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# Book Review: Yongyi Song, Editor-in-Chief: China and the Maoist Legacy: The 50th Anniversary of the Cultural Revolution

Heng Ge

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**Yongyi Song, Editor-in-Chief : *China and the Maoist Legacy: The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cultural Revolution* 文革五十年：毛泽东遗产和当代中国. Hong Kong and New York: Mirror Books, 2016, 2 vols.**

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 2016 inspired several commemorative seminars and conferences in Germany, France, Japan, Hong Kong and the United States. However, only one such commemorative event held in Los Angeles and UC Riverside entitled *China and Mao's Legacy: Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Cultural Revolution* produced a two-part conference volume entitled *China and the Maoist Legacy: The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cultural Revolution*. Complete with nearly one million Chinese characters and edited by Yongyi Song, a leading Cultural Revolution scholar and one of the chief organizers of the conference, this conference volume is a significant contribution to the existing literature on the Cultural Revolution.

Since such scholarly activities and exchanges are restricted in China, conference organizers felt duty-bound to convene such a conference overseas. Their efforts came to great fruition. This volume contains twenty essays from a great many prominent Cultural Revolution scholars and researchers from mainland China, including Xu Youyu, Qin Hui, Yang Jisheng, Wang Haiguang, Yin Hongbiao, Mi Hedou, Zhu Xueqin, Tang Shaojie, Dong Guoqiang, Shen Xiaoyun, Xu Hailiang, Jin Guangyao and Li Xun. In addition, over fifty scholars from the United States, Canada, Germany, Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, and other parts of the world also gathered at the conference and contributed their research papers to this volume, providing a well-rounded representation of recent and current research findings on the Cultural Revolution.

Another important aspect of this conference volume is that the views of some emerging scholars on the Cultural Revolution are heard and represented. Over the last decade, many young scholars and doctoral students who have focused on Cultural Revolution studies have emerged both inside and outside China. Recognizing the importance of this community, the editor has included a few essays from the so-called "ba ling hou" generation (people born in the decade of 1980s). Six nascent researchers from various parts of the world contributed papers on such Cultural Revolution-related topics as work teams, violence, the handling of grievances in Guangxi, and a comparison of worker rebels in Shanghai and Wuhan. Although these young scholars are all members of the post-Cultural Revolution generation, their research has nonetheless reflected solid command of archival sources and knowledge of new scholarship. Their contribution is pivotal for the future of Cultural Revolution studies.

Yet another important contribution of this volume is the representation of new historical facts, perspectives, and theories, as reflected in the writings of a number of prominent scholars, including Xu Youyu, Song Yongyi, Wu Guoguang, Cheng Yinghong, Yang Haiying, Ding Shu, Mi Hedou, Hu Pin, Cheng Tijie, and Zhou Zehao. Efforts to establish new

theoretical frameworks are reflected in quite a few papers. Researcher Mi Hedou, an eminent mainland China scholar on the Red Guard movement, offered his new interpretations on the cultivation of the Red Guard mindset based on their “heroism outlook,” their developmental stages, and the “courtyard culture” in which children of communist officials were raised before the Cultural Revolution. Dr. Yang Haiying of Shizuoka University in Japan, on the other hand, attempted to interpret the massacre of ethnic Mongolians during the Cultural Revolution in the case of “Neiren Dang” (Inner Mongolia People’s Revolutionary Party) through the lens of genocide. Also worth noting is the paper by Dr. Zehao Zhou of York College of Pennsylvania titled “Restless Bones: the Fate of the Dead during the Cultural Revolution and Other Political Movements of the PRC.” Through the fate of the dead, Zhou provided a new and distinctive prism through which to study the history and impact of the political movements in China since the founding of the PRC.

Some historical events during the Cultural Revolution are familiar to many, such as the “February Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries,” “Extensive Democracy,” and “Elections at Party Congresses.” However, in-depth research on them has long been absent. Professor Xu Youyu’s paper “February Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries” was the first effort to comprehensively investigate and shed light on this major historical event through a combination of broad analysis and careful documentation. For another instance, Professor Wu Guoguang of the University of Victoria delved into the phenomenon of “Extensive Democracy” with which the Cultural Revolution is often associated. In his paper “Elections during the Cultural Revolution: An Investigation of Party Congress,” Wu exposed the nature of “Extensive Democracy” during the Cultural Revolution through meticulous analysis.

Notwithstanding the restrictions on Cultural Revolution studies, the legacy of the Cultural Revolution continues to be keenly felt in contemporary China. It is inevitable, therefore, that any meaningful research on the Cultural Revolution and its political legacy must include an assessment of the impact of the Cultural Revolution on China today. Several papers in this volume address this topic through in-depth discussions. For example, Gao Wenqian’s paper studied the parallels between some practices during Cultural Revolution and the leadership style in contemporary China while Ling Cangzhou explored the impact of Mao’s legacy on contemporary China.

The editor also created a special section titled “The Reexamination of the Cultural Revolution Studies” to sum up the state of research on this historical event. In this section, Wang Haiguang, a professor from the History Department of the East China Normal University, contributed his paper “Cultural Revolution Research Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: a Comprehensive Review of Research on the Cultural Revolution,” in which he described and reflected on the long and difficult trajectory of Cultural Revolution research in mainland China. Professor Guo Jian of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater presented a paper titled “Rebel Complex.” Guo argued that the healthy

development of a research field is improbable without frequent introspection and self-corrections on the part of the participants of the historical events in question. All these perspectives have led the discussions into many hitherto unexplored areas and served to both enrich the content and broaden the scope of this volume.

In sum, the publication of this conference volume will not only promote Cultural Revolution studies as an academic field but it will also provide much needed clarity and perspectives on Mao's legacy and its continuous impact on China today and tomorrow. This conference volume will be a welcome addition to any Cultural Revolution collection in academic libraries as well as to any public library with a comprehensive Chinese collection.

Heng Ge, NYU Shanghai Library