The unusual events in China from mid 1966 through early 1968 have led me to attempt a rather unusual kind of book. It is about Mao Tse-tung and the Cultural Revolution, but its larger concern is with men's efforts to render their works, and especially their revolutionary works, eternal.

Professor Lifton, a psychiatrist with a leaning towards psychoanalysis, is widely acknowledged as an authority on contemporary psychological patterns in East Asia. In Revolutionary Immortality he combines psychological and historical analysis to reveal the Cultural Revolution as a reaction to the anticipated death of Mao Tse-tung and the dictator's fear that his revolution may lose its impetus.

Purity and power, the 'immortalization of words' (in The Thought of Mao), the deification of the hero and victory over death are some of the intriguing elements in Dr Lifton's remarkable comment on the mass strength and the underlying limitations of Mao's programme in a technological age. Seen in these terms the Cultural Revolution may well represent the last stand of 'militant rectitude' against the shifting, shiftless, but growing presence of what the author calls 'protean man'.

Professor Lifton's study of brain-washing, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, is already in Pelicans.

Cover design by Oodo van Hasselt

For copyright reasons this edition is not for sale in the U.S.A. or Canada.
3. The Death of the Revolution

Mao's ultimate dread — the image of extinction that stalks him — is the death of the revolution. When he speaks of the possible 'poor performance' of the young, his overriding concern is that the immortal revolutionary legacy will be squandered. As he pointed out to Snow 'n that same interview, 'those in China now under the age of twenty have never fought a war and never seen an imperialist or known capitalism in power'. His fear is not simply that the young are too soft, but that they may be incapable of sharing and perpetuating the world view that created the revolution. For that world view was based upon his and his generation's specific experience, and as he goes on to say about the young, 'They knew nothing about the old society at first hand. Parents could tell them, but to hear about history and to read books was not the same thing as living it.' That is, in such unknowing hands the sacred thing itself — the Revolution — could be abused, neglected, permitted to die.

Such 'historical death' can, for the revolutionary, represent an 'end of the world', an ultimate deformation and desymbolization. It may cause anxiety similar to or

*All of these terms refer to symbolic death, through loss of viable relationship to the forms and symbols which sustain psychic life.

The Death of the Revolution 29
even greater than that associated with the idea of individual death. Actually, the two forms of death anxiety become inseparable: if the revolution is to be extinguished, the dying revolutionary can envision nothing but the total extinction of his own self.

Marxists repeatedly call forth certain specific images to suggest the danger of the death of the revolution. These include 'American imperialism', 'feudalism', 'the capitalist road', 'bourgeois remnants', and 'modern revisionism'. American imperialism is the ultimate enemy to which one must be alert, lest it destroy the revolution through power or guile. But the threat it poses is external and therefore largely visible. Feudal or capitalist and bourgeois remnants, on the other hand, are doubly dangerous because, as retained internal poisons whose effects are mainly upon the mind, they tend to be invisible. They thus require constant psychic purging, as provided by the extensive programmes of thought reform (or 'brainwashing') so long prominent in Chinese Communist practice. But what has recently emerged as the greatest threat of all is modern revisionism. For it is both an external danger, as embodied by a visible friend-turned-enemy, the Soviet Union, and an internal one of an insidious personal nature. It is a form of degeneracy or inner death experienced by those who once knew the true path to revolutionary immortality but, through a combination of moral weakness and shadowy conspiracy, strayed from it. Much more than the other negative images, modern revisionism looms as almost an immediate possibility.*

*The kind of energy the Chinese Communists have long mobilized against 'feudal remnants' — influences from the old society believed to threaten China's future — now seem to be directed against 'modern revisionism'. The shift in emphasis has
But why now? Why the current crisis in revolutionary immortality? There is much evidence that the Cultural Revolution represents the culmination of a series of conflicts surrounding totalistic visions and national campaigns, of an increasing inability to fulfil the visions or achieve the transformations of the physical and spiritual environment claimed by the campaigns. The conflicts took on great intensity over the decade including the late 1950s and early 1960s, and found their quintessential expression in what was surely the most remarkable campaign of all prior to the Cultural Revolution, the Great Leap Forward of 1958.

I shall later examine more closely the cast of mind associated with the Great Leap, and the technological and psychological impediments involved. It was a heroic attempt to achieve rapid industrialization and collectivization by making extensive use of the bare hands and pure minds of the Chinese people. Its massive failures resulted in overwhelming death imagery in several ways. It produced widespread confusion and suffering even as the régime was announcing its brilliant achievements. And its extensive falsification of statistics reached down, it was later learned, to virtually every level of Party cadre. This falsification represented something more than merely a conscious attempt on the part of the régime to deceive the outside world: it was an expression of a powerful need (dictated by pressures from above but by no means limited to government leaders) to maintain a collective image of revolutionary vitality that became, so to speak, more real than reality itself. Such visions of transformation had become so basic to Chines
great historical significance, but the quality of urgency and danger is psychologically consistent in the two cases.
revolutionary immortality. The liberalization of 1961–2, following several years of economic strain and general unrest caused by the failure of the Great Leap, did not produce quite the luxuriant across-the-board condemnation of the régime that took place at the time of the Hundred Flowers. But there was nevertheless a muted historical repetition. More important was the muted revival of intellectuals during 1961–2, the demand for de-emphasis of politics and for stress upon learning for its own sake (including greater use of books and equipment from capitalist countries), and especially the mockery of the régime’s claim to infallibility — the so-called ‘degeneration’ and ‘decadence’. The very fruits of liberalization were, for Mao and certain other Chinese leaders, death-tainted threats to the immortal revolutionary vision.

From 1962 onward, and especially since 1965 (when the preliminaries to the Cultural Revolution took place), the régime has been struggling to reassert the confident relationship to history it had possessed in earlier days. The split among Party leaders has had much to do with the image held of how one should go about doing this. During the pre-Cultural Revolution decade Mao encountered increasing opposition because of his long commitment to the kind of heroic but unrealizable vision that reached its zenith in the Great Leap Forward. From at least 1955 the ‘pragmatists’ (and one must always look upon the term as relative) within the Party have sought to moderate this vision and to pursue programmes resembling the less militant Soviet example. They apparently succeeded in curbing Mao’s influence, at least temporarily, during the late 1950s and early 1960s. This resistance to Mao, leading to his resignation under pressure from the State chairmanship in December 1958 (though he did retain chairmanship of the Party throughout), could take shape only because of the growing conviction that alternatives to his policies were absolutely necessary for economic and social stability. But Mao was later to refer scornfully to such pragmatists as ‘women with bound feet’ and to associate their caution with remnants of the ‘dying old régime’. To Mao and his supporters both his partial ouster and the programmatic alternatives of his opponents were expressions of betrayal of the revolutionary vision, evidences of death and deterioration.*

Maoists later called forth the picturesque idiom of Chinese folklore to place these critics in the centre of a demonology — referring to them as ‘demons’, ‘devils’, ‘monsters’, ‘ogres’, ‘ghosts’ and ‘freaks’. But demonology always addresses itself to the management of life and death, and includes an implicit theory of what might be called negative immortality: incarnation of evil which never die out, whatever one does to counter their nefarious influences. Groups like the Maoists who so boldly defy human limitation are inevitably plagued in turn by images of supernatural enemies. For demonology also reflects unacceptable subterranean conflicts. The ‘devils’

*Peking wall posters reported Mao to have said, in October 1966: ‘I was extremely discontented with that decision, but I could do nothing about it.’ And Hsiao, without relying on the accuracy of the wall posters, concludes that ‘the existing evidence suggests that Mao gave up his State Chairmanship not entirely by his own choice’. But there are some observers who, stressing the importance of doctrine for the Chinese Communists, accept the official version given out at the time of the decision (10 December 1958): namely, that Mao was being relieved of his duties as State Chairman in order to ‘make it possible for him to spare more of his time to do the theoretical work of Marxism-Leninism’.
and 'monsters' under attack are largely inner doubts of Maoist accusers concerning their own omnipotence; they are in effect anti-immortals.

What are some of these deadly influences? Much of the rhetoric during the Cultural Revolution and the Socialist Education Movement preceding it has been a reaction and an answer to ideas expressed during the preceding year (1961–2) of liberalization. Under attack at the philosophical level have been theories of 'human nature' along with expressions of 'humanism' (or even 'socialist humanism') making their way to China from Russian and Eastern European intellectual circles. For such concepts deny that class origin is the ultimate moral and psychological determinant of behaviour, the first by insisting that certain characteristics are shared by all of mankind, and the second through a principle the Chinese contempuously term 'love for all people', under which even capitalists and landlords become worthy of sympathy.

Ideas like these are dangerous because they could undermine the Maoist vision of revolutionary immortality by encouraging people to revert to alternative intellectual traditions which extol quests for truth and self-realization. Or in the somewhat more pejorative language of the Cultural Revolution, they lead to desires 'to get on by politics, be really good at your speciality, and have a good life'. These ideas emerge from post-Stalinist thought, from 'modern revisionism', and express a rediscovery of the individual. But in Chinese media they are dismissed as 'philosophy of survival'. Paradoxically, a humanist principle of 'love for all people' becomes associated (in Maoist terminology) with 'degeneration' into a 'petrifying bourgeoisie', with traits that deserve to be 'relegated to the morgue'. Humanist principles ex-

tolling man's life are now seen as agents of death, as demons that must be exorcised lest their deadly emanations destroy all.

The Chinese have also had to cope with a more concrete form of death anxiety, as stimulated by the war in Vietnam, and the fear of war with America. There is good evidence that the repeated characterization of America as a 'paper tiger' by no means eliminates in Chinese minds images of annihilation associated with her destructive power. And Mao has in the past regularly instituted large-scale programmes of reform and 'rectification' when preparing for actual military combat. But I believe that the fear of war with America is in itself less of a fundamental source of the Cultural Revolution than an aggravating factor in the overall death anxiety surrounding it. And the Cultural Revolution itself appears to be more a quest for a collective sense of revolutionary power than an actual mobilization of military power to combat an outside enemy.

China's crisis, then, involves a profound general threat to revolutionary immortality intertwined with the anxious concern of an ageing, partly infirm leader—hero about his capacity, through his revolutionary contributions, to outlive himself. The explosive disruption of a unified revolutionary vision (granting that conflict underlay such unity even in the past) has enormous significance as both cause and effect. For in the absence of such a vision, each individual self becomes vulnerable to the anxiety of extinction associated both with biological death and with collective forms of desymbolization. No wonder that elements of the historical past — of both Chinese tradition and the modern encounter with the West — take on newly ominous qualities. Ghosts and demons must be slain again and again as fear for the life
of the revolution becomes associated with fear of the dead. To remain calm, to act with measure in the face of such a threat, can be perceived as an intolerable form of inactivation and stasis. The psychological stage is reached in which one cannot dispense with one's hatred. One cannot give up one's enemies.

The activist response to symbolic death — or to what might be called unmastered death anxiety — is a quest for rebirth. One could in fact view the entire Cultural Revolution as a demand for renewal of communist life. It is, in other words, a call for reassertion of revolutionary immortality.

Without losing sight of antagonisms among individual leaders, we do well to consider the significance of the 'cultural' in this unique 'revolution'. We may speak of culture, in its broadest anthropological sense, as an accumulation of significant symbols, or, as Clifford Geertz has recently written, of 'symbolic sources of illumination' which each man requires 'to put a construction upon events, to orient himself to “the ongoing course of experienced things”'. Mao seems to have a similarly inclusive view of human culture, but unlike Western anthropologists he feels compelled to regulate its tone and content, at least within his nation, and to take steps to alter it radically when it seems to be moving in undesirable directions. A cultural revolution anywhere involves a

*The idea that the state and its officials should manage the cultural tone of society — should supervise the songs people sing, the rituals they follow, the principles by which they live — goes far back in Chinese tradition. It is an aspect of the holistic view
collective shift in the psychic images around which life is organized. In Maoist China, however, it has meant nothing less than an all-consuming death-and-birth experience, an induced catastrophe together with a prescription for reconstituting the world being destroyed.

The 'total mobilization of faith' (in Mark Gayn's phrase) involved in this prescription for rebirth has been peculiarly autistic. For more than a year the Chinese turned in upon themselves, performing actions required by their inner states or those of their leaders, however inappropriate or repugnant these actions may have seemed to a perplexed and fascinated outside world. In this sense the Cultural Revolution moves in the direction of what I propose to call *psychism* – the attempt to achieve control over one's external environment through internal or psychological manipulations, through behaviour determined by intrapsychic needs no longer in touch with the actualities of the world one seeks to influence.* I shall have much to say about such psychism as a predominant element in the Cultural Revolution's Maoist call to life.

The agents of this attempted rebirth, the Red Guards, reveal much about its nature. The tenderness of their years – they have included not only youths in their early twenties or late teens but children of thirteen and fourteen – has been striking to everyone, and then much too of man in his relationship to state, society, and nature that persists in communist practice.

*Psychism* is an admittedly awkward coinage, but it seems the best term for the phenomenon I wish to describe. Other related words, such as 'autism', 'psychologism' and 'voluntarism', have specific meanings and would be misleading. The concept is relative, and to say that the Cultural Revolution moves in the direction of psychism is by no means to claim that everything its leaders and followers say or do fits into this category.

quickly attributed to political necessity alone. The assumption here is that, having alienated most of the more mature population by his extreme policies, Mao had no choice but to call upon the young. But I believe that one must look beyond such explanations (whatever their partial truth) to the wider symbolism of the Red Guard movement.

According to most accounts, the Red Guards first began to appear during the early summer of 1966. (One Red Guard poster put up at Tsing-hua University Middle School, later named Red Guard Militant School, was dated 24 June, and there are other versions that claim an even earlier appearance at Peking University.) Their exact origin remains obscure. One model referred to by the Chinese press is that of a group of guerrilla units during the heroic early days of the Chinese Revolution which bore the same name and were also often very young. Needless to say, there is no reference to the Red Guards of the Russian Revolution, though these were probably the original inspiration for the concept. What is certain is that the present-day People's Liberation Army has served as an important model for the emergence of the new Red Guard of China's Cultural Revolution.

Only after an official public 'confirmation' and blessing from Mao Tse-tung during a gigantic dawn rally on 18 August 1966 did the Red Guard take on national and international significance. Within a few days tens of thousands of youngsters with identifying red armbands were roaming through Peking and, before long, the entire country. Some have viewed the Red Guard movement as a spontaneous phenomenon, a point of view encouraged by the régime itself. Most Western observers take the opposite position and see it as carefully shaped
throughout by knowing Maoist sculptors. What appears to have taken place is a combination of purposeful manipulation by Maoists and partly autonomous responses and decisions by leaders of Red Guard units — with all behaviour profoundly influenced by the immortalizing vision animating the Cultural Revolution. Permitting a certain amount of spontaneity in such a movement would be in keeping with Maoist concepts of the revolutionary creativity of the masses, though such concepts would by no means preclude close control over the extent and direction of that spontaneity.

The Maoists certainly were in general control of the Red Guard movement during its early months, much less so during the factional rivalries and general confusion later on. But from the beginning there was probably a good deal of emotion stimulated that went its own way and could not be entirely managed by anyone — as is generally true of mass movements, especially when participants are very young. It is possible the Red Guard, as some have already claimed, could turn out to be a transitional entity, to be dispensed with as soon as it has outlived its usefulness. Even if this is the case, however, one must consider the meaning of the creation of a 'youth force' at this time, and the specific functions it was called upon to serve.

From the beginning the battle cry was the triumph of youth over age, of the 'new' over the 'old'. Hence the Red Guard's announced early goal of totally destroying the 'Four Olds' (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits); and the similar stress upon smashing the 'old educational system' in its entirety. The formation of the Red Guard was in fact closely tied in with an attack upon teachers, university officials, and educational policies, beginning at Peking University in May—June 1966.

This focus upon education has been part of an effort to bring about a shift in qualities of mind that are to be esteemed and rewarded. More important than newness as such (past revolutionary virtues were honoured) has been an association with youth and vitality. And the human targets selected by the young militants for mental and physical abuse were, in contrast, referred to as 'old f ogies of the landlord and bourgeois class', 'the revisionist clique of old men [on the Peking Party Committee]', and, a bit later, as 'old men in authority' and 'old gentlemen who follow the capitalist road'. The Red Guards themselves were heralded as young people who had 'declared war on the old world'. But in their attack upon old age and decay they were, psychologically speaking, declaring war upon death itself.

The special aura of the Red Guard had to do not only with its youth but with its class purity. Its members were presented to the general public as an elite organization of youngsters charged with cleansing the entire nation. One could be admitted to their number, at least during those early days, only if one came from a family of workers, of poor (or 'middle') peasants, of revolutionary cadres, or of members of the People's Liberation Army. With the rapid expansion of the Red Guard into a mass movement, these standards were inevitably relaxed, but its purity was nonetheless constantly contrasted with the 'Five Black' categories of people selected for attack: landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, 'bad elements',* and rightists.

* A rather loosely used term, which in earlier campaigns has referred to various undesirable local types — including those who have connexions with the underworld or with remnants of secret societies (prominent in traditional and pre-Communist China), and those who do not engage in productive work.
image created was not unlike that of a children's crusade. They were a mass of youngsters unified by a transcendent vision, so infused with a sense of virtue as to be almost beatific – politicized 'flower children' of the Cultural Revolution.

But the Red Guards, as everyone knows, have also had another face. Theirs has been the task of inducing the catastrophe, of (in their own words) 'breaking and smashing', or initiating widespread agitation and disruption while spreading the message that this was what the country required. They became a strange young band of wandering zealots in search of evil and impurity. And during the first year of their existence virtually nothing and no one in China escaped their verbal or physical abuse – including at moments even Mao Tse-tung, in whose name all of their actions were carried out. Repeatedly identifying themselves as 'anti-bureaucratic' and 'anti-authority', the Red Guard became the means by which the Maoists undermined the very Party and state structure they had so painfully laboured to create over the entire course of the Chinese Revolution. The Red Guard's symbolic mission was to 'kill' virtually everything in order to clear the path for national rebirth, leaving only Mao and his Thought as the stuff of that rebirth.1

Hence the wide range and often remarkable targets of Red Guard activism, especially during the summer and autumn of 1966: the invasion of homes, mainly (but by no means exclusively) those of people in the 'Five Black' categories, with confiscation of furniture and other possessions; the humiliation of inhabitants by verbal and sometimes physical abuse, including the ritual of parading them through the streets in dunce caps; the attacks upon temples and churches and the destruction of reli-
and an image of perpetual youth — really perpetual life — that was both revolutionary and Chinese.

Whether or not accompanied by physical abuse, the verbal violence of the crusade was impressive. The literature associated with the Red Guards has abounded in gory death imagery. It has sometimes taken the form of a kind of military bravado:

Demolition bombs and hand grenades will be thrown.... Let what is called 'human affection' ... get out of the way!

And at other times it has called forth various biological and anatomical metaphors:

... non-revolutionaries are bad eggs; counter-revolutionaries are broken eggs! ... They must dig out their guts, change their bones.

Peasant earthiness merges with extreme expressions of class antagonism:

Old and young gentlemen [of landlord and bourgeois classes], we tell you frankly, you all stink and you are nothing special, just rotten trash.... We detest you from our hearts! We hate you! ... We shall beat [members of these exploiting classes], crunch them.... We shall smite their dog mouths and our bayonets shall taste blood!

There must be no leniency, no reconciliation:

We want to settle accounts for every drop of this ocean of blood-stained hatred. Nothing will ever be forgotten!

And those victimized are accused of being 'vampires' and made to ring 'death bells'. In this way *alleged evil is linked with death*. The 'enemy' is defined as 'whoever denies or is opposed to the proletarian [Maoist] line of our Party', followed by the simple statement: 'He will die
Revolutionary Immortality

and we will live!" Beyond the simple threat, we encounter in this last expression a fundamental psychological impetus for victimization (or what is more gently called 'prejudice'): the need to reassert one's own immortality, or that of one's group, by contrasting it with its absolute absence in one's death-tainted victim.*

Told and retold during the same period have been stories of heroism, of martyrs who gave their lives to combat military, industrial, cultural, or even natural enemies. The individual Red Guard was to model himself upon them and become the most recent and by far the most ambitious version of the 'new man in the socialist era'.† His privileged status was in the service of the most privileged of missions: 'We are graduating students, the generation that counts in the Chinese and the world revolution.' He was in fact to epitomize the unlimited

capacity of the community of immortals. One young man expressed this to me vividly when talking about his former Red Guard comrades: 'They thought themselves the greatest people in the world. They felt they could do anything.'

* The language used is sometimes reminiscent of the Old Testament and sometimes of nineteenth-century Chinese anti-missionary and anti-Christian outbursts (though of course often more excessive than either). For this kind of extreme language - demonic, scatological, violent, hysterical - is likely to be called forth in struggles between contending modes of immortality. The process is further intensified by youthful zeal and peasant superstitiousness.²

† This 'new man' is also expected to embody what Meisner calls 'the original bourgeois virtues' - diligence, frugality, self-discipline, honesty, belief in the moral value of work, and selflessness. Meisner views these as part of an 'ascetic pattern of life demanded by Chinese Communist ideology ... as a means by which men can transform themselves and transform nature to realize the 'truly human life' that in Marxist theory is historically located in the socialist utopia of the future'.² What I am suggesting is that this ascetic ideal, much like the Calvinist equivalent Meisner also mentions, is bound up with a transcendent involvement. While the Calvinists sought to 'establish the Kingdom of God on earth', the Maoists seek a Kingdom of eternal revolution.
A key to the momentum of the Cultural Revolution is the merging of purity and power. We may define ‘purity’ as encompassing such things as self-denial (or even self-surrender) on behalf of a higher cause, the urge to eliminate evil, and ideological single-mindedness. And we may speak of ‘power’ either as the ability to make decisions and take actions that exert control and influence over others, or as the sense of inner strength and capacity. Too often an either/or situation is assumed to exist in which purity or power must be radically subservient to the other as the basic motivation for behaviour. In regard to present-day China the consensus of outside observers has been that an image of purity has been no more than a decoy and a mask for the power-hunger lurking beneath. But the assumption can be highly misleading. Rather than constituting antagonistic motivations, purity and power are in fact psychologically inseparable.

Both are ultimately associated with some kind of divine, or at least more than human, image. Purity is ‘godlike’ and ‘god-given’ in the sense of virtue so absolute that it transcends mortal frailty, and in influences or ‘works’ that outlast any individual life. Power is godlike in the more ominous sense of hubris, or man usurping divine prerogatives, looking upon himself as a god. But in a less pejorative image power is god-given because it is attributed either to an immortal legacy – the Mandate of Heaven or Divine Right of Kings – or to an individual ‘gift’ for ruling men that is virtually superhuman. Interwoven themes of power and purity are therefore likely to dominate any collective quest for transcendance. They readily give rise to forms of ideological totalism so prominent in the Chinese Revolution. And the accompanying polarization of good and evil leads to distinctions between ‘people’ and ‘non-people’, to decisions concerning which groups are entitled to exist and which are not, or to what I have called the dispensing of existence – all in the name of superior virtue. Power becomes the harnessing of purity for an immortal quest.

Mao’s previously quoted misgivings about the young as revolutionary heirs concern their capacity to maintain a proper combination of purity and power. And his fearful image of the ‘death of the revolution’ is one of breakdown of the combination with disintegration of both elements. The Red Guards were mobilized to confront this breakdown by simultaneously ‘seizing power’ for the Maoists and transforming ubiquitous contamination into all-consuming purity.

*These concepts are by no means the same. The Divine Right of Kings suggests authority originating with God through the ruler’s distant ancestors, and responsibility only to God. The Mandate of Heaven suggests a much more contingent authority – ‘not a patent of divine right, irrevocable and eternal . . . [but] conferred upon a sage King whose virtue had entitled him to act as the deputy of Heaven. His descendants enjoyed it only so long as their virtue made them worthy representatives of the Supreme Ancestor’. What the two concepts share is a stress upon a transcendent (or immortal) source of authority.
Two features of the Cultural Revolution epitomize this purity-power constellation: the temporary use of the Paris Commune of 1871 as a model; and, much more important, the dual role of the Army.

The idea of the Paris Commune was consistent with the régime’s longstanding communal ethos, and was a means of extending that ethic from the countryside to the city. Images surrounding the Paris Commune, although apparently used ambivalently and experimentally, may have nonetheless influenced the general course of the Cultural Revolution.\(^3\) For the Paris Commune has always had a special mystique for communist movements throughout the world. Its early occurrence and heroic circumstances, and the later commentaries on it by Marx, Engels, and Lenin, have given it a quasi-sacred aura within the sequence of Marxist history. These commentaries dealt with both sides of the constellation we have been discussing: the achievement of proletarian purity by means of collective revolutionary action, and the question of ‘seizure of power’. Like the Cultural Revolution, the Paris Commune stressed the theme of the ‘armed populace’ – the idea of militant unprofessionals – to carry out the two aspects of the mission.

It was Marx himself who pointed out the immortalizing nature of the Paris Commune when he said that it ‘admitted all foreigners to the honour of dying for an immortal cause’. These days it would be difficult to read such a passage without a sense of irony – except perhaps in China. And the Chinese did indeed use similar language in reference to the Shanghai Commune in February 1967, when they spoke of the ‘birth of a new Paris Commune in the sixties of this century . . . [through which] the people of Shanghai have been liberated a second time’, and which would be ‘eternal

... and indestructible’.\(^*\) Their estimate turned out to be a bit premature, since the life of the Shanghai Commune, like that of many institutional arrangements during the Cultural Revolution, turned out to be a very short one. But the point here is the Shanghai Commune’s ideal (like that of its model) of perfect fusion of power and purity – through absolute proletarianization, total elimination of bureaucratic and bourgeois ‘contamination’, and close attention to the task of prevailing militarily and politically over one’s opponents.

The People’s Liberation Army provides an even more striking contemporary purity-power model. The Army’s own cultural revolution preceded that of the rest of the country, and set the tone and idioms for the national movement – with emphasis upon the almost legendary achievements of the Red Army in the past. Thus, Red Guards could refer to a journey to Peking from a distant part of China as a ‘long march’. Maoist functionaries became so infused with this military idiom that they extended it to social and economic areas and would (as one Western commentator put it) ‘treat . . . capital formation as a type of guerrilla warfare’.\(^4\) And when leading Peking Opera repertory groups came under attack by Mao himself as ‘still under the rule of the dead’, their road of reform was incorporation into ‘the great school

\(^{*}\) There was even a parallel during the Cultural Revolution to Marx’s statement about ‘foreigners’. Mao’s essay ‘In Memory of Norman Bethune’, originally written in 1939, was given great stress as one of the ‘three constantly read articles’, and in it Mao speaks of this Canadian physician who served with the Chinese Communist Army as having ‘died a martyr at his post’. Mao then asks, ‘What kind of spirit is this that makes a foreigner selflessly adopt the cause of the Chinese people’s liberation as his own? It is the spirit of internationalism, the spirit of communism, from which every Chinese Communist must learn.’\(^4\)
for the great thought of Mao Tse-tung – the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’. Through this blend of art and Army, Mao’s wife, the former film actress Chiang Ch’ing, emerged from relative obscurity to take a surprisingly active part in the Cultural Revolution. From the outset the ultimate ethic held out to the nation was that of the brave soldier inspired to superhuman sacrifices by the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, then dying willingly and heroically for the revolution with Mao’s words on his lips. And groups associated with the Army (as the same observer commented) ‘offer [ed] instruction to virtually the entire population in communist morality and ethics’.*

There is no ignoring the obvious political benefit – indeed, as things turned out, necessity – of backing up the desired psychic state with military strength. Nor did the Army itself, or for that matter its Red Guard emulators, turn out to be totally ‘pure’. Both remained under the general control of the Maoist group, but experienced a variety of factional struggles and conflicts involving Maoists, anti-Maoists, and indeterminate units and subdivisions. Moreover, the Army’s entry into the ‘Triple Alliance’† could be said to represent a certain amount of backtracking from the purist model of the Paris Commune, which the Alliance actually replaced. The same

*There was something of a historical precedent for this, as the famed Eighth Route Army is said to have served a similar function in Yenan and the Border Areas from about 1938 to 1945. But that was in the midst of civil war, when virtually everybody had to be part of the Army, in contrast to the much more differentiated society in which the Army ‘offers instruction’ today.

†The Triple Alliance includes revolutionary mass organizations such as the Red Guard and Revolutionary Rebels, pro-Maoist cadres (from among officials, Party members, and Party workers), and the People’s Liberation Army.

may be said of the increasing hegemony of the Army within the Alliance itself, to the extent of sometimes rendering it virtually a form of military rule. Yet while the resistance Mao encountered made it necessary for him to resort increasingly to military force, that force, from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, had been intimately associated with revolutionary purity – with combined psychic and material power.

Precisely this combination has been prominent all through Chinese Communist practice. An excellent example is the thought reform process, long a trademark of Chinese communism, with its group-mediated psychological pressures towards ideological conversion. One could view the process as a carrot-and-stick application of power for the purpose of controlling behaviour – using various kinds of coercion and threat, together with a promise that those properly reformed will merge with and partake deeply of the invincible revolutionary force. But one could also view it as a method of individual purification which, by means of detailed self-examination, provides benefits akin to those of psychotherapy and spiritual enlightenment. Thought reform has, at various times and for different individuals, been both. All of its elements have been perpetuated with new intensity during the Cultural Revolution: the familiar insistence that ‘the [ideologically] sick be cured’, that they ‘lighten their burdens’ and ‘obtain merits to redeem their crimes’; and the endless public accusations, self-criticisms, and confessions.

We shall soon note the psychological pitfalls of the thought reform programme as applied during the Cultural Revolution, but there is no denying the potential impact of its particular ingredients. Its attractive purity backed by coercive power – one could equally say attrac-
tive power backed by coercive purity — undoubtedly evoked strong feelings of self-condemnation, encompassing both guilt and shame, in many of those failing to meet the extreme standards of the environment. Such feelings can culminate in a terrifying anxiety of extinction, related less to biological death per se than to a sense of being cut off from all human connexion and rendered totally inert and insignificant.

Purity and power merge in the language of the two leaders of the Cultural Revolution, Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao, the latter through quotation and paraphrase often serving as the voice of the former. Lin Piao thus states, ‘All our work is preparation for war’; and also, ‘The best weapon of our troops is not the airplane, cannon, tank, or atomic bomb, but the thought of Mao Tse-tung; the greatest fighting force is the man armed with the thought of Mao Tse-tung, daring, not afraid of death.’ Lin and others frequently quoted statements by Mao to the effect that ‘War can be abolished only by war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun’; and ‘The world can be changed only by using gun barrels’ (a recent modification of Mao’s earlier principle that ‘political power grows out of the barrel of a gun’). What this language suggests is the principle that ultimate purity requires application of ultimate power, but that purity as such remains the source of that power — indeed is ultimate power — because he who possesses it has conquered death.

The Mao–Lin combination can itself be said to symbolize just this kind of fusion. While Mao may be considered to embody both purity and power, he has (or had prior to the Cultural Revolution) achieved a status within revolutionary lore as godlike in wisdom and virtue. Lin, although associated with revolutionary education and reform, is the essence of the successful military man, his aura of power deriving not only from longstanding Army leadership but from close recent identification with the making and testing of nuclear weapons. And during the Cultural Revolution both men have stood not only for the much publicized motto ‘Seize power!’ but for the related one, ‘Seize the Revolution!’ — the latter much more significant because of its implicit suggestion of noble purpose and enduring consequence.

The ‘mass line’ and the almost identical ‘Red line’ are ideological manifestations of a similar blend. They have been employed, at times loosely and at times with the most narrow precision, to provide criteria for acceptable behaviour during the Cultural Revolution, just as they did during earlier campaigns and in everyday life in Communist China. But in terms of feeling, they evoke a more mystical sense of immortal revolutionary substance, and serve as a guide for an individual’s becoming and remaining part of that substance. Moreover, the Cultural Revolution has stressed a mobilization of purity through China’s power of numbers — visions of seven hundred million Chinese all following the ‘mass line’ and achieving ‘the peasant and worker viewpoint’ — which is another way of combining revolutionary substance with the eternal substance of the Chinese race and culture.

A related issue is the heightening during the Cultural Revolution of the longstanding Chinese Communist preoccupation with being ‘Red’ as distinct from ‘expert’. This seemingly simple polarity reflects a crucial confrontation between revolutionary purity and modern technology. Without pausing just yet to explore this confrontation, we may say that the extreme Maoist glorification of ‘Redness’ and undermining of ‘expertness’ (the
latter including not only professional skill but learning itself) for a time so threatened the last vestiges in China of dispassionate intellectual endeavour as virtually to eliminate ‘the intellectuals’ as a functioning group. (The extreme example was the public humiliation of Kuo Mo-jo, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, long the epitome of the Communist intellectual and perhaps the most nationally respected of all Chinese scholars.) Involved here is the implicit assumption that the special revolutionary combination of purity and power could in itself completely nourish the individual mind, and that any additional intellectual needs were suspect.

In the delineation of purity great stress was placed upon what could be considered rural and ‘Chinese’ as opposed to the threatening impurities of the urban and the foreign. While the Red Guards first appeared in Peking, they came to include many youths from outside the large cities and in general tried to take on a rural colouring. They made repeated journeys to the countryside and placed great stress upon ‘learning from the peasants’ and ‘becoming little students of the masses’—these two slogans having been prominent in the preceding Socialist Education Movement, which sent large numbers of intellectuals to rural areas to imbibe the wisdom of the Chinese earth and its tillers. Here we sense a restorationist impulse, the Maoist attempt to recapture a form of harmony (purity) felt to exist in the past among people close to the earth until ‘contaminated’ by the complexities of modern existence.*

*This form of harmony and purity is consistent with the ‘spirit of Yenan’, not to mention that of Rousseau. But it is also consistent with various millenary visions of traditional and modern Chinese thinkers, who, in characteristic restorationist fashion,

What of the shift in target, within a month or two after the Red Guards came into being, from ‘class enemies’ to ‘those in authority’? Once it became clear that none other than the head of state, Liu Shiao-ch’i, was to become the object of extreme vituperation, many observers concluded that here was the answer to the mystery of the Cultural Revolution, the entire point of the operation. But even if one assumes that Mao and Lin had planned from the outset to undermine Liu’s authority, and that this goal greatly influenced the tone and scope of the Cultural Revolution, one must still ask why it became so important to get rid of Liu. What was there about this ‘rivalry for power’ that could cause a revolutionary movement with an extraordinary forty-five-year record of organizational accomplishment prior and subsequent to its assumption of national power, to embark upon a series of actions directly undermining the authority it had so laboriously built up?

It seems clear that Liu, during the decade prior to the Cultural Revolution, emerged as a leading voice among the pragmatists who opposed Mao and sought to limit his power. There is also some evidence that a group of high Party officials might have contemplated a coup d’état (even if this is true, however, one does not know whether Liu was in any way connected with it). But again I would insist that we avoid the solipsistic assumption that in such situations men act only out of motives totally centred upon the individual self, that is, out of

find their models in a mythical golden age of the past. The larger or ‘Great Harmony’ sought in these visions should be distinguished from the more humble everyday Chinese cultural principle of harmonious human relationships, based upon proper attention to rites, principles, and compromise—though the two would seem to have considerable psychological relationship.
'petty jealousies'. Rather, one must assume that Liu came to feel that curbing Mao's power was necessary for the Revolution, just as we know Mao and his followers to have come to believe that revitalizing the Revolution required that Liu and his influence be destroyed.

In other words, the individual urge to wield power is associated with a formulation which connects that power to worthy purposes extending beyond both the self and the historical moment. Nor can such a formulation be dismissed as mere rationalization of personal ambition. For ambition itself is bound up with a larger vision, a controlling image, of self and world: for Liu an image of 'de-Maoization' and a pragmatic course of consolidation; for Mao one of heroic national struggle including a spirit that the Chinese themselves call 'revolutionary romanticism'. Whatever the extent of personal antagonism between the two men, their 'power struggle' is enmeshed in questions of purity. Maoist anxiety arises less from the prospect of the Revolution falling into the hands of a different leader, which must in any case inevitably happen, than from the possibility that the new leader will espouse an alternative - and therefore impure - revolutionary vision.

In such instances judgements become retroactive. Four and a half decades of shared revolutionary experience extending from heroic early days through turbulent recent accomplishments, as well as regional bonds so important in Chinese culture (both men are from Hunan province) - all this must give way to a new Maoist claim that Liu had always possessed hidden inclinations towards capitalism. The same applies to Liu's celebrated pamphlet 'How To Be a Good Communist'. Long a source book for the self-cultivation of generations of Party cadres, its forceful combination of Confucianist and Leninist tones always regarded as highly 'Maoist', it now becomes the work of a 'traitor' which has 'poisoned' the minds of innumerable innocent comrades.

Do Mao and his followers really believe this? Or do they coolly regard their own denunciations as no more than necessary political manoeuvres? From what I have learned about the behaviour of men in such situations (including observations of former Chinese Communist cadres) and about the psychology of belief in general, I would suspect that both tendencies coexist. A sense of tactical necessity merges with the accuser's partial commitment to his own accusations. But the inner logic is tortuous (though perhaps less so for the very young who have not known Liu during his greatest days). And the kinds of judgements made are precisely those which can be equally rapidly reversed once Mao's hegemony has ended (as in the post-Stalinist Russian experience, in which previously condemned leaders, living and dead, had their names cleared and their virtue restored). Yet the original condemnation is felt to be necessary because, in the psychological language we have been using, once a man and his vision are perceived as destroyers of revolutionary immortality, so must be all of his 'works'.

* Confirming the importance of elements beyond the self in the struggle between Communist leaders is the fact that the attack upon Liu has had a highly symbolic quality. Rather than seeking to punish or eliminate Liu - that is, either put him to death or imprison him - Maoists have preferred to condemn him as a dangerous example of the kind of deadly impurity that could affect anyone. Throughout the attack upon him he was referred to as 'the top party person taking the capitalist road' or 'China's Khruuschchev'. Not until March 1968, months after the collective passions of the Cultural Revolution had subsided, was his actual name reportedly mentioned - and even then not on a public occasion but at a meeting with a Japanese trade delegation presided over by Chou En-lai. This specific identification led some
Revolutionary Immortality

Crucial to the blending of power and purity – because it draws directly upon both – is the question of autonomy. Even if ‘the masses’, when called upon to ‘organize their own strength’, were actually being manipulated from above, many could none the less experience a feeling of awakened individual significance. I have mentioned the sense of unlimited capacity or power in many Red Guards during the more enthusiastic moments of the Cultural Revolution. Along with Revolutionary Rebels and related groups, they roamed the cities and countryside in 1966 and 1967, attacking alleged class enemies, spreading terror among foreign diplomatic communities, and then turning their wrath upon their own ‘men in authority who take the capitalist road’, right on up to the head of state; we suspect that they experienced a rare sense not only of participating in a great moral crusade but of taking matters into their own hands.

They could also share in a sense of dramatic reversal of past intimidation and humiliation, at the hands of foreign powers (represented, actually or symbolically, by the diplomats who were abused), of landlords and capitalists (the ‘class enemies’ and ‘Five Black’ categories), and of Communist Party bureaucrats (‘those in authority who take the capitalist road’). The attack upon bureaucracy in particular called forth powerful emotional responses in a society which for two thousand years, observers to believe that the Maoists were ready to go ahead with a political purge (Liu has remained technically the régime’s President throughout, though divested of state functions and confined to his home) and possibly with some form of punitive action. There is some precedent in Chinese tradition for this form of symbolic attack; it was, for instance, utilized by Boxer leaders in 1900 in their public humiliation of members of Allied legations.

whatever the régime in power, has subjected its people to the arrogances, dogmatic rigidities, and humiliating controls of a uniquely influential bureaucratic élite. This kind of abuse, along with the struggles of the common people to alleviate it, has been prominently depicted in Chinese fiction, notably in the great and extremely widely read (especially among the present generation of Chinese Communist leaders) fourteenth-century historical novel which has been translated into English as Romance of the Three Kingdoms.*

In one sense, then, the Cultural Revolution was an exhilarating revolt of the patronized. It was a violent renunciation of what I have elsewhere called ‘counterfeit nurturance’ – situations in which the weak must remain dependent upon the strong for help they both require and deeply resent as a reminder of their weakness. It has been an upsurge of the downtrodden. Peasants, impoverished workers, and even children could convey wisdom to intellectuals, depose government authorities, and win (or so they were told) the great struggles ‘between man and man’ and ‘between man and nature’. They could at least momentarily eliminate painful vestiges of enforced dependency and helplessness.

The paradox is that collective autonomy of this kind results from the totalistic attack upon any signs of the

* The other side of the Chinese bureaucratic impulse has been the extraordinary organizational accomplishments it has brought about: the governing of so vast and populous a society according to consistent ethical and legal standards. But such a bureaucratic emphasis is bound to give rise to potentially explosive antagonisms. The Communist bureaucracy has apparently been prone to abuses and forms of self-indulgence comparable to those of its traditional predecessors; and some of the Maoist condemnation of it is reminiscent of Milovan Djilas’s attack upon the privileged Communist ‘New Class’.
Revolutionary Immortality

independent (non-Maoist) self. Any violation of the individual becomes acceptable if in the service of the larger vision. As a Red Guard was once quoted as saying, 'So long as it is revolutionary, no action is a crime'. The goal of each person, the Chinese press made clear, was to become a 'stainless screw' in the 'locomotive of revolution'. Each was, moreover, warned to beware of the danger of unauthentic claimants to noble ideals – to 'tear off the "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" loincloth of the bourgeois class'. For a should class enemies be permitted any liberties, they become 'smiling tigers', and one must remember that 'smiling tigers can eat people'.

The great dread is that the Revolution will be devoured in this fashion, that China will 'change colour' and take the capitalist-revisionist road. But since it is an ultimate confrontation between good and evil – 'a life-and-death struggle on which the fate of the world depends' – a sense of ultimate purity and ultimate power beckon to the individual participant. Even if he cut himself off from all but the most ritualistic Maoist images, he could feel a new autonomy as he merged with his people, his history, his revolution.

*The Maoist demand for 'absolute selflessness' – and denunciation of 'the concept of self-interest, selfishness, advancing one's own interest at the expense of others; and extreme individualism' as 'the kernel of the bourgeois world outlook' – finds some cultural echoes in the traditional Chinese stress upon subjugating the individual to prevailing collective standards. But in its more extreme expressions (as during the Cultural Revolution) Maoism leaves considerably less room for certain forms of individual manoeuvre traditionally permitted under the concept of consideration for 'human feelings'.

6. The Immortalization of Words

How are we to understand that remarkable entity, the Thought of Mao Tse-tung? The man and his words fused into a powerful image, which became the essence of revolutionary immortality as well as the energizer for its quest.

This is by no means the first time that a political leader has been made into a divinity. But few in the past could have matched Mao in the superlatives used, the number of celebrants, or the thoroughness with which the message of glory has been disseminated. Even more unique has been the way in which the leader's words have become vehicles for elevating him, during his lifetime, to a place above that of the State itself or its institutional source of purity and power, in this case the Party.® And the process

*This is in violation of the Stalinist precedent of viewing the leader as subservient to and an instrument of the ultimate historical authority of the Party. One would have to go back to Lenin or possibly Marx to find communist analogies to this aspect of the Maoist image; and their delification differed both in being a retrospective historical phenomenon that had to await their deaths, and in being less directly related to specific quotations from their writings. But if one compares Mao to a traditional Chinese emperor (as has Yuji Muramatsu in 'Revolution and Chinese Tradition in Yanan Communism'), his position becomes that of a Confucian ruler whose Mandate of Heaven places him above the machinery of state in carrying out what he deems to be best for the masses.
1. Benjamin Schwartz (‘Upheaval in China’, Commentary, February 1967, pp. 55–62) emphasizes Mao's 'nostalgic idealization' of the 'idyllic days of Yenan', as does Mark Gayn (‘China Convulsed’, Foreign Affairs, January 1967, pp. 246–59), who, to the best of my knowledge, first used the terms 'Yenan syndrome' and 'Yenan complex'. Franz Schurmann (‘What Is Happening in China?’ New York Review, 20 October 1966, pp. 18–25, and 12 January 1967, pp. 32–5) speaks of Mao's anticipation, on the basis of American escalation of the Vietnam war, of an impending 'moment of confrontation' with America. Joseph Levenson (‘An Exchange on China’, New York Review, 12 January 1967, pp. 31–2) describes 'a conviction of present crisis', which renders 'the pastness of the past... not so certain, because the future is so uncertain'. And Martin Bernal (‘Puritanism Chinese-Style’, New York Review, 26 October 1967, pp. 23–7) sees the Cultural Revolution as a 'temporary break between the two forces that have created the Chinese Revolution: “catholic” and “protestant”, organization and inspiration'. These writings are consistent with different aspects of the point of view I shall set forth, as is Roderick MacFarquar's ‘Mao's Last Revolution’ (Foreign Affairs, October 1966, pp. 112–24), though only Schurmann's and Levenson's articles were available to me when I originally prepared my manuscript. See also writings by Father L. LaDany (‘Mao's
Revolutionary Immortality


When this book was in press I came upon Gouldner's and Horowitz's "The Red Guard" (*Trans-Action*, November 1966), whose sociological interpretation is similar to my own psychosocial one. I also made extensive use of translations and summaries of Chinese Communist newspapers and periodicals, and of the 'great-character posters' of Red Guards and other groups. The latter, which were especially prominent during the early days of the Cultural Revolution as daily commentaries (unofficial but significant) on directions of thought and action, appeared at various focal points in the large cities; they were consistent with the use of 'wall newspapers' in earlier Communist campaigns. Translations appeared in *Survey of China Mainland Press* and selections from *China Mainland Magazine*, both published by the American Consulate General in Hong Kong; in *China News Analysis*; and in newspaper articles in the *New York Times*, *The Times* and the *Observer* (London), and the *Guardian* (Manchester). I also availed myself of the extensive coverage in the Japanese press; and of the various Eastern and Western European commentaries appearing in American, British, and Japanese publications. Direct quotations of Chinese writings, unless otherwise identified, come from one of these sources. Also very useful were a number of commentaries appearing in *Current Scene* (published by the American Consulate General in Hong Kong), in the

China Quarterly (London), and in *Asian Survey* (Berkeley, Calif.).


2


3


4


2. I introduce these concepts of victimization, and contending modes of immortality, in *Death in Life* and discuss them more extensively in *The Broken Connection*. Concerning the language of the Cultural Revolution, see Chuang.


5


2. R. J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of
Revolutionary Immortality


3. Robert A. Burton of the University of Kansas was one of the first observers to emphasize the significance of the Paris Commune for the Cultural Revolution. I am indebted to him for discussions of the question in Hong Kong, and for his making available to me a memo he had prepared on the subject in which the phrase quoted from Marx appeared.


6.
1. Paper presented to Seminar on East Asian Thought and Society at Stanford University, 21 November 1957, mimeographed.


4. I have used the official English translation, published by The Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966. Additional quotations from Mao in this and subsequent chapters are from Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung; either the London (Lawrence & Wishart, 1954) or the Peking (Foreign Languages Press, 1965–7) edition; and from Stuart Schram's excellent recent biography Mao Tse-tung, Pelican, 1966. Other invaluable background works are Schram's The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung (Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1963); Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966); Benjamin Schwartz, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1951); C. Brandt, B. Schwartz, and J. Fairbank, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1951); Jerome Ch'en, Mao and the Chinese Revolution (Oxford University Press, New York, 1965); Schurmann and Schell, The China Reader; Vol. III: Communist China; John Wilson Lewis, Leadership in Communist China (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1963); and that still fundamental source book on Mao, Edgar Snow's Red Star Over China (Victor Gollancz, 1937). In all cases I have retained the rendering of Chinese names used by the translator, even where these do not follow current practice.


7. Death in Life, Chapter VI, and pp. 481–2; The Broken Connection.

8. Lin Mo-han, Raise Higher the Banner of Mao Tse-tung's Thought on Art and Literature, The Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1961, pp. 27, 28. Kuo Mo-jo was probably the first to use the term 'revolutionary romanticism' in an article he wrote in Hung chi (No. 3) in 1958.

9. Mao Tse-tung, p. 293. The quotation concerning Mao in the previous sentence, also taken from Schram's biography (p. 253), is originally from Tso Shun-sheng, Interesting Events in the Past Thirty Years.

10. Red Star Over China, pp. 80, 81.

11. Ibid., p. 83.

12. From an interview with Agnes Smedley, as quoted in Schram, see Mao Tse-tung, p. 201.


14. Schram, Mao Tse-tung, p. 352. All of the poems I quote are Schram's translations or adaptations, as appearing in his biography of Mao. The official interpretations referred to are from the same volume, and Schram adds his own perceptive views.

15. 'Interview with Mao', p. 370.
Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism

*A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China*

Robert Jay Lifton

Can a man be made to change his beliefs, and if so for how long? Do Westerners and Chinese react differently to the ordeal of 'brainwashing'? How is it applied, and what are its origins?

'Brainwashing' has often been described in sensational terms: but Dr Lifton's painstaking investigation of Thought Reform is based on psychological studies (with follow-up interviews) of Western civilians and Chinese intellectuals who underwent the process in a variety of prisons, universities and other settings. His case histories throw a flood of light on how contemporary forms of totalism implant fear and guilt in the minds of those designated as 'reactionaries' or 'enemies of the people' in order to bring about not only submission to, but active enthusiasm for the new creed. The last part of the book discusses the broader implications of Thought Reform for education, religion, politics and science in all societies.

'As a study of the psychological issues raised by thought reform in China, Dr Lifton's book is humane and many-sided in its understanding; for the light it throws on the Chinese revolution it is scarcely less valuable'.

*The Times Literary Supplement*

*Not for sale in the U.S.A. or Canada*