

land to learn that the great schism [between poetry and the people] is curable," he warns, "then the knowledge brings no comfort."

The future of poetry, then, depends upon "whether or not a work such as Schiller and Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' is possible in our century," upon the artist's capacity to envisage a new millennium. The poet, if his craft is to survive, must not only bear witness to the "twentieth century purgatory," but create an eschatological art that sees the "last things" beyond it—"Salvation, Damnation, Judgment, the Kingdom of God, the goal of history—in other words, everything that connects the time assigned to one human life with the time of all humanity." It is this visionary capacity that characterizes the writers in Milosz's private pantheon: Blake, Dostoevski, Simone Weil, and Oscar Milosz (one wonders again at the absence of Yeats and Lawrence)—and it is toward prophecy that Milosz himself moves in his perplexing final lecture, "On Hope."

Unable or unwilling to imagine the "dark sterility" of a worldwide totalitarian state, Milosz places his faith for the future in the very source of our contemporary terror: the unprecedented development of science and technology in the West. He finds here not merely the potential for global destruction, but an "elemental force" of potential knowledge that will give rise to a "new historical consciousness" by turning mankind back to its entire past, "searching for a key to its own enigma."

At present, Milosz suggests, we are witnessing "a kind of race between the life-giving and the destructive activity of civilization's bacteria." It is impossible to know what he has in mind here, or where he speaks of man as a "force of consciousness transcending nature," or where he envisions "mass education" as the source of this advancement. "Something new is being born," he insists. But where, and what? One finds in these vague speculations neither the inspired symbology of Blake nor the political acuity of Dostoevski. Perhaps Milosz comprehends little more of his prophecy than we do. "All my life," he tells us at the start, "I have been in the power of the daimonion,

and how the poems dictated by him came into my being, I do not quite understand." Or perhaps, for one of the chief witnesses to the agony of our century, hope's imprecision is the final stay against despair.

## CHALLENGES TO COMMUNISM

by John G. Gurley

(W. H. Freeman and Company; 184 pp.; \$20.00/\$10.95)

Ralph Buultjens

There is an element of karmic symmetry in the development of communism and capitalism. Children of the Industrial Revolution, they have been brothers-at-war for the better part of the past two centuries. In this time their evolution has been remarkably similar: fundamental value systems largely perceived and presented as economic systems, both vigorously expansionist in their quest for either ideological or financial markets, both spawning a variety of antagonistic subsystems and organizations. Communism and industrial capitalism are the Corsican Brothers of modern history—born together, linked together by continuous interaction, and probably doomed to die together by either slow self-destruction or a mutually engineered nuclear *Götterdämmerung*.

Although much has been written about capitalism and communism, little intellectual energy has been expended on exploring this extraordinary linkage. In *Challenges to Communism*, Professor John Gurley of Stanford University presents one part of this interaction. Broadly stated, his argument is that capitalism was largely responsible for the creation of Marxism and then so effectively confronted this revolutionary movement that Marxism was pushed into the less-developed world. And there, capitalism, through many agencies, continues the assault that has caused the decline of communism in recent years. The midwife has become an assassin.

Communism, however, has not been passive. Gurley suggests that its counteroffensive has weakened capitalism. And so, these two cosmic forces, like primordial giants, are locked in an embrace that weakens both and from which they cannot disengage. Neither is strong enough to conquer or weak enough to be destroyed. In the course of this struggle, Gurley claims, the development of communism has been more affected by capitalism than by any other single force.

Capitalism, then, emerges as a kind of central dynamic of modern communism.

In support of this thesis, Gurley analyzes the origins and growth of Marxism. He begins with an examination of the ideas of pre-Marxian socialism, which leads into a discussion of the concepts of Marx and Engels and subsequent influences directing the flow of Marxist history. This is an exemplary exposition of multilayered Marxist thought, written with a clarity unusual in explaining these complexities. In fact, this section of Gurley's book can well stand by itself as an introduction to the theory and practice of Marxism.

Early Marxists believed that their new order would soon establish itself in Western Europe. Industrial society was, after all, the seedbed of the revolution, and it was here that the proletariat was expected to assert itself. Every sign of social and economic unrest or disturbance—the Paris Commune of 1871, the depression of the 1890s, World War I, the Great Depression, and lesser dislocations—was hailed as a portent of the Age of Communism. None was. Gurley attributes this failure to two causes: the evolution of a reformist type of socialism and the surprising flexibility of modern capitalism. In chapters on Communist failures and capitalist strength, Gurley presents a lively discussion of how these developments have unfolded.

But communism has also prevailed. There is a fascinating chapter on why it lodged in Russia, China, and elsewhere. Here we learn of the great nineteenth-century debates between Russian Westernists and Slavophiles about the future of their homeland. Today these debates are seemingly reincarnated in the disputes among Soviet dissidents, with contemporary Westernists like Sakharov challenging contemporary Slavophiles like Solzhenitsyn. They should not forget that the Slavophile tradition gave sustenance to Russian populism. Lenin grafted Marxism onto Russian populism and brought forth the most lasting form of totalitarianism: Marxist-Leninism.

Gurley also gives much attention to the Third World. He explains the appeal of communism to peoples of developing nations. And then he directs a perceptive focus on the central paradox of communism as a working system: The nature of Communist governance inhibits achievement of the economic and social results that communism promises. Trapped by this paradox, Communist governments increasingly resort to repression. In recent years this has provoked more large-scale workers revolts in Communist countries than anywhere else. Marx was right: The exploited proletariat will rise. He just never expected this to happen in states ruled by Communist parties!

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Gurley concludes with a somewhat depressing, yet perhaps realistic, observation: Both systems will probably endure, each enfeebling the other. He rejects prescriptions of love and predictions of convergence. The world, he suggests, is likely to see more "contentious disunities" within and between capitalist, Communist, and Third World countries. At best we could have consolidations within each group. What will probably save us from global destruction is not good will but the fulfillment of Gurley's thesis: Through increasing interaction between systems we may achieve a dependency that binds us, kicking and screaming, in mutual restraint.

This is an erudite and elegantly written book which achieves goals that every serious author should seek. It informs both the general reader and the specialist: it provokes thought; and it makes order of a field littered with obscurities. Its flaws are the offshoots of its virtues. Gurley's rigorous approach is probably a shade too disciplined. He gives us little room to remember that, as systems interact and theories clash, the great sweep of events is often determined by the humanity and the frailty of individual participants. Yet what this book lacks in charm it more than makes up in knowledge and balance.

A final suggestion. John Gurley should continue his examination of the symmetry between communism and capitalism and their use of the Third World as a stage on which to enact their fantasies. Widening our awareness of these issues is perhaps one way in which we can reduce their lethal potential. Gurley is well qualified to make more important contributions to this understanding. *The Twilight of the Gods* deserves further explication. **WV**

**THE CONSPIRACY AND DEATH  
OF LIN BIAO**

by Yao Ming-le

(Alfred A. Knopf; xvi + 231 pp.; \$13.95)

**SON OF THE REVOLUTION**

by Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro

(Alfred A. Knopf; xii + 301 pp.; \$15.00)

Howard Goldblatt

Fact and fiction—the lines are hazy and one is often mistaken for (or palmed off as) the other; yet as readers we like to know the rules before we begin the game. Hsia Chih-yen called *The Coldest Winter in Peking*, his exposé of the power struggle at all levels of Chinese society during the Cultural Rev-

olution, a novel; but we knew we were reading a work steeped in fact written by an informed though pseudonymous participant and observer, and we learned from it. It's a pity we can't feel the same security reading Yao Ming-le's story of high-level conspiracy, degeneracy, sexual exploitation, and adventure, though it is every bit as compelling and dramatic as Hsia's.

It is a scary tale—an attempt to debunk the official account of the death of Mao's one-time chosen successor—and, given China's recent history, certainly plausible. But there are disquieting signs— not the least of which is the cloak of secrecy that obscures the pseudonymous author, the unnamed translator, the unknown circumstances surrounding the creation and acquisition of the manuscript, and the citation of inaccessible material and undisclosed sources. Perhaps Yao Ming-le has found himself torn between a noble desire to "tell all" and a patriotic and humanitarian need to protect sources and national security. We do learn our lessons, however, and the "Hitler Diaries" are too fresh in our minds for us to shake the skepticism that nags us throughout *Lin Biao*.

There is also the issue of prior disclosure, since many of the incidents (the aborted assassination of Mao and his personal train, the love affair between a Chinese intelli-

gence agent and his Soviet girlfriend, and others) first appeared in "underground" stories published in Hong Kong after the Cultural Revolution. Then there is the writing. Such lines as "He felt like the man who knew too much" dot a text that reads like a novel of le Carré, albeit somewhat rough around the edges. Stanley Karnow in his introduction argues for the authenticity of the manuscript and explains its cloak of secrecy by implying that current Chinese leaders would probably "protest against the descriptions of life inside their ruling structure." That the book will not please them is a foregone conclusion and does not in itself remove the possibility of a hoax.

*Son of the Revolution* is no less scary, and it is considerably more intimate and saddening. The evocation of sadness does not end with the final curtain of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, for which Liang Heng's life story is a poignant metaphor, but continues up to the day he leaves China with an American wife, his former English teacher, to study in the United States. As the reader follows Liang Heng's narrative from his youth as "Chairman Mao's Good Little Boy" in the first decade after Liberation, through his adventures as the son of a "Rightist," as a twelve-year-old Red Guard, a "peasant-farmer," a factory worker, and finally as a college student in the early


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