

CHEN VILLAGE: THE RECENT HISTORY OF A PEASANT COMMUNITY IN MAO'S CHINA
by Anita Chan, Richard Madsen,
and Jonathan Unger

(University of California Press; 293 pp.; \$19.95)

David Rosen

Throughout the 1960s and '70s peasant villages in much of China were caught up in the nation-wide revolutionary political movements that culminated in the Cultural Revolution. These movements—the Four Clean-Ups Campaign, the Antisuperstition Campaign, the Destroy the Four Olds Campaign, and many others—were part of a state-orchestrated revolutionary process that spread from urban to rural areas. Villages throughout China became the locus of intense conflicts that pitted peasant leaders, Communist party cadre, and revolutionary youth against one another. Chen Village, the subject of this marvelously descriptive book, was one of those affected by such changes.

The primary economic goal of the Chinese Revolution was the transformation of peasant life from the traditional class-based system of agricultural production into one based upon collective agriculture. This required that political leadership at all levels of Chinese society be drawn into the processes of social change. Yet intimately tied to this broad goal of economic change was another goal: revolutionary purification to weed out all vestiges of class from political and economic decision-making. As this book makes clear, the end product was an ideological trap, whereby those with the skills and background necessary for effective leadership were alternatively utilized as leaders and vilified as class enemies. In such a climate, leadership itself was often suspect, and success became the parent of suspicion.

Chen Village is primarily about the achievements and failures of leadership in rural China. At the most abstract level it is an analysis of how different individuals and groups attempt to mobilize human, social, economic, and symbolic resources to attain personal and social goals. It is also an example of how crucial it is to the success of social change that the authority and influence of the leadership emanate from the grass roots. *Chen Village* provides a highly personalized account of village life and of the human drama of revolutionary transformation. As such, it is a remarkably revealing portrait of how specific individuals, playing key roles in village life, adapted, survived, succeeded, and failed in the most

turbulent period of China's recent history.

The problems brought about by the interplay of revolutionary change and revolutionary purification in Chen Village is illustrated by events surrounding the lives of two key political leaders, Quingfa and Longyong, whose leadership styles differed considerably.

Quingfa, the head of the Party branch committee, made heavy use of traditional ties of kinship and classic forms of political brokerage to achieve his goals. Though often authoritarian and autocratic, he had deep roots in village life. But Quingfa's leadership was constantly undermined by agents of the national government in ways that show how the ideology of class origins was manipulated either to support or to sabotage. The fact that Quingfa was an impoverished peasant originally helped him obtain power in the village. But when he became unpopular, he was targeted by the Four Clean-Ups Campaign, which used his kinship ties to a former landlord family to discredit his class origins and identity. In fact, Quingfa's is only one story of how the ideology of class was manipulated to compromise almost all forms of political leadership. As a result, it became impossible to predict whether today's leaders and policies would become tomorrow's counterrevolutionaries and heresies. Quingfa's ultimate success depended not only upon changes in the Chinese state after the death of Mao but, equally profoundly, upon his deep ties to the peasant community.

Longyong's leadership, in contrast, grew largely out of the power and authority vested in him by the state. An intelligent man, he quickly learned to balance the interests of Chen Village against the demands of the state. But he exhibited a puritanical revolutionary style, which failed to gain him the level of support he required to survive politically. Although Longyong was the architect of the modernization of Chen Village and remained popular as long as his policies were successful, his leadership faded with the collapse of his grandiose plans for village development. Longyong's story, like that of Quingfa, illustrates the importance of ties to the peasantry for successful village leadership. Leaders like Longyong, who tied their fate to the state administrative system, were failures in the long run.

A second and equally important focus of this book is the story of the "send down youth"—the young people, often of bourgeois backgrounds, who dedicated themselves to the revolution by moving into the countryside to work with the peasantry. These young people found themselves in a profoundly difficult position. They were

from outside the village and could not carve out new lives among a peasantry who regarded them at best as likeable long-term guests. In addition, their class origins made them suspect in the eyes of their revolutionary sponsors. One youth, for example, rose to a position of leadership among the youth because his stepfather had been a war hero. But his standing was ultimately undermined when it was revealed that his deceased biological father, whom he had never known, was a former Kuomintang official. Essentially rootless in the village and discredited by revolutionary ideology, many of these often talented, skilled, and dedicated young people fled to Hong Kong. They were cast adrift by a peasant society that could not absorb them and by a revolutionary administration that ultimately eschewed them.

Outstanding as this book is, it falls short at two points. First, although the data for this study were derived from interviews in Hong Kong with individuals who left Chen Village, there is no more than a glancing reference to the problem of bias. Second, although contemporary events in the village are wonderfully portrayed, without some idea of the history of agricultural development in China and of peasant-state relations we do not have a larger context in which to view them. **WV**

CITIES AND THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

by Jane Jacobs

(Random House; 257 pp.; \$17.95)

Ralph Buultjens

Economics, as a discipline and a profession, is currently in an embattled state. Bedrock theories and traditional verities, confidently articulated for several decades, have been exploded by the realities of the 1970s and 1980s. Certainty is now displaced by unpredictability.

At the heart of this confusion is a central question: What creates and what sustains economic growth? Creation is of vital concern to poorer societies; the inability to stabilize and order growth is a critical problem for the more affluent. Answers and explanations cascade down on policy-makers and the public alike. Supply-siders and demand-siders (Friedmanites and Keynesians), purveyors of class analysis (Marxists), advocates of new economic orders (Third Worlders), peddlers of nationalization and privatization (Mitterrandistes and Thatch-

erites)—all address this question. Yet effective solutions remain elusive.

Jane Jacobs brings a different perspective to this debate. Earlier work has established her as a kind of high priestess of city economics. Her thesis: The workings of economies can best be understood by examining the life and death of urban agglomerations. Jacobs tells us that successful economies are built around cities that work, and cities work only if they engage in import replacement: substituting items they make themselves for those they once imported. Thereafter, innovation spurs the expansion of exports and stimulates growth.

In *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, Jacobs advances these ideas further. She begins with an assault on traditional economic theories and their inability to explain or cure stagflation and other modern economic diseases. This failure, she asserts, is largely due to the use of an irrelevant basic unit of economic measurement, planning, and management. Economists ground their thinking on a false foundation: the idea of the nation. The key to the structure of economic life in any society is not found in national configurations but in the character of cities.

As she warms to this analysis, Jacobs

divides the world into three economic entities: rural/supply regions, non-import-replacing cities, and import-replacing cities. National policy-makers and international institutions have expended much recent effort on the first and second. They are doomed to failure. Aid, capital transfers, and technological assistance to rural regions and non-import-replacing cities are transactions of decline and only serve to disguise or prolong the terminal nature of these economic wastelands. The American South, the Tennessee Valley Authority, rural Russia, and Puerto Rico are cited in making this point. There is "no decent way of overcoming rural poverty where people have no access to productive city jobs." Non-import-replacing cities—the Belfasts and Cardiffs and Lisbons of the world—are also on their way out. They cannot and should not be replaced.

It is the import-replacing cities—the Taipeis and the Tokyos and the Hong Kongs—that light up modern economics. They unleash great forces (including new markets, jobs, technology, and capital) and produce dynamic and sustained economic activity. Jacobs argues that all developing economic life and all economic expansion depend on city economies. If these stagnate,

the general condition of global existence will deteriorate. Consequently, economic stability and growth can be achieved only by concentrating resources to create and support these engines of growth. Any other investment is a waste of global and national assets.

To maximize the economic potential of cities and rescue the world economy, Jacobs suggests that cities be liberated from national government. Let them become largely autonomous, preferably with their own currencies, and let them make their own economic policies. Pressure for survival will soon turn them into import-replacing units and induce a new prosperity. Surrounding territories may then be drawn into the city region and benefit from it. As for other areas, unless they can be interwoven into this import-replacing complex, they are best abandoned.

In sum, Jacobs's presentation contains three essential ingredients. It is an attack on existing approaches to economic development. It is also a critique of conventional wisdom—government intervention, rural development, rehabilitation of decaying urban areas, and the like. And it is a warning that, unless her devolutionary proposals are

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accepted—and even Jacobs sees little immediate chance of this—the human prospect is frighteningly gloomy. The high priestess becomes Cassandra.

Jacobs's viewpoints are presented with absolute conviction and some clarity. They are reinforced with ample, although selective, historical evidence. Here we must ask the critical question: How valid is her analysis and her prescription? In general her approach is unconvincing for several reasons. First, Jacobs is very much the prisoner of her thesis. Everything, it seems, happens or can happen because of cities: business cycles, stagflation, recessions, regeneration, development or the lack of it. Other causations are ignored in a single-minded dash to establish this premise. Unfortunately, the world of economics is not quite so unidimensional, and things often take place through the interplay of many different pulls and thrusts.

Second, Jacobs's answers run in the face of political fact. Three centuries of deeply rooted nationalism will not dissolve into

separate economic quality circles, quasi-independent city-states with their own monetary systems. Third, Jacobs's focus ignores considerable progress made through policies of government intervention in the economies of many nations. All aid and all assistance are not transactions of decline! The ethic of economic intervention, spawned in its own way by the policies of Roosevelt in America and Stalin in the Soviet Union, have had significant successes in the past five decades. Their historical utility may be challenged by Reaganites and other warriors of retrenchment, but they cannot be dismissed. There is still much that they have to offer in the context of economic development.

Despite these and other tangential flaws, including its conceptual constriction, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* performs a useful service. Jacobs opens a new line of thought and evokes an unusual vision. While her theses are unrealistic and her answers largely unsatisfying, her concerns are timely and welcome. **WV**

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF JOURNALISM

edited by Robert Schmuhi

(University of Notre Dame Press; 160 pp.; \$13.95)

THE KENNEDY CRISIS:

THE PRESS, THE PRESIDENCY AND FOREIGN POLICY

by Montague Kern, Patricia W. Levering, and Ralph B. Levering

(University of North Carolina Press; 290 pp.; \$29.00)

Raymond A. Schroth

Journalism is certainly the most self-critical of professions. Seldom do doctors or lawyers attack one another publicly for their high fees or for failure to put public good over private ambition. And the American Association of University Professors usually aims its fire at university administrators rather than at the incompetents within its own ranks. But one can easily imagine the tragic acquiescence if, after the last edition has been put to bed, the ghost of H. L. Mencken were suddenly to appear at the pub across from any city room in the country and carp at the reporters at the bar: "The journalist can no more see himself realistically than a bishop can see himself realistically." "Most of the evils that continue to beset American journalism today, in truth, are not due to the rascality of owners nor even to the Kiwanian bombast of business managers, but simply and solely to the stupidity, cowardice and Philistinism of working newspaper men." No one would give

him an argument.

A few years ago there were few more intellectually exciting events in New York than the *More* journalism counterconventions, staged at the Roosevelt-Biltmore, while the publishers association was convening across town. They allowed working journalists, including stars like Seymour Hersh, John B. Oakes, Anthony Lewis, and others, to talk for three days, mostly about what journalists were doing wrong. *More* died, but the *Columbia Journalism Review* and the *Washington Journalism Review* have persisted.

When George Will coached Ronald Reagan in the debate prepared with filched Carter documents and then praised Reagan's performance on ABC's "Nightline" commentary, fellow journalists, particularly Jimmy Breslin, were quick to hold his feet to the fire. When the *Wall Street Journal*, which had recently run a front-page exposé on itself, revealed that a *New Yorker* writer,

Alistair Reid, admitted that he often rearranged "facts" for effect in his reportage, the columnists and the editorial writers were quick to brand him a transgressor. All this is not just because journalists are more self-righteous than doctors, lawyers, and professors, but because they know the extraordinary degree to which their professional reputation hangs on a general public perception of their collective integrity. Theirs is a reputation constantly under fire, not just because American journalism is full of holes, but because it is the moral center of the establishment itself. It must, for self-preservation, keep cleaning its house in public. That's why journalists are often the most interesting people to talk to, and why books about journalism's mess-ups have more than a 50/50 chance of being interesting.

The Responsibilities of Journalism grew out of a 1982 conference at Notre Dame on the moral dimensions of contemporary journalism. Collections of conference talks often make nonbooks, but Robert Schmuhi has provided a good historical introduction to journalism's self-examination, covering the publication in 1947 of *A Free and Responsible Press* by the Commission on Freedom of the Press, chaired by Robert M. Hutchins, the various codes of ethics, and today's "ombudsmen," who write columns passing judgment on the goof-ups in their own papers. The talks display a certain uniformity in their evenness of tone and in their almost ritualistic listing of the same examples of press perfidy: the Janet Cooke Pulitzer fraud at the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times Magazine's* faked on-the-scene report from Cambodia, the *New York Daily News's* composite stories on Northern Ireland.

Edwin Newman's talk is amusing in its exasperated mockery of the ace communicators who can't handle the English language: NBC's "Today" show announced that "Brezhnev will lay in State," and the *Oklahoma Journal* ran a photograph of a nurse with a physician "in whom's office she worked." The weakest chapter is by John E. Swearingen, chairman of the board of directors of the Standard Oil Company, who laments that the oil companies are persecuted by the press. It is a windy blast, which I suspect was ghosted by a public relations man. If part of the conference had included a case study on the coverage of the energy crisis, Swearingen might have had a role; but by itself his chapter is just a free ad for the oil business. The last five chapters do present a case study, a relatively easy one about an ambitious investigative reporter tempted to print a story that con-