is well written, subject to the general limitation imposed on any foreigner reporting on a closed society. As the author himself admits, "There was no lack of interesting and revealing contacts. But I felt that all this was being done on special orders, and that a journalist can work successfully in China as long as the authorities wish."

In contrast to what is occurring on mainland China, the fourth volume under review presents another area of China which is full of hope and promise. In his *Formosa: A Study in Chinese History*, William G. Goddard provides an analysis of the past, an evaluation of the present, and a projection of the future. From the historical point of view, Mr. Goddard insists that Formosa is an integral part of China. Formosans are Chinese. Formosan culture is Chinese culture. When the mainland was dominated

by an alien horde, Formosa served always as the custodian of the historic values of China. In particular, Cheng Cheng-kung (Koxinga), as a loyal son to the Ming empire, tried to use Formosa as a base from which to launch an expedition for the recovery of the Chinese mainland from the Manchus. Although he failed, he set an example which can be very well followed in the future.

Concerning the present situation in Formosa, the scholar from New South Wales, who has a profound knowledge of Chinese history and civilization, tells us that with the revitalizing force of Chinese traditional values, the Chinese in Formosa are living a fuller life. With American aid the basic economic problems have been largely solved. More than 96 per cent of school-age children in Formosa are in school. Land reform, for the double purpose of giving land to the tiller and equalizing land rights, has been carried out without resorting to class struggle. Seventy-eight per cent of the farmers own all or part of their land. "Landlordism in respect to agricultural land is a thing of the past." The people on the island enjoy almost the highest standard of living in Asia, second only to the Japanese. Free economy, not a totalitarian system, is the key to new China's industrialization and modernization.

Goddard's great hope for Formosa lies in the future. The present leadership, with the close cooperation of the literati, has been working forcefully and energetically for the realization of a vision set forth by Cheng Cheng-kung in the seventeenth century. "On that island (Formosa) the flame of Chinese culture could burn brightly and freely." China will be united, not in tyranny, but in freedom; not in the Communist system, but in Confucian values which have been revitalizing themselves ever more vigorously in Formosa. "The last word," as the author concludes, "will not be said by Peking or Washington but by Taipei itself. It is there that the future of Formosa will be determined."

Reviewed by PAUL K. T. SIH