

REVIEW ARTICLE

THE DIALECTICS OF IDEOLOGY

Aspects of the Chinese case

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If one had to characterize each of the three works under discussion here<sup>+</sup>, three epithets spring to mind: clarification - vindication - preservation.

**Clarification:** According to the author's own statement, E. Bauer's study *Ideology and Development in the People's Republic of China* originated from the insight that during the mid-70s parts of the Western Left continued to adhere to a tradition of the former student movement by projecting their own subjective conceptions of socialism onto People's China. They believed that in China these conceptions had been realized optimally. Moreover, in the scholarly and popular literature, Bauer found himself confronted with the nebulous and unreflected stereotype of a "China model" for the developing countries. Irritated by such observations, he decided to explicate the specific structures of China's "ideology and development", thereby challenging Western illusions and misconceptions.

**Vindication:** T. Bergmann and his associates were inspired by the desire to rectify a distorted image. They argue that Western perceptions of

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<sup>+</sup>) Edgar Bauer: *Ideologie und Entwicklung in der Volksrepublik China. Philosophische und politische Aspekte der Entwicklungsideologie der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas.* (Sozialwissenschaftliche Studien, 9) Bochum: Studienverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1980. viii + 670 pp., DM 69.80.

Theodor Bergmann / Ulrich Menzel / Ursula Menzel-Fischer (eds.): *Liu Shaoqi. Ausgewählte Schriften und Materialien.* 2 vols. Stuttgart: edition cordeliers, 1982. Vol. I: 345 pp.; vol. II: 391 pp. Appendix: 23 photographs. DM 49.80.

Helmut Martin (ed.): *Mao Zedong. Texte. Schriften, Dokumente, Reden und Gespräche (1949-1976).* Deutsche Bearbeitung und chinesische Originalfassung. München und Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag. DM 1600.- per set.

Vol. I: 1979. CXXXIV + 599 pp.

Vol. IV: 1982. XVI + 635 pp.

Vol. II: 1979. XVIII + 605 pp.

Vol. V: 1982. XXIV + 783 pp.

Vol. III: 1982. XV + 594 pp.

Vol. VI: 1982. XXXII + 1027 pp.

Liu Shaoqi had been deeply deformed, to a great extent under the influence of the campaigns unleashed against Liu during China's Cultural Revolution. When during the late 70s drastic political and social changes gained momentum in China, the time seemed to have come to also lay the foundation for a more adequate perception of Liu in the West and present him "as a quite independent theoretician" of Chinese-style Marxism-Leninism (I, p.7). For this purpose, Bergmann and his associates compiled a collection of translated writings by Liu, supplemented by additional material and two essays. Thus their book in fact serves as an extension of the Chinese rehabilitation campaigns for Liu into the horizons of German intellectuals.

**P**reservation: H. Martin's project *Mao Zedong. Texte* is devoted to preserving the Chairman's written traces from the latter period of his life (1949-1976). Martin and his team set out to supply the reader with the whole body of Mao material available outside China by the mid-70s, "without additions and omissions" (I, p. CI). Although Martin's project is not intended to enhance or deflate a particular image, as a work printed so relatively soon after Mao's death it was bound to appear as a part of his legacy. In paradoxical contradiction to what the editors had in mind, the *Texte* collection at first glance could be misperceived as a mere Mao monument.

To be sure, each of the three works deserves a discussion in its own right, presented in the following parts I to III. What demands a more complex review article is, however, that they are interconnected by some basic issues: these will be subsequently examined in parts IV and V.

## I. THE ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Bauer's study could most appropriately be termed a rigorous analysis. It commences with a general criticism of the conceptions of ideology in the relevant literature, covering Western and (translated) Russian works. Bauer first emphasizes that within the two spheres of non-Marxist and Marxist world-views, a diffuse multiplicity of definitions of ideology exists. From this conglomeration, the "epistemological and functional approaches" are singled out. For Bauer, their main deficit stems from the fact that - due to their "fruitless effort to solve the question of what ideology is and which task it fulfills for its holder" - these studies inevitably ignore the specific contents of a given ideology, since they do not perceive a "substantial interrelation between ideology and politics" (p. 51). This is exactly the gap Bauer wants to bridge. His objective is to analyze the web of connections between "ideology" and "development" from an "inner perspective". This approach is based on his decision to accept "Chinese ideology", or "the ideology of the Communist Party of China", as a coherent and meaningful system. Consequently, Bauer does not strive to dismantle it as a negative phenomenon obscuring reality,

but by his decision he assumes he has gained access to the system's internal structures.

His explorations amount to an excursion through a wide range of material, published in China between 1949 and 1978: writings of prominent leaders, official treatises, publicized philosophical and political debates, terminological dictionaries etc.

A mere glance at these sources should indicate what Bauer's study does not undertake: an investigation of the impact of ideology or policy on the economic and social reality in the People's Republic of China. For this, different research would be necessary.

Instead, the author confines the scope of his research to the sphere of theory and politics. As his essential point of departure, he asserts that the basic contents of ideology, formulated by small leadership groups and disseminated through media and propaganda channels, must indeed be perceived as factors influencing trends and contents of development strategies. Tracing such links, Bauer resolves to focus on the "philosophical and political aspects of CCP ideology". To either of these two complementary dimensions he devotes one of the central chapters of his book. In the philosophical chapter, he deduces the specific concept of development from the patterns of materialist dialectics and the materialist conception of history. The chapter dealing with the political dimension then discusses the issue of the final goal of historical development - to be reached in the "socialism" and "communism" stages -, further reflects on the process of continued development under the conditions of a socialist society, and finally investigates the various functions of CCP leadership in the political framework of the PRC.

One important achievement of Bauer's analysis is that it transcends the limits of purely abstract and theoretical considerations by pinpointing "ideological and political implications" in the turbulent history of the PRC. Thus "the intra-Party conflict between the group around Mao Zedong on the one side and the group around Liu Shaoqi on the other" is associated with the debate about the developmental law of unity and struggle of opposites (p. 175). Similarly, the discrepant political directions in the context of the socialist transformation of China's agriculture (1955) are linked to the theoretical controversy between Ai Siqu and Yang Xianzhen (p. 221), and elsewhere we find illustrated how ideological issues were transformed into instruments for criticizing the Gang of Four.

The final part of the book evaluates the roles of ideology in the realm of CCP leadership. This part reveals the complicated self-definition processes within the Party, considers the potential emergence of frictions between the Party and a professional army, and eventually declares the so-called "mass line" a fictitious phenomenon, merely camouflaging the fact that "the masses" should be regarded as passive recipients of CCP ideology and politics, even more so since they are dependent upon the guidance of the cadres.

It seems highly questionable whether an average reader from the one-time West-European Left, fascinated by China but lacking even elementary knowl-

edge about it, would be able to maintain orientation while being rushed through the intricate interior of Chinese ideology and politics. More likely he would get dizzy halfway along and only be able to form a confused picture, made up of blurred details. The "message" of Bauer's study, however, will reach the reader with full force: "The ideology of the Communist Party of China" does not exist as a clear-cut entity, providing one and only one specific "instruction" for a given situation, but as a framework it offers "a wide range for alternative variants of development" (p.445). Due to conceptual and terminological "indistinctness" and "openness" of its central parts, CCP ideology in the philosophical and political spheres provides a rich stock of components, which - according to different needs and goals - can be combined into different models and even contradictory lines of argument for developmental policies.

Under the impact of Bauer's conclusions, the long-cherished "brainchild" of the Western Left, i.e. the projection of an ideal Chinese-type socialism, disintegrates into a puzzle of theorems and postulates - a puzzle, paradoxically, in which the pieces have no definite locations.

For one involved in the study of China's thought and material development, Bauer's book does definitely make stimulating reading. For the reviewer, however, it also created a disturbing effect: the deeper one gets into it, the stronger the question grows, what actually are the criteria substantially distinguishing Bauer's own book from some of the "epistemological and functional" analyses criticized in his introductory chapter?

## II. THE CASE OF LIU SHAOQI

While Bauer causes disintegration, Bergmann and his associates hope to re-establish Liu Shaoqi as a key figure. The translated texts of 13 of Liu's important writings and speeches constitute the core of their two-volume opus, supplemented by nine documents on "the case of Liu Shaoqi". Added is a bibliography in which the editors claim to list all primary material, either written by Liu himself or of direct relevance to his case, spanning the period between 1921 and 1982. In one of the accompanying essays, U. Menzel presents an outline biography of Liu Shaoqi: his rise, persecution, fall, and posthumous rehabilitation. In the other essay, T. Bergmann attempts to define the function of Liu and "Liuism" in the ideological and political contexts of the PRC.

Material and interpretive framework could have been fused by the editors/authors into a single complex entity. But unfortunately their work is weakened by a considerable gap: the positions and hypotheses expressed in the essays are not systematically related to or deduced from the contents of the sources published here (or the numerous others not included in this collection). The authors mostly refer to the documents as phase-markers in Liu's biography. Especially T. Bergmann's reflections must primarily be regarded as some

kind of a personal manifesto elevating Liu Shaoqi; it culminates in a "critique of Maoism and de-Maoization", directed mainly at the then ruling circles in Beijing, but at the same time also addressing erstwhile or left-over Western "Maoists". Bergmann's assumption of a coherent system labeled "Liuism" as a conscious alternative to "Maoism" seems highly debatable. The most crucial point, however, is that essays like these, inspired by conviction, not really evolving from scholarly analysis, and largely unburdened by cautionary doubts, are bound to produce strong suggestive effects. Thus, the editors might even have rendered their own cause a disservice, since the essays could affect the reader's sensitivity toward the complex contents of the documents given at hand.

### III. MAO MATERIAL

H. Martin supplies an uncut gem. As regards its sheer scope, Mao Zedong. Texte is a far cry from the two other publications reviewed above. Six volumes, comprising almost 4500 pages, present about 570 documents in bilingual Chinese/German versions, approximately 850 additional, mostly shorter primary language texts, plus a bilingual compilation of "Quotations from the Cultural Revolution", all arranged in chronological order. Mao Zedong. Texte is designed to reach two different readerships: sinological experts as well as interested readers not familiar with Chinese. (The price of this collection, however, is so exorbitantly high that presumably only very few sets can have been purchased by individual buyers.)

Martin's project must of course be granted the distinction "impressive". The editors claim to have traced virtually everything attributed to Mao since 1949 and available outside China during the second half of the 70s. The texts were not only taken from official publications and unauthorized anthologies circulating in the PRC: to ensure completeness, major international newspapers, reports, memoirs etc. were sifted through. (Yet, with a project of this size, perfection cannot but be beyond reach.)

Considering the treasure of sources assembled here, it is disappointing that this opus magnum, too, suffers from a significant discrepancy between its contents and framework. To be sure, Martin opens the whole project with the long essay "State Maoism", an introduction to the functions of Mao's writings (I, pp. VII-C). This essay demonstrates that the so-called "Mao canon" never existed as a definite body of texts but was subject to incessant changes in response to the recurring policy debates and ideological controversies. Martin elucidates how various groups of editors during the course of PRC history re-structured the "Mao canon" in order to legitimize differing political outlooks.

Beyond this information, however, the Mao Zedong. Texte collection

lacks any further explanatory or interpretive aids. It neither includes a detailed discussion of the interrelations between various important texts nor is an introduction to the substantial issues inherent in the documents provided. The reader's hope that he might be offered some interpretations in retrospect is thwarted, too: although the foreword announces (I, p. CIV) that the project would be crowned by a special essay, the sixth volume unobtrusively fades out with the usual index. A brief statement would have been opportune at least, perhaps offering some reference to Martin's related writings in the field or to comparable works. But it needs no special emphasis that only a profound essay would have adequately rounded off the edition. Thus, where Bergmann/Menzel can be criticized for influencing the reader's perspective too strongly, Martin leaves him unguided - not a small risk with a labyrinth like Mao Zedong. Texte.

#### IV. FACETS OF THE TRANSLATION ISSUE

Besides non-specialized readers, the prime audience for translated documents are students of history, political science, philosophy etc. It could be argued that compilations like Bergmann/Menzel's and Martin's can constitute the foundation for analyses like the one by Bauer. Yet it is exactly in this quality that Bauer practically rejects them. He does, no doubt, find it helpful to use translations in order to acquire a better understanding of the background, but since he attributes overriding importance to the questions of terminology for a thorough exploration of patterns of ideology, he unequivocally declares: "... there can be no substitute for the exhaustive study of the Chinese original sources" (p. 15/16).

Remarkably, such doubts are also apparent in Martin's foreword, since he warns that translations in general, and especially translations of Mao texts, are always to be understood as interpretive and often complicated by highly "elliptical" contents or polymorphous structures of Mao's utterances (I, p. CIV/CV). Not least, it was this realization that motivated Martin to include the original texts in his collection: to open up deeper insights, beyond the horizons of the translation, for sinological experts.

All this should not be misread as a verdict against editions of translated material. Quite to the contrary, it is the reviewer's opinion that more are required, and of more diverse sources. The recent boom of literary translations, i.e. of Chinese novels, dramas, stories etc., cannot compensate for the relative dearth of other categories of translated material.

Viewed in this perspective, the general value of both Bergmann/Menzel's and Martin's collections is evident. In direct comparison, however, the achievements of Mao Zedong. Texte are to be rated higher. First of all, the actual translation work confronted Bergmann/Menzel with relatively

little difficulties: the German versions assembled in their edition are not directly based on Chinese originals, but are either reprints of German translations or are translated from English versions, all officially published in Beijing. Moreover, the Liu documents are throughout well-phrased texts. This keeps ambiguities and enigmas at a moderate level, yet does not absolutely preclude terminological frictions. For instance, to translate "New Democratic Revolution" as "Neue Demokratische Revolution" is formally correct, although the translation "Neudemokratische Revolution" conveys the specific ideological particularities inherent in the Chinese term *xinmin-zhuzhuyi* more strongly.

Secondly, the collection suffers from a defect not sufficiently taken into consideration by its editors: in several cases, the actual date of origin of a given document and the date of its Chinese or foreign language re-publication are a number of years apart. Thus the re-published versions may bear the imprint of later developments and changed terminological patterns. Since such variant readings remain unmarked in the translations offered here, the reader will in vain search for detailed information enabling him to evaluate the relevance of the variations.

The texts assembled in Martin's edition do indeed pose a more complex challenge. For reasons of principle, Martin and his team base their translations upon the optimal primary language source to be traced - in most cases, of course, Chinese ones. Besides numerous clear-cut political or programmatic documents, they had to cope with Mao's speeches to groups of leading cadres: these speeches often lack systematic structuring; they are erratic, loaded with excursions into history and/or the politics and ideologies of foreign countries, and interspersed with cryptic terms or remarks. To make it worse, no officially issued texts are available for a number of speeches, but only unofficially compiled and circulated records. Another category of difficult documents is Mao's philosophical reflections, saturated with spontaneous insights and elaborations on socio-economic issues.

On the whole, Martin's team of translators succeeded well. Certain aspects of their work, however, require separate discussion. Only three instances, all taken from volume III, can be singled out here. First, the merely literal translation of *gongchan feng* as "communist wind" ("kommunistischer Wind") is insensitive to a pejorative connotation equally contained in this term, which is rendered as "kommunizatorskoe povetrie" ("communizing craze"/"Kommunismus-Mode") by one dictionary (Beijing 1977). Mao himself once emphasized that the issue of *gongchan feng* was included in Soviet criticisms during the late 50s, when Moscow objected to premature tendencies propagating China's imminent entry into the communism stage. Second, in some cases the name of foreigners failed to be decoded: for example, on p.61 (p.378), the Chinese transliteration *Kuxining* is recognized as the name of O. V. Kuusinen, while on p.145 (p.413), *Ku Xining* is not correspondingly identified. Another Soviet key figure is not recognized and treated as a Chinese functionary (p.269/p.464; p.338/p.496). Third, in a

philosophical passage of rather fundamental significance, the German rendition of a sentence breaks the pattern of the Chinese original, producing a different meaning (p. 329-330/p. 490). Instead of "rectifying" this sentence without indicating so, the editors could have taken it, combined with related passages, as the point of departure for a reflection on "Maoist" understanding and interpretations of the axiom of the unity of opposites.

Such issues do not denigrate the undisputable importance of the Mao Zedong. Texte collection. Nonetheless, hidden aspects like these must be acknowledged as cases in point supporting Bauer's caveat concerning the undiluted authenticity of translated material. (As the recent case of some of "Mao's late poems" shows, the problem of authenticity in fact goes much deeper.)

#### V. UNEXPLORED DIMENSIONS OF "CHINESE IDEOLOGY"

The question could be asked what justifies such a detailed discussion of three works which could be considered obsolete, long since overtaken by reality? After all, the erosion of Western illusions of Chinese socialism was primarily effected by the drastic changes in China, and not so much by Bauer's efforts. With the recent publication of the second official volume of Liu Shaoqi's "Selected Writings", his rehabilitation seems to have come to a close. And Mao Zedong has been assigned a prominent place in the Chinese hall of fame: as if to emphasize his transformation into a detached historic figure, in post-Mao China a special academic discipline with its own periodicals was established for the study - and thereby modified preservation - of "Mao Zedong thought". (China's newly accelerated study of Marxism-Leninism and of European philosophy, respectively, are conducted as separate fields.)

The value of the books under review here, however, is not dependent upon such obvious contemporary developments - even more so since they share some more essential common features which make them appropriate objects of the following concluding reflections.

One core element of the three works alike is "ideology": for Bauer, in the form of a flexible conceptual and terminological system, for Bergmann/Menzel as the theory facet of Liu's political role, and for Martin as the corpus of Mao texts.

Coinciding in principle, each of the authors postulates in his study or essay the objective existence of a "CCP ideology", "Mao ideology", or "Chinese ideology". All arguments revolve around this phenomenon, and all conclusions are deduced from it.

This concept of "Chinese ideology" basically assumes that only at particular points of China's recent history, a stock of Marxist-Leninist terms and elements was adopted by "the Chinese" or "the CCP" and subsequently supplemented by



the creation of their own, "sinicized" versions. This assumption finds its clearest expression in Bauer's following hypothesis: "The CCP's ideological style in the first place is distinguished by the adoption of Marxist-Leninist terminology, which is extended by the use of terms and formulas coined by the Chinese communists." (p.90) Furthermore, this approach is implicitly based on the axiomatic assumption that the Soviet-type Marxism-Leninism had already been developed into a full-blown system at a rather early (but never clearly marked) stage, so that the Chinese merely had to select and sinicize certain elements of this system.

This concept of a "Chinese communist ideology" is prevalent in most of the relevant literature. Yet the validity of this understanding has to be principally contested: there was no self-centered, separate formation of a "Chinese communist ideology". The continuous changes of the contents and presentation of ideology must at least partly be perceived as facets of an on-going Sino-Soviet communication process - not a clear-cut dialogue between two closed systems ("Soviet ideology" and Chinese ideology", viz.), but an often confusing tangle, caused by the existence of differing conceptions on either side. Interpreted within the formula of the unity of opposites, the later Sino-Soviet dispute of the 60s and 70s was but a continuation of the preceding phase, only now in an openly negative, antithetical form.

Applied to the books under discussion, this means that their authors/editors all inadvertently remain confined to the parameters of a fictitious "Chinese system": Bauer with his choice of an "inner perspective", Bergmann/Menzel with their concentration on Liu's role, and Martin with his reconstruction of a "state Maoism" or the "Mao canon". For all of them, important dimensions of development and strategy debates lie beyond their scope. None of the works reviewed has, for instance, recognized the hidden links between a number of texts (among them *Maodun lun*, *Bianzhengfa liju*, Soviet treatises etc.) as significant indicators for the changing texture of Sino-Soviet relations.

In a flexible concept of ideology, various strands are interwoven into a coherent entity: basic philosophical and theoretical ideas, reflections on the nature of society, development strategies etc. It could be argued that this is exactly what Bauer reveals in his study. In fact, however, there are much more complex implications to the phenomenon. This can, for example, be illustrated with the following observation: once again, Bauer bases his analysis on the well-known standard formula that "in the historical-materialist component of the CCP ideology, the development of human society in general and of Chinese society in particular is being schematically pressed into the procrustean bed of five and six social formations, respectively. Development thus takes the form of a process of successive modes of production, while the course of development is defined as universally valid" (p.203). This stereotype of the "unilinear scheme of development" has its counterpart in Bergmann's laconic claims: "1. There exist certain parallels between socialist countries. 2. After the revolution they pass through similar cycles of development." (II, p.306)

Such oversimplifying assumptions are rooted in what could be called a *fata morgana* of pure ideology: as though the leaders of either of the Great Neighbors would only concentrate their attention on the smooth passage of their country through the predestined stages of the "universally valid" pattern, China merely lagging behind, two discrete lines of development, not affected by any mutual influences or interferences.

Such an approach ignores the existence of strong dialectical ties between ideology and interest. One of the continuously debated issues between the Soviet and the Chinese leaderships was how to create an integrated theory-model that would be flexible enough to accommodate the often contradictory positions of either side in abstract formulas, both sufficiently "orthodox" and at the same time leaving room for varying interpretations. Crucial points in this context are, among others, the definition and evaluation of general features and particularities of socio-historic development patterns, or the problem of the succession of the various socio-economic stages. (Like most other authors, Bauer bases his image of the "Marxist" pattern of Chinese history on the most conspicuous and most widely quoted source: a passage from "The Chinese Revolution and the CCP". This very source, however, can be shown to be of questionable authenticity.) Up to the Sino-Soviet dispute, the seemingly intact "framework of orthodox theory" was not recognizably disrupted but at times strained to its limits. For instance, only with great effort could the theorem of "New Democracy" be fitted in. Similar background dimensions are inherent in the question - treated by Bauer, but as a purely Chinese problem - of the interrelations of the socialism and communism formations.

How the "dialectics of ideology" functioned in the sphere of concrete politics could be demonstrated by an analysis of the collectivization debate in the 50s: differing socio-historic theories, developed by Soviet as well as by Chinese theoreticians, provided the groundwork for arguments both pro and contra. And the Great Leap Forward evolved from similar debates.

The list of examples need not be continued here. (A forthcoming study by the author will present a more detailed picture.) It can be stated, however, that a truly absolute sphere of ideology apparently did not exist: the changing structures of formulated ideology can be shown to be connected to the major issues of the development strategies competing within the Sino-Soviet "macro-system".

Although the aspect of history has been touched upon above in the context of the "unilinear development scheme", it requires further discussion leading to the issue of the genesis of a "Chinese ideology". This issue finds its clearest expression in Bauer's study but it is implicit in the two other works as well. Bauer first sketches a "historical background (1840-1920)", comprising well-known events and developments in China ("Between tradition and modernization"), but then nonetheless reconstructs the ideology of the 20th century as a phenomenon almost completely generated in the Occidental world, refined to the canon of Marxist-Leninist theory by Russian/Soviet thinkers, passed on to the Chinese,

and eventually "sinicized" by them as "emancipation from ideology imperialism" (p.108).

Such uni-directional explanations are incompatible with the complexities of the history of Chinese thought. Similarly, it seems insufficient to merely refer to Confucianism, thereby covering the "traditional dimension", or to trace scattered elements of "traditional thought" in the assumed 20th century system of CCP ideology.

Still, far too little is known about the transformations of Chinese thought throughout the whole period from the 18th century up to the present. What is needed are more in-depth studies scrutinizing the changes in Chinese conceptions of society, economy, and politics during the said period - studies disregarding the superimposed limitations of competing official historiographies, and penetrating the various layers of sources written in the manifold styles which appeared during this period of transition.

Studies comparable to Bauer's analysis will henceforth have to treat the "dialectics of ideology" in their full dimensionality - beyond the limited horizons of a "sinocentric" view. Then, however, a crucial question can no longer be avoided: what actually were (and are) the substantially common elements and links in the ideology supposedly uniting the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China?