

Selected Writings of Li Shenzhi

LI SHENZHI, Edited by ILSE TEBBETTS and LIBBY KINGSEED

Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation Press, 2010

xiii + 188 pp. \$19.95

ISBN 978-0-923993-29-0 doi:10.1017/S0305741011001238

This volume offers the profound insights of one of contemporary China's deepest political and foreign-policy thinkers concerning his own personal journey of understanding Mao Zedong's rule and the roots of authoritarianism, the prospects for democracy in the People's Republic, globalization, the role of ideology in foreign policy, US–China relations, the dangers of nationalism, and the relationship between democracy and a nation's capacity to pursue its “national interests.”

The essays that comprise this volume were written in the last decade of his life, a tumultuous period for both China and Li following the repression of June 1989. I remember with fondness a white-water rafting trip with Professor Li and his wife in this period. A picture taken at the time shows a smiling and exhilarated elderly man and his beloved wife, surrounded by churning water, enjoying the thrill of life even as he had regrets about his and China's turbulent modern political journey, noting in his last three years of life that: “I once believed that I was someone who fully understood the regularities of social development – but I have only made a laughing stock of myself, haven't I?” (p. 186). This collection tells the story of lost illusions, but not lost hope, illusions that began with his optimistic belief in October 1949 that “Time Has Begun” (Hu Feng's turn of phrase) and ended late in life with his understanding that, as Lord Acton had said, “‘Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ I had not been able to understand this when the New China was founded, nor was it conceivable to me” (p. 5).

Diverse subjects are covered in this volume, subjects united by a single integrative thread:

liberalism has not been an intrinsic part of Chinese cultural tradition for the past several thousand years. It has been less than 100 years since the concept was introduced to China but, like Buddhism, once having entered China it will inevitably take root and flourish and will merge with Chinese tradition. Its significance and effects, however, will be far greater than those of Buddhism, because liberalism will enable China to enter into the world, moving towards modernization and globalization (p. 13).

The varied content will engage readers with diverse interests, running the gamut from traditional Chinese philosophy to the history of the early years of the post-1949 regime; Beijing's Cold War relations with Moscow; the motivations for, and consequences of, the Great Leap Forward; the dynamics of the Cultural Revolution; and a rather detailed account of Deng Xiaoping's calculations in normalizing relations with the US, showing how Mao Zedong's earlier move toward Washington gave Deng the necessary political space to accomplish this in late 1978. And, most pointedly of all, Li puts the pluses and minuses of Deng Xiaoping under his magnifying glass.

I found several sections fascinating, not least Li's discussion of how national interest, not ideology or nationalism, must provide the North Star for Chinese foreign policy. “In the future, if we wish to realize an overall normalization of international diplomacy, we need first to get rid of ideological interference with national interests ... [I]f we intend to allow national interests to become the only factor in determining foreign policy, it can only be achieved if democracy is realized in every sphere” (p. 152). Indicative of the kinds of cross-cutting sentiments to which patriotic Chinese of liberal bent are subject, however, Li Shenzhi was an ardent critic

of what he viewed as the injustice of the American position on Taiwan, even as he was ardently committed to liberalism (p. 130).

In the more specific realm of policy process, Li explains in great detail, given his central role in Xinhua News Agency in the mid-1950s, how international news was gathered, disseminated, and processed by the Party centre.

Another topical area that will interest a wide range of readers is Li's discussion of how the Chinese elite reacted to Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, and to the Polish and Hungarian uprisings later that year. Li explains how he, and others, fundamentally misread Mao Zedong's intentions in tactically liberalizing during the short-lived Hundred Flowers movement of this period. Li paid a heavy price for not understanding that Mao's call for democracy and political loosening did not represent an enduring commitment to liberalization, or what Li called "Greater Democracy" – it was rhetoric to be abandoned at the first whiff of threat to the Chairman's power. This forever changed not only Li's view of Mao, but also Li's life. He immediately was labelled a "rightist" and his views were directly and publicly rejected by the Chairman.

All this leaves the reader with a deep admiration for an indomitable spirit that at the beginning of his post-1949 career had challenged (albeit inadvertently) Mao Zedong, suffered greatly in the intervening years, returned to the public stage to play an historically significant role in the normalization of US–China relations, and somehow at the end of his life still had the inner fortitude to challenge yet other paramount leaders, this time Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin.

DAVID M. LAMPTON

Breaking Feminist Waves: The Many Dimensions of Chinese Feminism

YA-CHEN CHEN

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

xii + 274 pp. \$85.00

ISBN 978-0-230-10432-7 doi:10.1017/S030574101100124X

Breaking Feminist Waves is an important and distinct contribution to the understanding of feminism and, in particular, feminist scholarship in China. Feminist scholars in the West and in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have a partial understanding of Chinese feminism – Western feminist scholars are inclined to equate Chinese feminism with Asian American or Chinese American forms of feminism while PRC feminist scholars have a tendency to imply that the PRC form of feminism represents feminism in the entire Chinese cultural realm. Chen argues that Chinese feminism should include within its scope studies or activism about women or gender issues in as many periods and places as possible: pre-historical through Imperial China, Republican China, colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet and other Chinese-speaking areas.

In this book, Chen examines the diversity of, and differences within, Chinese feminism in the 1990s through interviews with 50 feminist scholars in the PRC and Taiwan and through an analysis of journal articles related to Chinese women and feminism in prestigious academic journals in Asian studies and women's studies. She focuses on the decade of the 1990s for several reasons. Firstly, this decade followed the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident and included the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women and Feminist NGO Forums (1995). This