
Mao Lives

Arthur Waldron

THE 20TH century was remarkable not only for the number and scale of the atrocities it witnessed but also for the slowness with which these frightful events were recognized for what they were, let alone condemned. Of these crimes, which began with the mass murders by Lenin and Stalin in the USSR (costing over 20 million lives) and continued through the Nazi Holocaust and the democides in China and Cambodia, only the Nazi horror is regularly acknowledged and truly well known. The others are still primarily the province of specialists.

This is particularly the case with the crimes of Mao Zedong, the founder in 1949 of the People's Republic of China and, until his death in 1976, its supreme ruler. China has never repudiated Mao as Khrushchev did Stalin at the party congress of 1956. Embalmed in Tiananmen Square, he remains today the final source of legitimacy for the government in Beijing. Nor, with honorable exceptions, have Western scholars ever dealt with Mao as at least some did with Lenin and Stalin. Today, no one in his right mind would put a portrait of Hitler in his house. Yet, in many places in the West, Mao kitsch—posters, badges, busts, and so forth—is still considered not only acceptable but even fashionable.

ARTHUR WALDRON is the Lauder professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania and vice president of the International Assessment and Strategy Center in Washington, D.C. In collaboration with Stuart Schram, he is currently editing the wartime writings of Mao Zedong.

One reason, perhaps, is that Mao Zedong was introduced to the world stage as a hero. He made his first appearance—as a genial and modest man who happened also to be a dedicated social revolutionary—in a long interview with the American journalist Edgar Snow. The interview, which took place at the Communist party's headquarters in a remote corner of northwest China, formed the core of Snow's book, *Red Star Over China*, which has been continuously in print ever since its first appearance in 1936.¹ Nearly all subsequent accounts descend, in one way or another, from his.

Mao was forty-two when he met Snow. As he told the American journalist, he had been born to a farming family in the south-central province of Hunan, spent a rebellious childhood and youth, attended a teachers' college, and helped to found the Chinese Communist party.

What Mao grasped, in this account, was that Communism could succeed in China only if it stood with the hundreds of millions of impoverished rural dwellers rather than (as the party's real leadership in Moscow had insisted) with the relative handful of China's industrial workers. So, from the start, Mao's Communism contained a strong admixture of indigenous elements. This remarkable and, as it seemed, durable blending of traditional elements with modernity (in its Communist

¹ In Chinese translation, under the anodyne title *Record of a Journey to the West*, the book also made Mao a hero to many of his countrymen who had hitherto been ignorant even of his existence.

form) held a powerful appeal for many Chinese whose sense of identity had been shattered by the ending of the old order when the last dynasty abdicated in 1912.

Naturally, Mao's liberationist intentions also alarmed the class of rural landlords and "gentry" who supported the then-central government of Chiang Kai-shek at Nanjing. Chiang and his allies mounted five "extermination campaigns" against the base areas of the Communists. The fifth, planned with German assistance, would have finished them (so the standard story goes) had not Mao led a brilliant break-out, the celebrated "Long March," that moved through the most remote areas a step ahead of the pursuing Nationalists, fighting valiantly when attacked and eventually escaping to the security of the northwest, where Snow recorded Mao's stirring account.

THEN CAME World War II, when—according to the received version—the Communists were the only Chinese really willing to fight the Japanese. (Chiang Kai-shek himself was supposed to be much more interested in fighting Mao.) It was then that Mao led a great revolutionary upsurge that, translated into a mighty military force, helped not only to drive the Japanese back but to sweep him and his followers to power in the ensuing civil war of 1945-49. Snow later told this story, too, though its most eloquent and influential version came from the pen of the late Barbara Tuchman.

In *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945* (1971) and other writings, Tuchman argued that, in supporting Chiang's Nationalists, the United States had backed the wrong horse in China. This is the so-called "Lost Chance in China" school, whose adherents believe to this day that a different U.S. policy would not only have spared us future conflicts with China over Korea, Vietnam, and the Taiwan Strait but would have changed Mao himself. Aligned with the U.S. (as he wished) instead of with the USSR (as we forced him to become), he would have ruled China in a far more democratic and pro-Western fashion.

Even aligned with the USSR, however, Mao in power continued to be viewed favorably by most Western scholars and commentators. To be sure, confiscating and redistributing land from the rich to the poor involved bloodshed, as did the cleaning-up of such notoriously lawless cities as Shanghai. Mao also attacked the educated, even some who had supported him, as in the Hundred Flowers campaign of the mid-1950's when criticism of the regime was invited but then crushed as soon as

it crossed certain boundaries. Later, in the Great Leap Forward (1959-61), he attempted to substitute China's abundant manpower for its limited capital in order to make possible a rapid growth of the economy, unfortunately causing widespread death by starvation in the process. Toward the end of his life, worried by the near-extinction of the revolutionary flame in the Soviet Union, he launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1965-76) in which marginalized groups, above all students and young people, were encouraged to run riot against entrenched authority.

These blemishes were duly noted, though never the scale of death and destruction they entailed. Always, Mao was seen as searching for new ways to build socialism, and on these grounds much if not everything could be forgiven him.² In 1955, Simone de Beauvoir judged that "the power [Mao] exercises is no more dictatorial than, say, Roosevelt's was"; in 1972, Jean-Paul Sartre hailed his "revolutionary violence."

In the academic world, Mao's achievements were extolled while the alternatives offered by the rival Nationalists, or by parties calling for parliamentary democracy, or by refugee critics were dismissed as hopeless dead ends. Scholars who dissented often paid with their careers. Certainly, it was concluded, Mao had shed blood as he "reformed" the system, and he had often shown a hard, authoritarian hand. But given the results, who could cavil? As the influential Harvard professor John K. Fairbank observed in 1972 on returning from a visit, "The Maoist revolution is on the whole the best thing that has happened to the Chinese people in centuries."

Something like this view is still very widespread, among both specialists and the broader public. No American textbook of Chinese history classes Mao with Stalin, or with Hitler. Nor has any foreign leader since the 1960's ever spoken out against the evils of Chinese Communism with anything like

² To be sure, some did get the story right, and from as early as the 1950's. They included, among others, the Hungarian Jesuit Ladislao La Dany, publisher of the authoritative Hong Kong weekly *China News Analysis*; Raymond J. de Jaegher, author of *The Enemy Within: An Eyewitness Account of the Communist Conquest of China* (1952); the German political scientist Juergen Domes, who was able to arrive at a figure of 10 million victims of Mao's 1959-61 famine in *Internal Politics of China, 1949-72* (1973); Edward Rice, former American consul general in Hong Kong and author of *Mao's Way* (1971); Ivan and Miriam London and their collaborator Ta-ling Lee, who in *The Revenge of Heaven: The Autobiography of a Red Guard* (1972) first brought solid documentation of the Cultural Revolution to an indifferent West; and Jean Pasqualini, son of a Corsican father and a Chinese mother who after release from years in Chinese prison camps wrote *Prisoner of Mao* (1973) with the American journalist Rudolph Chelminski.

the forthrightness showed by some toward the Soviet Union. Today, though Mao's legacy is still very much in evidence in China, the European Union is eager to end the trade embargo put in place after the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 and to begin selling advanced weapons systems to the Communist regime. Israel has long been a supplier of weaponry to Beijing (though this may be changing). American companies, including Loral, Boeing, and Microsoft, have provided important assistance to China's military programs and to its suppression of free speech and access to information on the Internet. Although the overwhelming majority of the world's unfree people live in China, ordinary visitors, cocooned in its luxurious new hotels, are largely unaware of the brutality around them, or, if they are aware, console themselves with the thought that, repressive trends notwithstanding, commerce and trade will eventually transform things for the better.

THEY NEED to think again. Luckily, to aid their thinking, they can now turn to *Mao: The Unknown Story*,³ a bombshell of a book that quickly soared to first place on the best-seller lists of England and that has recently been released here. Its author is Jung Chang (born in China in 1952), writing in collaboration with her husband Jon Halliday (born in Ireland in 1939). Halliday, an excellent stylist, is proficient in Russian and other languages and was for a brief time the editor of the British *New Left Review*. Chang, who lives in England, has been known till now mainly for *Wild Swans* (1991), a brilliantly fictionalized story of three generations of women in her own family: her grandmother, a concubine whose feet were bound; her mother, initially an enthusiastic Communist but later disillusioned; and herself, who grew up in the violence and anarchy of the Cultural Revolution, during which she worked as a "barefoot doctor" in the poverty-stricken countryside while her mother was sent to a detention camp and her father was driven mad.

Mao: The Unknown Story is no ordinary book. Reaching for comparisons, one looks inescapably to Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. His was not the first negative account of Soviet Communism, and *Mao* is not the first book to present Mao and his collaborators as criminals. But like the *Gulag*, *Mao*, while factual, is much more than that; resting on a mass of evidence, overwhelmingly accurate and well-supported, it conveys its story in the voice not of the bloodless scholar but of the novelist and the moralist. Already Beijing is terrified of this

book, going so far as to ban an issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that contained an account of it. But we can be certain that pirated copies will soon be circulating in China, if they are not doing so already. Chang and Halliday may not be the first to expose Mao's crimes, but their work, even with its limitations (of which more below), cannot be ignored. Like Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, it delivers a death blow to an entire way of thinking.

THE MAO who emerges from the pages of Chang and Halliday's book is in every way repellent. He is an ignorant, power-obsessed, manipulative, and cruel mass murderer.

To begin with, the authors show, Mao was an ignoramus, hostile to learning and to intellectuals. A drifter as a youth, he evinced talent but refused the discipline of study, including the "classics of Marxism-Leninism" that his contemporaries mastered as their fathers had mastered classical Chinese literature. Unlike many of those who rose to the top of the Communist hierarchy, he never studied abroad, nor did he travel outside of China until after he had taken power—and then only to Moscow, which formed his idea of "the West." The antique editions of Chinese classics shelved at the head of his enormous bed, which so impressed visitors to his inner sanctum and photographs of which were studied by Western intelligence agencies for clues to his "thought," were mostly plundered from the libraries of doomed scholars and arranged for show.

Mao's hatred of learning was coupled with a passion to destroy China's cultural heritage. In 1949, when he came to power, the Mongol-Ming-Qing capital of Beijing (Peking) was still intact, with its massive dressed stone walls and gates, its hundreds of temples, its traditional courtyard houses with their exquisite tile roofs, its memorial arches or *pailou*, and its distinct drama, cuisine, customs, and traditions. Everything had survived the war with Japan; were it extant today, it would constitute one of the world's most magnificent historical sites.

But Mao decreed its obliteration. In 1958, on the eve of his campaign, roughly 8,000 historical monuments were listed as still standing in the capital. Mao planned to keep only 78 of them; most were destroyed.

Ignorant himself, Mao saw to it that others were kept ignorant as well. Contrary to widespread Western belief, he spent less on the education of his countrymen than had his predecessors. He also ruthlessly limited access to learning. His policy, write Chang and Halliday, "was not to raise the gen-

³ Knopf, 832 pp., \$35.00.

eral standard of education in society as a whole, but to focus on a small elite, predominantly in science and other 'useful' subjects." All other Chinese were to remain "illiterate or semi-literate slave laborers."

As for Mao's obsession with power, from his earliest days in the Communist party he sought control for himself and the physical elimination of those who opposed him. Already in the 1920's he was murdering his colleagues and driving his subordinates to death, gradually consolidating his own position by a series of conspiracies and betrayals.

The most important of these took place on the Long March. As Chang and Halliday demonstrate, the received version of this hegira is a myth. Whole episodes, including the great battle at the flaming bridge at Dadu, are inventions. Mao's main purpose, as the authors see it, was less to save the Communist party than to cripple the far more numerous and effective forces of Zhang Guotao, a gifted Communist general whom Mao was supposed to relieve but whom he left utterly exposed and weakened, thus enabling his own takeover.

By far the most interesting revelation in this section of the book is the authors' account of the paramountcy of Soviet influence in the establishment and growth of the Chinese Communist movement. Traditionally, this movement has been portrayed as an indigenous force, and one whose alignment with Moscow was a matter only of expediency. In fact, according to Chang and Halliday, from its foundation (by a Comintern agent) to its financing, communications system, leadership, and strategy, the party was an agent of Soviet policy—even when that policy conflicted with the Chinese national interest. Stalin early on recognized in Mao the combination of ambition, intelligence, and ruthlessness that would, so he imagined, serve the USSR better than the slavishly orthodox Marxism of many of Mao's Chinese rivals.

The subordination of Chinese to Soviet interests was clearest in the conflict with Japan during World War II. Like Chiang Kai-Shek, Mao recognized that war with Japan would be a disaster for China. But Stalin, fearing a Japanese invasion of the USSR from the east, wanted it, and Mao quickly grasped how it would serve his own purposes. By permitting the Japanese to destroy Chiang's forces while simultaneously helping to keep the USSR strong, he would be well placed to supplant Chiang as Chinese leader. Hence, according to Chang and Halliday, the successful effort by Communists in the military to start such a war, and hence Mao's decision—again utterly contrary to received myth—to sit it out.

Of course some patriotic Chinese Communists could not swallow this, but Mao saw to them, too. At his redoubt in Yan'an, and helped by the ghoulish secret-police expert Kang Sheng, he carried out purges of a number who threatened his will, dispatching them to a state-of-the-art torture facility called the "Date Garden." (Well-known to locals, this place is not mentioned by any of the Westerners who visited Mao and his wartime capital.) Over the following decades, he systematically eliminated others, with many finally perishing in the Cultural Revolution three decades later.

Mao was a consummate manipulator. With solid documentation, Chang and Halliday argue that the Hundred Flowers campaign, in which critics of the regime spoke out only to be arrested, was not a product of miscalculation (as it is presented in accounts by Mao's sympathizers) but a carefully laid trap. Similarly, the disastrous Great Leap Forward grew not out of a Marxist fascination with industrialization but out of Mao's determination to extract food from the Chinese people to pay for weapons imports and gifts to foreign leaders. The Cultural Revolution, finally, which the authors rightly call "the great purge," had nothing to do with renewing an ossified party and everything to do with simple revenge.

One of the most striking examples of Mao's manipulative skills was on display in the early 1970's in connection with the Nixon administration's "opening" to China. This, too, we learn here, was a carefully baited trap, and entirely Mao's idea rather than Washington's. By the time Nixon arrived for his famous visit in February 1972, he was convinced that, as between himself and Mao, "he was the keener of the two." But by then Henry Kissinger had already made his own secret visit in July 1971 as Nixon's national security adviser, bearing "many and weighty gifts and ask[ing] for nothing in return." Not only did Kissinger offer Taiwan on a platter, write Chang and Halliday, but he promised an American withdrawal from both Vietnam *and* Korea.

THE MAO of *The Unknown Story* is also, like many a tyrant, deeply insecure and fearful. Arriving outside Beijing in 1949, he fell into a crisis of anxiety before daring to enter the city and seize power. A superstitious man, he never once set foot in the Forbidden City where the emperors had lived, even though his residence adjoined it. Wherever he went, bombproof villas were built and staffed. He kept himself far from the public, making use later in his career of a system of tunnels

linking his residence, the Great Hall of the People, with military headquarters in the western suburbs.

Mao delighted in personal cruelty. He tortured the women around him, including his four successive wives. When Chou Enlai, the most popular member of the regime, was diagnosed with bladder cancer, Mao ordered that he be neither told of the condition nor treated for it; even as Chou was engaged in vital negotiations with the United States, Mao toyed with his loyal servant to ensure that he would die painfully.⁴

Most importantly, Mao was the greatest mass murderer of the 20th century. Much of the killing was direct, as in the torture and purges at Yan'an. After the Communist seizure of power in 1949, the practice became countrywide. Mao set his numerical targets openly, and stressed the "revolutionary" importance of killing. In 1954, citing the "softness" of his counterparts in Communist Eastern Europe when it came to the need to "eliminate all those counterrevolutionaries," he urged his inner circle: "We must kill. . . . And we say it's good to kill."

He was as good as his word. Millions were liquidated in the first years of his tyranny alone. Later, during the famine of 1959-61, which the authors blame above all on Mao's confiscation of crops from the countryside, something on the order of 50 million people died—men, women, children, infants. Cannibalism was not uncommon. Yet Mao continued to enjoy Lucullan repasts, served by his half-starved staff.

And so it went. Chang and Halliday's careful estimate is that by the time of his death in 1976, Mao had been responsible all in all for the death of some 70 million Chinese.

NO READER can be unmoved by this book's passion, or unimpressed by the mountain of evidence upon which it rests. The Chinese say that it takes "ten years to hone a sword," which understates by two years the amount of time Chang and Halliday have labored over this work. Halliday spent a decade in non-Chinese archives, including those of the Comintern in Moscow and the East-European Communist parties; from this has come much new factual information, as well as a clearer view of the control exercised by the Soviet Union over both the Nationalist and the Communist parties in China in the first half of the century. The unadorned and readable English prose is evidently also Halliday's, though one can sense his wife's mind behind much of it. As for Chang, she did all the Chinese research and carried out the hundreds of interviews with people in China and around the

world who were personally acquainted with Mao or had knowledge of him.

Specialists, of course, will have criticisms to make, some of them justified. Neither author is trained in Sinology. This is an advantage—unburdened by the inheritance of the field, they offer a new and fresh look, naïve in the best sense of the word. But it is also a disadvantage. One searches in vain for certain staples of the mainstream literature about Mao, which, whatever its flaws, has established facts and raised issues that must be addressed.⁵

Perhaps surprisingly in light of their own previous immersion in Marxist categories (compulsory, in Chang's case), we find in *Mao* no real discussion of social or cultural forces. Instead, the human actor is everything. There is only conspiracy after conspiracy, each turning, as in the traditional Chinese novels of which Mao was so fond, on deception, betrayal, espionage, and a cold assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of other individuals.

This stress on conspiracy and personal politics to the exclusion of nearly everything else is a weakness, perhaps the greatest weakness, of Chang and Halliday's account. Many men, after all, are evil and want power, but only a handful are successful in gaining and holding it and in somehow making their people collude with them in their crimes. In mitigation, one can say that the stress on personal action and conspiracy provides a useful counterweight to the opposite, Western tendency to impose social-science theory onto a Chinese reality that it does not fit and where it does not belong. Nevertheless, there is more to the story.

Specialists will also be puzzled by specific aspects of Chang and Halliday's account (for instance, of the 1945-49 civil war, or of Mao's struggle with Nikita Khrushchev over the Taiwan Strait). And both specialists and general readers will wonder how the authors always know what Mao is thinking—even during the Long March, or on his deathbed (when his mind "stirred with just one thought: himself and his power").

But none of this should distract us from the basic

⁴ In a case of measure for measure, the doctors who diagnosed Mao with Lou Gehrig's disease in the mid-70's agreed not to inform him of it—lest, knowing his days were numbered, he unleash some final purge.

⁵ One example that can stand for many is a series of essays by Joseph W. Esherick about the Nationalist attempt in the civil war to capture the Communist leadership through a pincer campaign against Yan'an. Chang and Halliday state flatly that the Nationalist commander was a secret Communist who botched the operation on purpose. They make no reference to Esherick, who happens to be favorably disposed to Mao and the Chinese Communists but whose careful research does not support this conclusion.

fact: this is the book that will wreck Mao's reputation beyond salvage. Taken whole, the indictment is too formidable to be dismissed, and any attempt at detailed refutation will inevitably pose even more awkward questions and disclose even more unsavory facts, thus dragging Mao ever more deeply into the mud.

THAT IT is long past time for such an airing should go without saying. As I indicated early on, Chang and Halliday are not the first to expose Mao Zedong as one of the greatest criminals in human history: a few non-Chinese scholars and journalists had the courage in decades past to follow the facts where they led. More recently, their work has been vindicated (and the work of their "mainstream" colleagues discredited) by Chinese scholars like Chen Jian, who in *Mao's China and the Cold War* (2001) has given an authoritative account of Chinese foreign policy that matches Chang and Halliday's, and by eyewitnesses like Mao's personal physician, Dr. Li Zhisui, whose *The Secret Life of Chairman Mao* (1994) presented the human, or more accurately the inhuman, Mao for the first time. The many dissidents within today's China have likewise kept up a steady flow of documents and news in spite of the government's best efforts to silence them.

But this brings us back to the question of Western attitudes. Evidence to indict Mao has always been adequate, if not abundant. Shamefully, however, many China specialists and others with access to information actively protected themselves from this evidence, lest it undermine the fantasy of a humane, caring leader. As with early word of the Holocaust, reports of the desperate situation in China during the 1959-61 famine caused by Mao were ignored or buried. When Mao died on September 9, 1976, the *New York Times* ran a triple banner headline and a two-page obituary that drew on much received wisdom, neglecting or dismissing the mounting evidence that contradicted it.

So *Mao: The Unknown Story* is not only a formidable but a necessary achievement: a full and convincing portrait of the destruction of tens of millions of innocent lives and the near-destruction of a civilization by a consummately evil man. Nevertheless, something is still missing, and that something has to do with what comes next. Does this atrocity, from which we can no longer turn away, have any significance beyond its own sheer horror, and does it call for any action on our part and on the part of the Chinese themselves? On this the book is silent, but of course the answer is yes.

The first action that is called for is to discover the names of the dead, locate their remains, and honor them—as has been done in exemplary fashion for the victims of the Holocaust and as is beginning to be done for the victims of Communism in Russia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. China, however, is not only far from having initiated such a process, it completely forbids any activity of the kind. No books published in China acknowledge Mao's evil; no monuments commemorate the dead. Letters to the authorities from the mothers of students killed by the Chinese army in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989 are never answered.

Having honored the dead, we must then seek to understand. Chang and Halliday describe the evil man, but never attempt to probe the origins of his evil or to explain why it spread through Chinese society. Not that this is an easy task. Writing in criticism of Hannah Arendt's interpretation of the Holocaust, for example, Hillel Halkin has recently observed that although the Holocaust may have been, as she stipulated, "the work of bureaucrats," these were bureaucrats whose "minds were formed by the Germany of the Weimar Republic, and of the Kaiser, and of the Christian churches. If they were easily persuaded that the Jews deserved to die, this persuasion came from an older Germany."⁶ Here in other words is an effort to get beyond Arendt's mechanistic approach to some appreciation of a living human society, and to understand Hitler as something more than a devil who mysteriously parachuted in to bewitch the German people.

Proposing an analogous social or intellectual explanation for the willingness of the Chinese people to serve as Mao's slaves, to kill and to denounce one another, is an even more difficult task—and Chang and Halliday do not address it. Where in late-Qing or Republican Chinese society would one find the roots of democide? Where in traditional Chinese philosophy is the justification for mass murder? Some of the necessary ingredients were surely imported with Marxism, but that simply begs the question of how Marxism acquired its authority and why so many Chinese accepted it. These problems cry out for pondering.

NOR is that the end of it. Given the bloody morass through which Chang and her husband lead us, it would be comforting in the extreme to know that the evil in Mao died with his body, and that China has been freed from it. But

⁶ "Eichmann: The Simplicity of Evil," COMMENTARY, July-August 2005.

that is emphatically not the case. Mao died in 1976. Thirty years on, there is still no happy ending. To be sure, China has changed—in appearance, feel, atmosphere, economic condition, and so forth. Maoist and post-Maoist China are admittedly very different. But they are also profoundly similar.

And that is the final point. Mao's atrocities are not simply of historical interest, but remain central to today's China—and to our dealings with it. As the authors write in a two-sentence "Epilogue," "Today, Mao's portrait and his corpse still dominate Tiananmen Square in the heart of the Chinese capital. The current Communist regime declares itself to be Mao's heir and fiercely perpetuates the myth of Mao."

Mao is, indeed, still revered in China as the wise and heroic founder of the People's Republic. There has never been any public criticism of him remotely comparable to Khrushchev's 1956 speech condemning Stalin.⁷ Not only does Mao's embalmed corpse, with its guard of honor, lie in the midst of Tiananmen Square, visited daily by throngs of Chinese who form long lines to pay their respects. Not only does his portrait continue to hang at the Gate of Heavenly Peace a few steps from the Forbidden City, the traditional center of the Chinese cosmos. In addition, the deep structure of today's China remains as Mao made it.

Rule in China is as arbitrary and capricious as ever under Mao. The only difference is that a single man is no longer in total charge; what is theoretically still the absolute power of the party is now divided among perhaps twenty people, all lacking Mao's intelligence and skill and most working at cross purposes with each other. China is not ruled by its constitution or by its laws, nor do courts actually resolve disputes, even in the realm of commerce with foreign countries.

None of today's Chinese leaders has been chosen according to the rules of the constitution, or even according to the rules of the Communist party. Hu Jintao is in charge because Deng Xiaoping named him to follow Jiang Zemin, himself selected after the June 4, 1989 massacre to replace Zhao Ziyang, who was illegally removed and placed under strict house arrest (lasting until his death earlier this year). And how did Deng become leader? By means of a military conspiracy that ousted Mao's designated and party-approved successors.

Like Mao, today's rulers are hypocrites, proclaiming concern for the poor and disenfranchised even as they steal state assets and live lives of luxury. But now the parasitical class of Chinese Communists is much larger than in Mao's day, and so is

the gap between their lives and the lives of ordinary Chinese, whether rural or urban. While desperate poverty and exploitation remain widespread, party members enjoy a privileged existence comparable only to Mao's, even as they send their children and grandchildren, along with their ill-gotten assets, overseas for safekeeping.

WHAT OF the formation of government policy? Again, it would be pleasant to report that decision-making in China has become more rational since the demise of Mao, who regularly ordered up insane projects like the destruction of the old city of Peking, or the backyard "steel" furnaces of the Great Leap Forward, or, in the days of the Sino-Soviet split, the building of immense and useless barriers outside the capital to defend against Soviet tanks. Have Mao's followers done any better with the Three Gorges Dam, or the huge concrete aqueducts intended to divert water from the south to the parched north, or the slash-and-burn industrialization (as it has been called) with its profligate waste of resources and its utter neglect of sustainability?

When it comes to China's dynamic economy, moreover, it is by no means clear that the current, export-driven approach to growth will lift China's poor, let alone help to create a society in which they will be able freely to exercise their talents and energies. Foreign markets now take the place of domestic demand (as they must, for most Chinese have little buying power), and foreign companies are invited not to enrich but to exploit a disciplined labor force under conditions in which any talk of unions or complaints about working conditions are dealt with by the secret police. Labor is kept cheap in China by the government's manipulation of the currency, and capital, the precious savings of the wretchedly poor, is wasted by state-directed bank loans to money-losing state enterprises. Chinese entrepreneurs are being squeezed out by privileged state firms on one side and privileged foreign investors on the other. Water is scarce and polluted, and the air in many places is unbreathable.

Nor does China's foreign policy make more sense now than it did under Mao, at least in terms of the Chinese national interest. To the contrary, post-Mao China has, exactly like Mao's China,

⁷ As Chang and Halliday inform us, Mao was upset by that speech and remonstrated with Khrushchev. The Soviet leader replied: "Since you love Stalin so much, why don't you take his corpse to Peking?" To his colleagues, Khrushchev added: "When I look at Mao I see Stalin, a perfect copy."

poured billions into weapons procurement while ignoring the plight of its people, especially in the countryside. The difference is that the jets and rockets and tanks produced by Mao's militarization did not work. The ones that contemporary China is purchasing, or is building with extensive foreign help, do, threatening the rest of Asia as it never was threatened even under Mao.

Violence continues in today's China: everyday killings by police and untold numbers of deaths in prisons and camps, the victims rarely named and never officially mourned. Censorship, too, remains very tight, with newspapers, radio, and television owned and operated exclusively by the government and the party. Vast sums have been spent on advanced equipment to read and track Internet traffic and block sites of which the dictators do not approve. Surveillance by closed-circuit television and the tapping of telephones is blanket in Beijing. Overseas, extensive networks of secret police monitor not only dissidents, students, and others but also Internet and telephone traffic in North America and elsewhere. Indoctrination, now stressing

xenophobic nationalism rather than Mao's version of Communism, is still rampant.

SADLY, WE are not soon likely to witness in China anything like the moral clarity of Alexander Yakovlev, once a servant of the Soviet regime, then the "godfather of perestroika," and now the man entrusted with the task of memorializing the great Soviet purges and the Gulag archipelago. Yakovlev's succinct (and radically understated) verdict on both Lenin and Stalin is this: "By every norm of international law, posthumously indictable for crimes against humanity." As Chang and Halliday demonstrate, that fits Mao, too—in spades.

Unfortunately, however, the world is just beginning an honest reconsideration of Mao Zedong and his poisonous legacy, and China, still Maoist at the root, shows no inclination of moving in that direction at all. The government remains in absolute denial, and, as best as it can, it keeps its people ignorant. Chang and Halliday have given a mighty push, but there are still many to mourn, and many to punish, and much to fear.