



## REVIEWS

*Chinese Communism, 1931-1934: Experience in Civil Government.* By Trygve Lötveit. (Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, No. 16. Copenhagen: Studentlitteratur, 1973. 290 pages. Chronology of Some Key Events; Notes; Selected Bibliography.)

The Shih Sou Collection of documents captured from the Chinese Communists and made available by General Ch'en Ch'eng, the late Vice President of the Republic of China, has provided the sinew for a number of scholarly works in recent years. Mr. Lötveit, author of the present book, now appears as a new beneficiary. Trying laboriously to convert the "complexity of sources into a readable account," this promising student of Chinese Communist affairs, currently a Fellow at the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, has attempted in the first place to examine critically "the history of the Chinese Soviet Republic as a struggle between the extremely erroneous 'leftist' policy of the 28 Bolsheviks and their associates on the one hand, and the more moderate, correct line of Mao and his men on the other" (p. 11). His emphasis in this regard was to trace the "gradual penetration" of this "leftist" line, in the Maoist perspective, "by means of studying the development within various spheres of the policy of the Chinese Soviet Republic—specifically those relating to the administration of justice, the class struggle and finances" (p. 12). Seemingly as a matter of convenience, he has also sought "to explore the significance of the very substantial administrative apparatus which the republic built up" (p. 12). This significance, in Mr. Lötveit's presentation, has to do with operational procedure as well as policy rationale and consequences. In pursuing these goals, the author has uniquely if not altogether systematically magnified a micro-unit in the Maoist movement's experience of theoretical and practical experimentation long neglected or overlooked by contemporary students in the field—neglected because little systematic evidence or revealing data had been previously available, and overlooked because the experience of the Kiangsi period was and could only be fragmented and ephemeral in the movement's overall history. This calls for encouragement, if not recognition.

Indeed, the Maoists assumed control over a vast state and a great people in 1949 almost totally unprepared administratively, it seemed. Few demonstrated any awareness that they had had such a period of "experience in civil government." The Kiangsi Soviets, in the minds of students, were generally overshadowed by the encirclement campaigns progressively successfully conducted by the National Government. The Long March took over after that. And the mountain-top days of the movement before that were hardly much of a challenge. Except when sympathy or "inside information" of some sort played a role, therefore, the so-called Chinese Soviet Republic has aroused little attention. Or, even aroused, anyone could do very much. The Shih Sou Collection has now very conspicuously changed the situation, and it is all for the good.

Did the Maoists have much valuable experience, theoretically or practically, during the Kiangsi period? Mr. Lötveit has provided us with some factual details, some probably useful and many instructive to the Maoists, but all, it seems, relevant to their continuing experiments—of infinitely greater proportions—on the mainland today.

The Kiangsi Soviet, or the "national" territory of the Chinese Soviet Republic, was centered not in the single province of Kiangsi but in the border area between that province and Fukien and possibly also Kwangtung ("it is uncertain whether or not it extended into the northern fringe of Kwangtung"). According to a map the author was able to reconstruct, it included in part or as a whole as many as 29 counties in the two sure provinces—21 in Kiangsi

and 8 in Fukien—and probably at least at some time some parts of some counties in Kwangtung. The fluctuation of this territory during the encirclement campaigns is understandable, and its progressive shrinkage has been well established. This was true also of the population, and even the Communist leadership ranks. Under such circumstances, to recognize, reconstruct, and study seriously a “national” administrative structure can only be difficult, if not meaningless. But Mr. Lötveit managed to outline four or five levels of Soviets for us, ranging from the lowest *hsiang*, through towns and cities, district, county and “province” to the highest “Central.” Although stressing especially the first and also the last, he gives us a fairly complete picture of the total establishment in the first four chapters of the book. He then proceeds to describe, on the basis of this total establishment, the Soviet Republic’s administration of justice, rural class policy and the Land Investigation Movement, and finances respectively in the remaining three chapters. The book, originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation, ends with a two-page “conclusion.”

In his general learning process, Mr. Lötveit was obviously most impressed by the Soviet structure and operation at the *hsiang* level, which, in his word, “ought to be explored to every possible extent” (p. 15). “The appearance of a complicated apparatus for local administration” in general, as he understands it, “had, in itself, revolutionary implications” because “It was a state of affairs vastly different from traditional China.” But this “most local level” of the apparatus was “extremely important” because it was here that the administration as a whole “came in direct contact with the peasantry” and because it was also here that the total structure “to some extent bears the personal stamp of Mao Tse-tung’s approach” (apart from overall Russian influence by way of a preceding example and of locally stationed Comintern agents). With jurisdiction over anywhere between 1,000 and 5,000 people, the *hsiang* Soviet is seen in detailed relief in its seven-level administrative structure and operation: it starts from the lowest “groups of inhabitants under the leadership of individual Soviet Delegates” (no. 1), to “village mass meetings,” “meetings of the Soviet Delegates of the village,” and “village committees” (no. 2); the “village head” (no. 3); the “*hsiang* mass meetings” and “*hsiang* committees” (no. 4); the “staff” (no. 5) and “presidium” (no. 6) of the *hsiang* Soviet; and, finally, the “representative congress” of the *hsiang* Soviet (no. 7). The Soviet Delegates (i.e., elected directly from the villages) in charge of “groups of inhabitants” also took care of “family” work and “individual” work within their respective jurisdictions. So, every inhabitant was included and under control in this set-up. Small towns were usually organized into Soviets equivalent to the *hsiang*, whereas large towns would be put on an intervening level between the *hsiang* and the district. Thus, administrative accountability proceeds further from the top level of the *hsiang* structure directly or indirectly to the district Soviet, the county, the province, and finally up to the Central level.

Such a structure would impress anybody, indeed!

And what about its operation? Mr. Lötveit pays attention, within the *hsiang* Soviet, particularly to its electoral process (from the bottom up), along with its administrative procedure (from the top down), *via* the various levels. The electoral process is important here because it was the only level where direct elections were held. The administrative procedure takes on added significance in the *hsiang* Soviet because it was here that one sees how (local) government business became the “specialized” work of its bureaucratic agencies, e.g., in the form of “departments” or “committees.” The *hsiang* Soviet had as many as 15 such specialized administrative committees in those days, taking care of army expansion, land registration, watercontrol, granary, confiscation, education, sanitation, protection against air attacks and poison gas, etc.

Did the *hsiang* Soviet function satisfactorily? Yes and no. Yes because the Soviet per-

sonnel, under the close guidance of the various levels of the structure which channeled leadership, including that of Mao himself as well as the Party (under “the 28 Bolsheviks”), straight down to the lowest level, seemed to have really tried; with the help of “mass organizations,” they, or at least the devoted ones, seemed to have really left no stone unturned. No because they nevertheless commanded no universal allegiance; were no match to certain influences of tradition, nor equal to their ambitious tasks; created inequities; and blundered and blundered. Gerrymandering at random, for example, Mr. Lötveit found their *hsiang* jurisdictions becoming smaller and smaller. Stressing “democracy,” “will of the people” and “opinions of the masses,” too, it turned out that “it was often the local Party branch that in actual fact decided important political issues.” Dedicated to formal government and literacy drives, chairmen and vice chairmen of the *hsiang* Soviets most often had to rely on staff members of other than “non-exploiting class background” to do their most elementary reading, or any reading, as well as their record-keeping for them. Professing a “workers’ and peasants’ democratic dictatorship,” the workers’ votes in the most basic and most direct instance of election in the *hsiang* somehow carried “almost four times as much weight as those of the peasants,” whereby “less than one tenth of the population,” according to Mao’s report, “had a correct understanding of the leadership of the proletariat.” Although the efforts made, including especially those by Mao himself, were in the opinion of the author “without parallel in the Soviet Union” insofar as the forging of “intimate relations between the leadership and the masses” was concerned, such a state of affairs was apparently much less than had been expected or hoped for.

The structure and functioning of the intermediate Soviets look no better in Mr. Lötveit’s eyes, and here the glory of “direct contact with the masses” is also absent. How would “the mandate of the common people in the countryside” reach the top level by way of indirect representation, for example? “It had to pass elections at the following stages: (1) the *hsiang* – (2) the district – (3) the county – (4) the province, and continuing at the central levels – (5) the National Soviet Congress – (6) the Central Executive Committee – (7) the Council of People’s Commissars” (p. 45). Even if one cannot say, as some do, that “indirect representation is an admirable means of banishing democracy while pretending to apply it,” it seems thus “reasonable” for the author to “assume that such safeguards as might exist (e.g., in the form of the electoral system designed to insure “rule by the will of the people”) are further reduced through each step of indirect representation” (p. 46). Besides, there was an additional level—that of an “executive committee”—now intervening between the “congress” and the “presidium” of each of the intermediate Soviets, like the Central Executive Committee of the Central Soviet.

The Central Soviet, or the Chinese Soviet Republic’s Central Government, had its seat in Juichin, Kiangsi, as has been widely known. At the peak of its authority, it controlled as many as three million people. Its “National Congress,” convened only twice (in November 1931 and February 1934), consisted of progressively indirectly elected members and also further indirectly elected its Central Executive Committee, its Presidium, and its Council of People’s Commissars (Cabinet). While the Congress supposedly wielded “sovereign” power, the Central Executive Committee and its Presidium actually handled policy matters both as to formulation and supervision. The Council, of course, administered policy. At the First National Congress, Mao was elected Chairman of both the Committee and the Council. This made him, to the outside world, both “President” and “Premier.” But at the Second Congress, Mao had to give up the “premiership” in favor of Chang Wen-t’ien, one of “the 28 Bolsheviks” (who had returned from Moscow), while retaining the “presidency.” And the Moscow returnees were known as “leftists.” Hence, the “swing” to the “left” while the National Government’s encirclement campaigns gradually approached success.

This "leftist" turn, as Mr. Lötveit has analyzed it, became manifest in many detailed aspects of the Communist regime's policy formulation and policy execution processes. In the administration of justice, for example, he found that the State Political Security Bureau, modeled after the Russian GPU and aimed at "counter-revolution," eventually became more powerful than the ordinary judicial organs; that lower judicial organs gradually took matters more and more directly into their own hands at the expense of "legality" and proper appeal proceedings; that mass sentiments were progressively allowed to outweigh the force of judicial regulations; that proletarian superiority always overshadowed nominal "equality before the law"; and that, in the end, Red terror tended to replace the administration of any real "justice."

If Mr. Lötveit's analysis of the administration of justice constitutes a calm, technical indictment of the Kiangsi Soviet's eventual radicalism, his treatment of its rural class policy and Land Investigation Movement tends to affirm Mao's relative personal moderation, ingenuity and basic importance as a leader, policy-maker, administrator and "empirical" theorist. He notices how class differentiation in the countryside was based mainly on Mao's own investigation and treatise; how changes were made in the light of practical experience at the various stages of implementation; how, while not free of radicalism himself in the beginning, Mao introduced a period of change in order to correct the excesses committed by local cadres and to salvage a deteriorating situation; and how Chang Wen-t'ien, his successor at the helm of the Council of People's Commissars, sought to remedy such a situation, on the other hand, by sweeping revolutionary measures. Mr. Lötveit's treatment of the Land Investigation Movement as a Maoist-style mass movement is especially noteworthy: he terms it a "great leap forward," predecessor of the real one launched by Mao on a grand scale in 1958. "We have to view the Land Investigation Movement in its very broadest sense," he suggests, seeing that it was simultaneously and progressively associated with not only land policy and class policy matters but, more importantly, also military mobilization and expansion, cooperativization, economic reconstruction, seasonal harvesting and plowing, educational and cultural campaign, mass organization, development of industry and trade, implementation of the Labor Law, construction and repair of roads and bridges, the election campaign, the struggle against "reactionaries," etc., etc. This does remind us of what has happened in 1958, during the Land Reform and Three-Anti and Five-Anti campaigns earlier, as well as the Cultural Revolution and the like. Maoists seem anything but simple-minded political animals.

In financial matters, too, the author suggests that "From 1931 to 1934 the economic burdens laid on the population of the Central Soviet Area increased tremendously" because "the 28 Bolsheviks, Chou En-lai and the Comintern adviser Li T'e (Otto Braun) prevailed in their insistence on a head-on clash with the Kuomintang forces, in defiance of Mao Tse-tung's advocacy of a more flexible warfare" (p. 185). Although he is not sure whether Mao could have done better under different circumstances, he offers the interesting revelation that the Soviet Area, after all, could not do without the help of capitalists like private rice dealers, nor without trading with the "white" areas around—confiscation at random for the purpose of solvency notwithstanding. Even repeated sales of "Government Bonds" failed to do any good, as measures of this sort—aggravated by "commandism" and unfulfilled promises—"had the very unfortunate effect of alienating the masses from the regime" (p. 205).

So, Mr. Lötveit's conclusion is that, while he has "reservation" as to whether or not Mao's was an altogether "moderate" line, he has no doubt whatsoever that "The leftist line of the Party leadership" as managed by "the 28 Bolsheviks" definitely "had extremely grave consequences": "It undermined the very base which the regime was built upon—namely the mass support" (p. 211).

In thus systematizing for us the information concerning this significant episode in the Maoist movement, Mr. Lötveit has utilized a total of 139 documents and 10 different journals from the Shih Sou Collection and dozens of other, secondary sources. Among the documents, 8 are specified as authored by Mao personally—although many others labeled Government and/or Party products can apparently be also traced to him—and 1 by Mao's brother Tse-t'an. Mao is quoted extensively. Such a documentary analysis necessarily has its limitations, of course, and the author, as a beginner, must also clarify and learn many basics in both Chinese studies and political science in his own background. It is not this reviewer's task or intention to touch upon such basics here. But a few instances of neglect or unawareness or undue modesty seem rather excessive. Using almost habitually the term "the Party centre" many times himself throughout his dissertation (pp. 96, 99, 154, etc.), for example, the author should have no great need to profess "difficulty" in establishing "what the word 'Centre' (Chung-yang) stands for" (p. 69); there could be a more definite interpretation in the given context. If his reading of Chinese Communist material had been more extensive, again, Mr. Lötveit would have realized that such a term as "t'u-chi-tui," which he renders as "surprise attack teams," may suggest "trouble-shooting" rather than purely military roles. He shows no awareness, also, of the concept—the very characteristic if not important concept—of "semi-proletariat" created by Mao in his class analysis. And, while indulging in concepts like "will of the people," "opinions of the people" and "the rule of the will of the people," etc., above all, the author, like many others, singularly neglected to define "people" after the Maoist fashion, or to exhibit understanding that "democracy" in the Communist ideology stands out not so much for its weakness in relation to "centralism" as for its auxiliary role—a definite subordinate and non-voluntary role—in the realization of a pre-determined, an ideologically designed, a teleological society that is not for "the people" of any description to "choose" freely. This realization ought to have saved many arguments, political or intellectual. Finally, from Mr. Lötveit's presentation, we cannot be sure whether there was a complete Constitution passed by the First or the Second Congress whereas those who are familiar with the *Documentary History* compiled by Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank, which he lists in his bibliography, have long taken it for granted. Isn't this lingering uncertainty a bit too basic and too glaring?

SHEN-YU DAI

*The Romance of the Western Chamber*. Translated and adapted by Lai, T. C. and Ed Gamarekian. (Hong Kong, etc.: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1973. HK\$8.50.)

Among the Yüan plays, only *Hsi-hsiang-chi* by Wang Shih-fu has been a favorite of translators' pens. It has been rendered into French by Stanislas Julien (1872), Soulie de Morant (1928) and Chen Pao-ki (1934), into German by Vincenz Hundhausen (1926), into English by S. I. Hsiung (1935) and Henry H. Hart (1936), to name only the relatively complete versions. Uneven as they are in their qualities, all of them aim at scholars or serious students of Chinese literature. The need of a shorter, simpler, nontechnical version for the general public has long been felt. Lai and Gamarekian filled this gap by providing an adaptation of this great play of China.

Despite the thinness of the volume, this version presents the complete story in five parts or 20 acts. (Henry H. Hart translated only 15 acts while Chen Pao-ki gave only synopses for parts.) By condensing monologues and eliminating repetitious matter, the whole romance between Chang Kung and Ts'ui Ying-ying (Little Nightingale) is rendered in abridged, but not sketchy, form. The language is highly readable, even by readers who have no knowledge of Chinese literature.