China After Mao

To the Editors: Concerning the article "China After Mao," by Ralph Buultjens (Worldview, July/August), for many, good journalism goes beyond passive information to the ability to generate a dialogue—to generate controversy. On this ground I suppose Mr. Buultjens may be excused. As an academician Mr. Buultjens is not constrained to establish the validity of his "opinion," lest those who appeal to the "ivory tower" doubt its sanctity. Mr. Buultjens would do well to reconsider the implications of the conviction that "a billion Chinese living in relative poverty is a national tragedy; a modernized China with a powerful military and industrial base—and a dynamic economic, strategic, and ecological impact on our planet—could cause serious global problems."

Is this to say that a "billion Chinese" economically underdeveloped would be more amenable to Western economic and political influence than a "billion Chinese" industrially, economically, and politically independent? Does economic prosperity necessarily imply military belligerency and the expansionist designs we so readily assume of "non-democratic" nations? Finally, are we not really discussing the reduplication of what has commonly come to be referred to as "Japan Inc.", in China's envisaged economic takeoff?

As for Mr. Buultjens' unseemly comparison of China's present course to the debacle of the Thermidor, it would appear that Mr. Buultjens is more concerned with making a point than with making sense. A rudimentary perusing of the history of the Thermidor seriously discredits the author's conviction that a comparative basis does exist—if only by the slightest of threads.

In short, Mr. Buultjens' opinion that the present trend in China to concentrate on urban development to the serious detriment of the rural sector is, to say the least, in the minority. Few students of China seriously believe that the Chinese will attempt to develop their urban industrial sector without a committable investment in the economic infrastructure of the countryside. The Chinese themselves, after years of careless experimentation, readily recognize the intrinsic danger in unbalanced economic development and the serious social dislocation it provokes....

M.S. Breiner

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Ralph Buultjens Responds

M.S. Breiner's observations on my article contain two elements: (1) a series of heated and colorful comments on journalism, academics, and comparative methodology, and (2) some serious questions about China's future. On important subjects it is perhaps better to separate rhetoric from reason, hard issues from opinionated shadings. Accordingly, I respond only to the substantive portions of Mr. Breiner's letter. Essentially, these concern three areas.

First, the long-term impact of a modernized China. In answer to Mr. Breiner's three rather disconnected questions on this topic, I would again suggest (as a careful reading of my article would indicate) that an economically and militarily powerful China would create profound concerns for many nations. This is a view often expressed by the leaders of the United States, the Soviet Union, India, Vietnam, and the ASEAN nations, and many others. Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping says of the Soviet Union: "Many people often overlook the continual development of the armed forces...its stockpiling of conventional weaponry, including ammunition...if one has so many things in one's hands, the day will come when one's fingers begin to itch. You can't eat those materials or wear them. You must use them somehow...." This surely applies to the China of tomorrow as much as it does to the Soviet Union today. At the moment, for a variety of reasons, it does seem that China sees some common ground with Western interests. This may not always remain so. Contrary to Mr. Breiner's sentiments, I disagree that we are discussing the duplication of Japanese economic development—the historical context, the resource base, the national interest and the ideological

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Halbritter's Arms Through the Ages
by Kurt Halbritter
(Viking Press; 158 pp.; $9.95)

Subtitle: "an introduction to the secret weapons of history," this delightful parody reveals new dimensions of man's ingenuity in maiming himself and others. Halbritter begins with "design failures" in weapons of war from ancient times, works up to this century's more lethal technologies, and illustrates his "findings" with frequently hilarious pen and ink drawings that expose the arts of Mars in all their folly.

The Library of Christian Classics: Ichthus Edition
(Westminster Press)

The publisher is rendering a real service in making available, in relatively inexpensive ($7.95 each) paperback, a multivolume series that is a standard resource for understanding the history of Christian thought. Volumes appearing this fall include Augustine: Earlier Writings, Zwingli and Bullinger: Western Asceticism, and Calvin: Commentaries. Volumes run from three to four hundred pages, and we warmly recommend the series for any library that would reflect seriousness about religion.

Democratic Political Theory
by J. Roland Pennock
(Princeton University Press; xxii + 573 pp.; $32.50/6.95)

Pennock, emeritus professor of political science at Swarthmore, is very thorough in covering ground that is distressingly limited. Whatever one might mean by "democratic political theory," a comparative study would require that attention be paid the classical Greek, biblical, and other sources that have shaped our thinking about man and his communi-

ties. Pennock, however, has an aversion to what he terms "the metaphysical," and therefore his putatively exhaustive survey almost totally excludes the more comprehensive theories of philosophy and theology and dwells upon the secularly respectable and empirically verifiable. This is particularly regrettable in a time when democratic political theory sorely needs renewal by relating it to the experience and belief systems of the Western world.

Correspondence
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framework are so different as to make any such comparison both ill informed and dangerous.

To Mr. Breiner's second point. He states that my use of the Thermidor scenario to indicate one general direction of the future possibilities is invalid. No reason is given as to why he feels this is so, and we are asked to accept opinion as fact without any supporting statement. Even a rudimentary perusal of history must surely suggest some background for this pronouncement. Something must have provoked it, and Mr. Breiner should feel free to share the source of these insights with Worldview readers. It is also strange that while he fiercely rejects my broad references to a Thermidor, he appears to accept some of the elliptical analogies to the Meiji restoration (e.g., duplication of Japan Inc.).

Third, Mr. Breiner addresses the question of urban vs. rural development and my concern that a focus on industry and the cities may result in some decline in rural priorities. The implications of this go far beyond the economic factors involved. They reach to a concern that the technological class that may be created by the recent policies of the Chinese Government could become an exclusive city-bound élite, possibly alienated from the rural masses, and provide the tinder for anti-élitist convulsions in the future. This is a view shared by many thoughtful observers of China (including Professor John Fairbank of Harvard University in articles in the New York Times and New York Review of Books earlier this year). In such a minority I am content to find myself.

Overall, while raising important issues, the tenor and theme of Mr. Breiner's letter suggest that, as so often in the past, a discussion of the People's Republic generates more heat than light. All of us who are concerned with China must constantly recall their old warning that "only from understanding comes wisdom."

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