

## CHINESE GREATNESS IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES: THE K'ANG-HSI EMPEROR AND CHAIRMAN MAO

*by Jonathan Spence*

In Chinese history, a man fulfilling one crucial role is destined for historical immortality and recognized as great. This is the unifier. The unifier is the man who, from the chaos of civil war, the miseries of famine, the apparently endless destruction of life and productive labor across the land, can draw his country together again, control the armies, supervise the bureaucrats, protect the harvest, and guard the frontiers. In the last five hundred years of Chinese history, two men have played this role. One was K'ang-hsi, the emperor of China from 1661 to 1722. The second was Mao Tse-tung, born 1893, unifier of China, almost, in 1949. They are not the same kind of person at all: one, K'ang-hsi, was born a Manchu prince, the other was born a Chinese peasant. They lived and fought in different worlds. But both had parallel kinds of problems that had to be faced. I want to examine five of these in this paper.

Three of them are what we might call geopolitical, since they relate to the guarding or expanding of China's borders. I want to look at three cases from very different parts of the Chinese frontier: Russia, Tibet, and Taiwan. The other two problems are connected with the stresses of ruling and aging: the problems of succession to power, and the meaning of power in the unifier's own life. So let me move through these five areas in sequence. Each time, I want to contrast the kind of problems that K'ang-hsi faced with the kind of problems that Mao has had to grapple with.

First, Russia. For K'ang-hsi, in the period from 1660 to 1720, Russia was a dimly understood threat on the northern and western frontiers of China. It was an area from which occasional trade caravans reached Peking, an area of mythology and fear. It was an area of challenge to China dimly sensed, as the cossacks and other settlers, moving east in Russia's great continental expansion and then curving south across the Amur River, began to clash with

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Chinese and Manchu settlers. It was the first area in which a Chinese emperor, in this case K'ang-hsi, moved to establish treaty relations with another power that broke out of the traditional tributary system of China's foreign relations. In the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, Chinese and Russian negotiators worked out a sensible demarcation line for the entire northern frontier. The treaty shows the kind of cosmopolitanism that K'ang-hsi's China was capable of, for it was written out in Latin by Jesuit missionaries acting as interpreters; in an extraordinary seventeenth-century drawing together of different parts of the world, Russian noblemen, Manchu lords, Chinese scholars, and French and Flemish Jesuit priests met together near Nerchinsk to make this treaty.

For the rest of his reign, K'ang-hsi showed a healthy respect for Russia. He involved Russia in his discussions of foreign policy at court, and he kept the Russians informed of what he himself planned to do. He also made generalizations about Russia that show how an emperor of his great power looked at another country:

The kingdom of Russia has many able men, but they are narrow-minded, obstinate, and their argument is slow. From ancient times they have never communicated with China (sic). Their country is very remote from our capital, but we can reach their territory directly by the land route.

Although it is splendid that the foreign vassal (*wai-fan*) should come to present tribute, we fear that after many generations, Russia might cause trouble. In short, as long as the Middle Kingdom is at peace and is strong, foreign disturbances will not arise. Therefore, building up our strength is a matter of fundamental importance.<sup>1</sup>

K'ang-hsi's handling of this large northern empire, which he began to learn more and more about, is an intriguing example of a flexibility that so often has been described as lacking in Chinese foreign policy. K'ang-hsi knew a surprising amount about the country; four small examples show that China was not the isolated country that it is often accused of being in the seventeenth century. For instance, K'ang-hsi described the discovery in Russia of rats as huge as elephants, each weighing several tons, and he discussed at some length the kinds of things that could be made from their bones and remains. It was recently discovered that K'ang-hsi had heard about the excavation of entire mammoths in the Siberian plateaus, either from his intelligence agents or from visiting ambassadors, and trying to work out how any creature could live that far underground, had of course concluded that they must be rats of several tons.

Secondly, when a Russian ambassador reached China in the early eighteenth century, K'ang-hsi asked the man, after a few minutes' conversation about the power of Russia, why it was that the Swedes were giving them such a bad time in their current war. (Again, an example of a certain knowledge of European power politics.) Thirdly, to give an example of his knowledge of another Russian habit, he smiled at the ambassador and said that he had

heard that in Russia, after drinking heavy toasts, they smashed their glasses against the wall. K'ang-hsi said, "I approve of the drinking; I disapprove of the smashing of glasses against the wall."

He also had something of an affection, apparently, for Peter the Great, who echoed in his empiricism and adventurousness the same traits that K'ang-hsi himself had. In a warning that he asked to be delivered to Peter, K'ang-hsi begged him not to take to sea, not to risk his life in small boats, when he himself was the ruler of an empire nearly as large as China. He was impressed by the size of Russia; he would never say it was powerful, but he knew of its size and he was impressed by its possibilities.

Now, for Mao, Russia has again been an absorbing problem. But here, of course, the images have been totally different. We can see this as an index of the way the world has changed. For Mao, growing up, Russia was not a vague frontier presence; it was a revolutionary inspiration. Mao's youth, like that of his friends, hinged on the incredible achievement, as they saw it, of the Russian revolution of 1917. From the period 1925-27, as Mao was beginning to move to the forefront of the Chinese Communist Party, he had considerable contacts with the Russian foreign advisers who were living in Canton and working with Sun Yat-sen. Mao worked with Russian advisers in the Peasant Bureau; he knew the Russian leaders who were training the peasant armies. He learned from them to fight the ideological battles and to make the concessions that were necessary for advance within the Party. At the same time, he learned the kind of difficult decisions that one had to make in obeying foreign advisers. The Comintern advisers sent by Stalin to China were people who had a clear view of the way the Chinese Revolution should advance. And Mao, who, as we know from some of his writings, by about 1926 had begun to see the potential revolutionary force of the Chinese peasantry, was forced to tone down his enthusiasm and think in different terms to please the Russian mentors.

From 1927 to 1935 Mao had an even harsher view of Russian reality. This was the period after the failure of the initial sweep of revolution in China, when the Communist Party took to the hills, or went underground—the period of the Kiangsi soviet, the period of the city parties in Shanghai and Wuhan, when Mao himself ended up as a leader on the run in Kiangsi. But he was subordinate, much of this time, to young Party leaders trained in Moscow and sent out to China, who Mao thought were ill-equipped to understand the realities of a Chinese agrarian revolution.

From 1936 to 1945 Mao moved along with the Russian United Front strategy. (Remember that Stalin, after the end of the Nazi Pact, was the ally of the Western powers, both of Churchill and of Roosevelt, and indeed, uneasily for a short period, of Chiang Kai-shek as well.) Mao here learned compromise, he learned how to follow along the Russian lines, and at the same time he developed an enormous admiration for Stalin which has never left him.

An admiration for Stalin, and a tension about the way that Russia manipulated world revolution, has always been present in Mao's thinking. I read recently the eulogy on Stalin that Mao wrote in the year 1939, which I think makes nostalgic reading now. This is a part of it:

How fortunate for our world to have the Soviet Union, the [Soviet] communist party, and Stalin, to make things easier to deal with. What does the commander of the revolution do? He enables everyone to have food, clothes, shelter, and books. . . .

We learn two things from him—his words and his deeds.

The immense complexity of Marxism can be summed up in one sentence: "It is justifiable to rebel." For centuries people have been saying: "It is justifiable to oppress or to exploit people, but it is wrong to rebel." Marxism turned this thesis upside down. That is a great contribution, a thesis established by Marx from the struggles of the proletariat. . . .

[Stalin's] deeds are the materialization of his words. Marx, Engels, and Lenin did not build a socialist society but Stalin has. This is unprecedented in human history. Before the two Five-Year Plans, capitalist newspapers of all countries had said how desperate things were in the Soviet Union and how unreliable socialism was. What do they have to say now? Chamberlain is silenced, and so are China's die-hards. They admit now that the Soviet Union has triumphed.<sup>2</sup>

In 1945, when civil war broke out again in China, and Mao Tse-tung was pitted in a final war with Chiang Kai-shek for control of China, there was a period of renewed and energetic alliance with the Soviet Union and with Stalin. This was the time when a great many American foreign policy advisers and others decided that China must by definition be subservient to the Soviet Union because of the kind of role that the Soviets seemed to be playing in the direction of China's domestic and foreign policy. Soviet troops moved into Manchuria in 1945 in line with agreements Stalin had made with Roosevelt and Churchill. The Soviets held Manchuria, made it much easier for the Communist Chinese to occupy it, and later withdrew. The Korean War was seen both in the United States and in Europe as surely a closely coordinated Russian-Chinese attack on the Korean people. Mao renewed his praise for Stalin. Mao visited Moscow, and the Chinese-Soviet Security Pact was signed.

Then in 1956 things began to change rather abruptly, and this was the beginning of what we call the "Sino-Soviet Rift." The de-Stalinization speeches of Khrushchev held up for ridicule and obloquy a man whom Mao clearly admired as one of the great socialist leaders in the world. The revolts in Hungary convinced Mao that weakness at the center of the socialist camp was responsible for a spreading rot. His buildup of attacks on Khrushchev is well known now, but at the time the vitriolic abuse that the Soviet Union and China started to pour on each other startled Sinologists and China-watchers; it was difficult to work out what was going on, partly because both the Soviet Union and China were talking in symbols in the late fifties, using one country to represent another: the Chinese used Yugoslavia to mean Russia and the Russians used Albania to mean China.

Tensions became almost irreconcilable, and in 1960 in the most graphic

gesture of hostility that they had made, the Soviets withdrew all their technicians from China. This was a very serious step. The technicians took their blueprints away with them, leaving projects halted in the middle: hydroelectric power stations half built, highways half completed, railways not finished. And with the technicians, the Soviet Union took the promise of nuclear aid and the promise of help in developing an entire nuclear and rocket potential for China.

This tension continued right through the sixties and, in 1968 and 1969, looked as if it might really bring open warfare between China and the Soviet Union. The threat seems now to have receded, though the Chinese at present call the Soviets not only "revisionists," but one of the two superpowers dominating the world (the other, of course, is the United States). So, for Mao, in about the last three or four years the Soviet Union and the United States, in a tragic irony of history, have become essentially parallel.

Mao has made one or two interesting remarks in this recent period that show how intricately enmeshed he has been in thinking about the Soviet Union. One of them is about the "cult of personality." We have heard a great deal about how Mao blew himself up beyond all proportion, or allowed himself to be praised by the people. Mao remarked on this point to Edgar Snow in an interview recently, just before Snow died. Snow asked, "In the Soviet Union, China has been criticized for fostering a cult of personality. Is there any basis for this?" Mao turned to Snow and replied,

Perhaps there was some. It was said that Stalin had been the center of a cult of personality, and that Khrushchev had none at all. The Chinese people, critics said, had some feelings or practices of this kind. There might be some reasons for saying that. Probably Mr. Khrushchev fell because he had no cult or personality at all. . . .<sup>3</sup>

In another and even more ironic case, Mao talked about Kosygin, and the problems of tension between China and the Soviet Union. Snow reported Mao's 1970 view:

As for ideology, who had fired the first shot? The Russians had called the Chinese dogmatists and then the Chinese had called them revisionists. China had published their criticisms, but the Russians had not dared publish China's. Then they had sent some Cubans and later Romanians to ask the Chinese to cease open polemics. That would not do, Mao said. The polemics would have to be carried on for 10,000 years if necessary. Then Kosygin himself had come. After their talk Mao had told him that he would take off 1,000 years but no more.

The Russians looked down on the Chinese and also looked down on the people of many countries, he said. They thought that they only had to speak the word and all people would listen and obey. They did not believe that there were people who would not do so and that one of them was his humble self.<sup>4</sup>

Let us move from the northern frontier to another area in which tensions and problems have been present, Tibet. Tibet, again, was on the edge of the K'ang-hsi Emperor's consciousness when he was a young man in the 1670s and 1680s. But by the 1690s he became extremely interested and concerned.

The reason for this was that K'ang-hsi in his role of unifier (as a parallel measure to the treaty system that he established with the Russians) wanted to establish China's dominant position in western China (what is now Sinkiang), and in the area around the Tibetan border. The tribesmen with whom K'ang-hsi was fighting, called the Dzungars, relied closely on the Dalai Lama as their source of spiritual authority, and so it was in fact not at all recently—it was in the late seventeenth century—that China and the Dalai Lama came into conflict.

In 1696, when K'ang-hsi fought one of his major campaigns against the Dzungars who had been following the orders of the Dalai Lama, he found from surrendered prisoners that the Dalai Lama had in fact been dead for over twelve years, and that it was another senior Lamaist politician in Lhasa who had been using the Dalai Lama's name to direct a huge confederation of tribes against Chinese power. As a result, K'ang-hsi began to be more and more involved in Lhasa politics. In 1706, he ordered the Dalai Lama to come to Peking; the Dalai Lama agreed to come but was murdered on the way, and yet another Lama was set up. In 1717, a rival faction seized the city of Lhasa and installed its own puppet Dalai Lama. In 1720, K'ang-hsi sent his own fourteenth son as a general with a large army, and Chinese troops entered Lhasa in that year and took it over. They installed their own puppet Dalai Lama who was then recognized as the official Lama. Chinese troops withdrew in force but left a strong garrison and for the next two centuries exercised *de facto* political power in Lhasa.

Tibet was never the problem for Mao that we have often seen it to be. To Western observers, Tibet became a symbol of the evil actions of the Chinese communists; it has always been an intensely controversial subject. But Mao assumed, I think automatically, that Tibet must be part of the Chinese polity. In 1949 and 1950 Tibet was taken over with the aid of the Panchen Lama and was declared an Autonomous Region. And apparently it was because of local Tibetan protests against the absence of meaningful autonomy that the revolt of 1959 took place. The instigators of that revolt have not been located by historians; we still do not know exactly what happened, except that the Chinese put the revolt down fiercely. The Dalai Lama fled to India, and the Chinese set up an Autonomous Committee which was controlled by the Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama's second-in-command. In 1965, he also was removed and the Chinese took over complete power.

The significance of the Tibetan example is that we often think of one action as being more graphic or more evil than another because we are ignorant of history. We forget that some things that seem to us serious moral decisions might in fact have meant far less to Mao. Oddly enough, it conceivably could be the example of the United States that may lead to a more lenient policy in Tibet in the future. Talking about Tibet and other so-called "Autonomous Regions," Mao said this to Edgar Snow:

China should learn from the way America developed, by decentralizing and spreading responsibility and wealth among the fifty states. A central government could not do everything. China must depend upon regional and local initiatives. It would not do to leave everything up to him.<sup>5</sup>

The third problem area, again very different, is Taiwan. K'ang-hsi brought Taiwan into the Chinese Empire. In doing so, K'ang-hsi was a unifier, as he had been when he established treaty relations with the Russians and when he dominated Tibet. When K'ang-hsi came to the throne in the 1660s, Taiwan was completely outside the Chinese Empire. In the 1600s it had been a Dutch base in the Far East, and then it had been taken over by pirates and Ming loyalists (defenders of the Ming ruling house that had been overthrown by the Ch'ing). It was as a pirate and Ming loyalist base that K'ang-hsi decided to have it cleared, and his troops captured the island in 1683.

Taiwan was then incorporated into Fukien Province; it became a part of the Chinese provincial structure. K'ang-hsi gave an extraordinary interview to an official in about 1720, that Professor Silas Wu of Boston College recently translated. We can see from it that this autocratic ruler, perhaps the most powerful man on earth at the time, knew very little about the island which had involved him so much in the campaign for its capture. Omitting the rest of the interview, here are K'ang-hsi's questions:

How was the situation in Taiwan?

If the population of Taiwan continues to grow, what will be the possible consequence?

What are the main products of Taiwan?

Do they harvest sufficient rice and cereals every year?

Is the weather cold there?

How do you compare the weather there with that of the Lei-chou prefecture [the official's native prefecture] in Kwangtung?

Why does Taiwan often suffer earthquakes?<sup>6</sup>

The answer to the latter question is intriguing for the way that K'ang-hsi combined extraordinary pragmatism with what strikes us now as nonsense. The answer to "Why does Taiwan suffer earthquakes?" came as follows from the official who was the senior governor there:

Taiwan is a piece of floating land in the sea, with a width of 50 *li* from east to west and a length of 2,000-odd *li* from south to north. It is surrounded by water on all sides; therefore it is only natural that earthquakes occur. There is nothing extraordinary about it.<sup>7</sup>

This explanation was, as far as I can tell, accepted.

Taiwan was added to a Chinese province, and thus it became part of China. In 1721 there was a short rebellion there against K'ang-hsi, which he put down rapidly and rigorously. From then on, for almost the rest of the Ch'ing Dynasty, it was totally absorbed in the Chinese state.

Taiwan has been a very complex problem for Mao, quite different from the kind of problem represented by Tibet or the very vexing, thorny problem presented by Russia, because Taiwan came under Japanese domination in 1895 and remained under Japanese control until 1945. For any Chinese, whether he was communist or socialist or Nationalist, Taiwan simply stood as a symbol of Chinese humiliation at the hands of the Japanese. If one reads anything of Chinese history in the twentieth century, one sees again and again how the Chinese suffered at the hands of the Japanese. So in 1945, when the Japanese were defeated, it was assumed that Taiwan would come back into a reunited China. It became instead, by a turn of history, the base for Chiang Kai-shek and a center for considerable economic growth that stood completely outside the patterns of development that China under Mao was pursuing.

Mao must have wanted Taiwan strongly. We know that when the Korean War broke out, Chinese Communist troops were massed in enormous numbers in Fukien Province, obviously preparing for a major attack on Taiwan. Indeed, the fact that so many Chinese troops were in the south of China waiting to attack Taiwan has been used convincingly by scholars to show that the Chinese were not in fact ready for the Korean War at all. It would have been militarily foolish to have the troops where they were, had they expected the Korean conflict to take the course that it did.

It was here, in this question of Taiwan, that the Americans intruded with such important effect on the Chinese, particularly by instituting the Seventh Fleet patrols that effectively separated Taiwan from the Chinese mainland and made it impossible for the Communist Chinese to capture it. The Quemoy and Matsu shelling and clashes that ricocheted through American papers in the 1955-1958 period, were testing devices by Mao's forces to see what the garrisons were capable of and what the United States response would be. Apparently, the toughness of the response in both cases was enough to induce caution. Also, the fact that the Chinese Communists had a very weak navy and air force meant that any attempt at running the blockade, or any paratroop attacks, were almost impossible.

In his role as unifier of China, Mao's only failure has been the case of Taiwan. Taiwan has been a difficult and humiliating problem throughout the whole of Mao's period of power. I would hazard the guess that President Nixon's visit to China (and the raising of the problem of Taiwan in the way it has been raised) is partly connected with Mao's view of himself as a unifier of China: that to achieve real unity before he dies, to reestablish the pales of the old Chinese Empire, to give the Chinese people control of all the territories that they regard as Chinese, Mao needs Taiwan; Taiwan should be a part of his country. Historically, Taiwan is important to Mao.

As a foil to this kind of geopolitical consideration, let us look at topics that are more idiosyncratic, topics in the vaguer areas of aging and visions of the



future, which include also the problem of succession to power. Here K'ang-hsi and Mao both have had real difficulties.

K'ang-hsi early decided that his second son, a prince called Yin-jeng, should be his successor. Yin-jeng was the only son who was born to K'ang-hsi from a reigning Empress; this put him above all the other sons in the hierarchy. This Yin-jeng, the chosen one, was given a most intensive grooming and education by the best scholars in China. K'ang-hsi watched over him day and night, attended to every detail of the young man's upbringing. He was trained in archery, morality, the Classics, principles of government and administration. We can say that no pains were spared by the loving father.

Yet by the 1690s, Yin-jeng had clearly become a very wild young man. He was debauched sexually, he was extremely cruel; there were rumors that he was also homosexual. In 1708, for a combined series of crimes, Yin-jeng was deposed. But K'ang-hsi had no one else to put in his place; he was lost without him. He obviously loved this son most of all, and in 1709, only one year later, he reinstated him. The whole cycle of accusations, of cruel and violent acts, took place again, and in 1712 K'ang-hsi deposed him, this time forever, putting him under house arrest in the palace. Yin-jeng was never allowed to appear in public again.

We should reflect on what an Emperor says to his people when his son behaves like this, because the problem of imperial succession, and combining this idea of unifying the Empire with the attempt to pass it on to one's people, is indeed a very serious one. Using K'ang-hsi's own phrases, but condensing them somewhat, we find that his views were as follows:

I have held the glorious inheritance of Emperors T'ai-tsu, T'ai-tsung and Shih-tsu for forty-eight years, with care and with attention, compassionate to my officials and nourishing my people, seeking only tranquillity for the country.

Now I see that Yin-jeng rejects the virtues of his ancestors, and disobeys my own orders. He is dissolute, tyrannical, brutal, debauched—it's hard to even speak about it. I've tolerated him for twenty years, but he's grown even worse, scorning and tyrannizing all at court—and monopolizing power. He has assembled a clique. He spies on my person. He checks up on each one of my routine actions. The country has only one ruler—how is it that Yin-jeng recklessly attacks princes and officials, brutally beats them?

Loving luxury, he made his wet-nurse's husband a director of the Imperial Household, so that he could take whatever he wanted from there. He had no compassion for my other sons or for me when we were sick. Strangely, he came each night to my tents and slit open the inner curtains so he could see inside. I couldn't tell if I would be poisoned tonight or killed tomorrow, I was never at rest. How could Yin-jeng take up his imperial inheritance, he who killed his mother, he who is so extravagant, so demanding, so interfering?<sup>8</sup>

K'ang-hsi, after issuing edict after edict along similar lines, finally died in 1722, having named no heir: he died worrying about factional war between his sons, but refusing absolutely to name openly whom he wanted to succeed him. In fact, power in China was taken by the very powerful and capable

fourth son of K'ang-hsi, who later ruled as the Yung-cheng Emperor, and we will never know if he was the "legitimate choice" of K'ang-hsi or not. What we do know is that Yung-cheng turned out to be a super-bureaucrat, an incredibly efficient emperor, who ably consolidated all of his father's gains.

Now let us look at Mao and the problem of succession. Obviously, in terms of the communist state and the hierarchy of power in China, the family nexus does not have the importance it did in imperial succession. But we should remember that, even though there might be no legitimate succession from father to son, Mao's own family life has been clouded with the most extraordinary tragedy. It seems wrong that we should think of him as a ruler (and some deified or vilified being) without realizing what, in fact, he went through. The wife he met as a student and married, clearly having loved very much, was shot by police in 1930 in Changsha, Hunan Province, the center of the revolution. They had two sons. One of them disappeared at that time, the other grew up, came to manhood and was killed in action in the Korean War in 1950. Mao had three siblings. One was a younger sister who was shot by the police in 1930. One was a younger brother, Mao Tse-min, who was executed by a warlord in Sinkiang Province in 1943. And the other younger brother, Mao Tse-t'an, was killed in action in the underground in Fukien Province in 1935. So, in a way, the family itself was literally wiped out, and it had not occurred to me until I began preparing this lecture that the deaths occurred at the locations which I have been discussing: in the northern area of Korea, not far from the Russian border; in Sinkiang Province, in the far west, near the Tibetan frontier; in Fukien Province, just opposite Taiwan itself. And the wife and the baby were killed in Changsha, one of the central revolutionary cities of China.

Later Mao had less tragedy. He married twice more; one of these wives he divorced after she bore him several children and accompanied him on the Long March. The other one is the now famous Madame Mao, Chiang Ch'ing, who has played such a notable role in the Cultural Revolution. Several children have survived, but we do not know any political role or power that is held by any of these, unless Yao Wen-yüan is Mao's son-in-law; there are widespread rumors that Mr. Yao, who is now often mentioned as a possible rising power in the Communist Party, is in fact Mao's son-in-law. There are certainly some marriageable daughters.

The successor chosen for Mao was Liu Shao-ch'i, who seemed definitely to be the dominant choice until 1966. Liu had proved himself as an able leader, theoretician, and organizer of the Communist Party; as a courageous fighter in the underground; and as head of state since 1958. But Mao's attacks on Liu became increasingly frequent after 1966, the period of the Cultural Revolution. I would like to look at three direct attacks on the kind of values that Liu stood for, which Mao made in private papers and correspondence. These have been made available through Red Guard publications and else-

where. (They echo the kind of irritation and dislike that K'ang-hsi came to have for his own son Yin-jeng.) Clearly Liu came to stand for a great many things that Mao could not stomach. Here is some of Mao's language, as he attacks the values and the structure which Liu Shao-ch'i backed. First, on the whole problem of education, Mao has said the following (he wrote all these quotations in the period of 1966, 1967, and 1968):

Our education is fraught with problems, the most prominent of which is dogmatism. We are in the process of reforming our educational system. The school years are too long, courses too many, and various methods of teaching unsatisfactory. The children learn textbooks and concepts which remain [merely] textbooks and concepts; they know nothing else. [They] do not use their four limbs; nor do [they] recognize the five kinds of grain. Many children do not even know what cows, horses, chickens, dogs, and pigs are; nor can they tell the differences between rice, canary seeds, maize, wheat, millet, and sorghum. When a student graduates from his university, he is already over twenty. The school years are too long, courses too many, and the method of teaching is by injection instead of through the imagination.<sup>9</sup>

He feels also that Liu lacks any sense of destiny or criticism, that Liu and the forces represented by him in the Chinese Communist Party do not have the kind of bite that will lead them to hold the revolution in the path that Mao wanted. Mao says the following:

Some of our comrades are allergic to opposition views and criticism. This is quite wrong. . . . (When the secretary comes, everyone at the provincial [party] committee becomes as quiet as a mouse.) [They] are irresponsible, afraid of responsibility; [they] intimidate others into silence or appear frightful like the backside of a tiger which cannot be touched. Ten out of ten people who adopt this attitude will fail. People will talk. Is the backside of a tiger really untouchable? [We] *will* touch it!<sup>10</sup>

And finally, he takes up the whole problem of pedantry and bureaucratism, the unforgivable sin that seems to have grown even stronger in Mao's head in the last few years, the kind of static thinking common in large bureaucratic offices. Mao has suggested several times that staff should be heavily slashed; no official should be saved who could not prove that he was working flat out in his job; everybody else must go. In this light, Mao has an interesting pronouncement for the benefit of students who feel trapped in the system:

The present examination system is more suited for enemies, than for the people; it is like an ambush, because the questions are remote, strange, and still in the old tradition of the eight-legged essays. I am against it. My suggestion is to publish the questions first, let the students study them and answer them with the help of their books. At an examination, the candidates are quite free to discuss with each other and A. is allowed to write B.'s script. If A.'s answer is good, B. should be allowed to copy it.

Students should be permitted to doze off when a lecturer is teaching. Instead of listening to nonsense, they do much better taking a nap to freshen themselves up. Why listen to gibberish anyway?

The present system strangles talents, destroys young people. I am not in favour of it. Too much reading. The examination system fights [the students] like enemies. It is murderous and must be stopped.<sup>11</sup>

It was this attitude that led to perhaps the most intensive attack on the entire system of education that any country has undergone: the attempt to remold the entire university and middle school level in China between the years 1966 and 1969, and the attempt to work out a means of recruitment to higher education in which pupils should be chosen on the basis of revolutionary potential and loyalty to the state instead of their prior grades. It is sobering to announce that in October 1972 the Chinese officially declared that they had reinstated the original examination system at all levels. The experiment, apparently, is over. What role Mao has had in that decision we do not know.

All these levels of hostility (one feels Mao's intense dislike of the coldness and efficiency that Liu represented) seem then to have swung Mao's favor onto the person of Lin Piao. Much younger than Mao (he was born in 1907), Lin Piao was an army officer, minister of defense, a brilliant guerrilla fighter; he had been a Corps commander at the age of twenty-four, had led the Chinese armies in Manchuria and overseen much of the Korean War, and had the power mechanisms of the army behind him. He seemed to share Mao's views, and was officially declared in the Constitution of the Ninth Party Congress in 1969 to be Mao's successor.

The events surrounding Lin's death are not clearly understood even now. All we know is that he was killed in a plane crash, allegedly plotting, or fleeing from a plot, perhaps en route to the Soviet Union. The present stage is one of rumor and gossip. We do not know what Mao has decided. In this sense, like K'ang-hsi, he has refused to make any formal statement of any kind. The odds are that a skilled bureaucrat-politician will emerge to hold together the great triumphs of Mao, much as a skilled bureaucrat-politician—the Emperor Yung-cheng—turned out to be the man who was able to hold K'ang-hsi's achievements together.

Lastly, and most difficult with men of this power and this range, we can try to analyze the problem of death and the future, of what they think about their lives and what they have been doing. With K'ang-hsi in his sixties, obviously there was increasing sorrow and anxiety about the country and the role he had been playing, increasing awareness of his physical frailty, great concentration on the problems of what physical frailty meant to an emperor who had to hold what he often described in quite interesting detail as the most demanding job the world could possibly provide.

K'ang-hsi was haunted as well by a vision of civil war and chaos. He wanted his place in history assured, but was uneasy about it. He felt he could not guarantee it, he felt that his historians and his scribes were not reliable. Let me just recall a short passage from his valedictory edict, not the one that was released to the empire, but a draft that he wrote four years before that. I think we will catch some of the pathos and the courage that ran through

him. This is a literal translation; it is the way emperors were capable of talking in China.

All men who live must die. As Master Chu Hsi said, "The principle of the cyclical cosmic forces is like dawn and night." And Confucius said, "Live contentedly and await Heaven's will." These sayings express the great Way of the Sages, so why should we be afraid? I have been seriously ill recently: my mind was blurred, and my body exhausted. As I moved around, if no one held me up by the arms, it was hard for me to walk. In the past I fixed my mind on my responsibilities to the country; to work "until death comes" was my goal. Now that I am ill I am querulous and forgetful, and terrified of muddling right with wrong, and leaving my work in chaos. I exhaust my mind for the country's sake, and fragment my spirits for the world. When your spirits aren't guarding your body, your heart has no nourishment, your eyes can't tell far from near nor ears distinguish true from false, and you eat little and have a lot to do—how can you last long? Moreover since the country has long been at peace and people grown lazy, joy goes and sorrows mount, "peace" departs and "stagnation" comes. When the head is crammed with trifles, the limbs are indolent; until everything is in ruins and you inevitably bring down at random and together calamities from heaven and destruction for men. Even if you want to do something, your vitality is inadequate, and by then it's too late to admit your mistakes. There's no way you can stir up your spirits, and moaning in your bed, you'll die with eyes open—won't you feel anguish just before you die?<sup>12</sup>

For Mao, we have no equivalent document. But we do have some extraordinarily frank and interesting statements, particularly those that he made in a series of interviews to Edgar Snow, both in 1965 and in 1970. We know now that Mao is approaching his death with an intensely ironic awareness of his own role. Perhaps this is surprising to us, who have been used to the vision of the totalitarian ruler or the brilliant socialist organizer of the state. At the end of 1970, Mao turned to Snow and said, "I'm not a complicated man; but really very simple . . . only a lone monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella."<sup>13</sup> Now, this sort of evocation of Taoist imagery (which could come straight out of a traditional Chinese painting), a landscape image, is not literally present in Mao's mind. But he does mean, I think, that he is aware now of the frailty of his position and the inconsequence at many levels of what he is trying to do.

He adjures the Chinese people against conceit. He exhorts the youth to ever greater efforts. He moves both to rapprochement with the United States and to reiterating, through the delegation at the United Nations, that China realizes once again the probable need for wars in certain situations. We have here a return to a balanced view of the United States, but at the same time a reminder to people that there is a serious war going on. There is already (and this does not merely mean Vietnam) an ideological war of the very greatest importance. As he said in direct response to a question about a U.S. rapprochement, "Except in the deserts, at every place of human habitation there is the left, the centre, and the right. This will continue to be so 10,000 years hence."<sup>14</sup>

In a similar interview, Mao rewrote and brought up to date the theory of contradictions:

Nature and society are full of contradictions. Sometimes we may not be able to name a specific contradiction, but it exists all the same. Contradictions are the motivating force of the development of everything. This has been so in the past, is so at present, and will be so in future.<sup>15</sup>

Mao is concerned with his own fate, and he also issued this astonishing statement (astonishing, at least, to me); as recorded by Snow it goes as follows:

He said that it was odd that death had so far passed him by. He had been prepared for it many times but death just did not seem to want him. What could he do? On several occasions it seemed that he would die. His personal bodyguard was killed while standing right beside him. Once he was splashed all over with the blood of another soldier but the bomb had not touched him. . . .

He had begun life as a primary school teacher. He had then no thought of fighting wars. Neither had he thought of becoming a Communist. He was more or less a democratic personage. Later on—he sometimes wondered by what chance combination of reasons—he had become interested in founding the Chinese Communist Party. Anyway, events did not move in accordance with the individual will. What mattered was that China had been oppressed by imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism. Such were the facts. . . .

From the long-range view future generations ought to be more knowledgeable than we are, just as men of the bourgeois-democratic era were more knowledgeable than those of the feudal ages. Their judgment would prevail, not ours. The youth of today and those to come after them would assess the work of the revolution in accordance with values of their own.

Man's condition on this earth was changing with ever increasing rapidity. A thousand years from now all of us, even Marx, Engels, and Lenin, would probably appear rather ridiculous.<sup>16</sup>

I will leave with you Mao's recent reflections on the problem of nuclear war and death. They do not exude the heady confidence of the "paper tiger" speech that has been so widely read. Mao had heard about the film "On the Beach" and he had asked Western journalists if they considered "On the Beach" a scientific film. His interest in this was so strong that Mao ordered and had translated into Chinese reports of the American scientific expeditions sent to the Bikini atolls several years after they had been used in the famous series of tests. On this, Mao reflected in 1970. Snow reported:

Yet recently he had reports of an investigation by Americans who visited the Bikini Islands six years after nuclear tests were conducted there. From 1959 onward research workers had been in Bikini. When they first entered the main island they had had to cut open paths through the undergrowth. They had found mice scampering about and fish swimming in the streams as usual. The well water was potable, plantation foliage was flourishing, and birds were twittering in the trees. Bacteria had multiplied at the rate of 400 kilograms per square *mou*. Probably there had been two bad years after the tests but nature had gone on. How was it that mice had survived? Plant life was destroyed but not the seeds which lay dormant until the earth's surface was

purified. For the bacteria, the birds, the mice, and the trees, the atom bomb really was a paper tiger. Possibly for man himself it was different. . . .<sup>17</sup>

We can see from this passage that Mao has his dark visions of a world where man may be obliterated even though the rest of life continues. But it is on his hopes that he concentrates. He has a vision of a new China, not only new but, in Mao's revolutionary thinking, constantly *renewing* itself, in which the young seize their future through their revolutionary heritage. It is far from K'ang-hsi's century, but in his dejection K'ang-hsi too worked for the future and did not lose his love of China and his belief in its greatness, nor lose his sense of the place he had earned in history.

Both K'ang-hsi and Mao would have agreed, in the wisdom and sorrow of their old age, on one thing. As Mao has phrased it in a one-line editorial of the second of June, 1966, echoing an old proverb, "The wind will not cease, even if the trees want to rest."<sup>18</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Fu Lo-shu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations (1644-1820)*, 2 vols. (Tucson: Arizona University Press, 1966), I, 106.
2. Jerome Ch'en, *Mao Papers, Anthology and Bibliography* (Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 16-17.
3. Edgar Snow, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 205.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Silas H. L. Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control in China. Evolution of the Palace Memorial System, 1693-1735* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 128-129.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ta-Ch'ing Sheng-tsu Jen Huang-ti shih-lu (Veritable Records of K'ang-hsi's reign)*, ch. 234, pp. 2-3: this shortens K'ang-hsi's words and is not a "literal" translation.
9. Ch'en, *Mao Papers*, pp. 21-22.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
12. *Ta-Ch'ing . . . shih-lu*, ch. 275, pp. 10-b-11.
13. Snow, *Long Revolution*, p. 175.
14. Ch'en *Mao Papers*, p. 153.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
16. Snow, *Long Revolution*, pp. 221-222.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
18. Ch'en, *Mao Papers*, p. 113.