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Introduction by Yafeng Xia

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Introduction by Yafeng Xia, Long Island University

In the last two decades, a great number of important personal memoirs by those who were involved in diplomatic decision-making, policy implementation and actual negotiations of the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the Cold War have appeared. These include memoirs of such military leaders as Nie Rongzhen (Marshal and acting chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army during the Korean War), Hong Xuezhi (deputy commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers in charge of logistics), Du Ping (director of the Political Department of the Chinese People's Volunteers), and such senior diplomats as Wu Xiuquan (vice foreign minister in charge of East European affairs in the early 1950s), Huang Hua (one of Zhou Enlai's top aides, China's first chief representative to the United Nations and foreign minister in the late 1970s and early 1980s), Wang Bingnan (Chinese ambassador to Poland and China's first chief negotiator at the Sino-American ambassadorial talks), Liu Xiao (Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1955 to 1962), Geng Biao (China's first ambassador to Sweden, and director of the CCP's International Liaison Department in the 1970s), Shi Zhe (Mao Zedong's Russian language interpreter from 1943 to the early 1950s), Chai Chengwen (one of China's main negotiators at the Korean armistice talks), Xiong Xianghui (a senior intelligence and Foreign Service officer, one of Zhou Enlai's top aides during U.S-China rapprochement talks in the early 1970s), Yang Gongsu (director of Tibetan Foreign Affairs office from 1953 to 1962, and Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Vietnam and Greece), Ding Xuesong (the PRC's first female ambassador), Qian Qichen (vice foreign minister, foreign minister and vice premier in charge of foreign affairs from 1982 to 2003) and many others. Yan Mingfu, Zhu Ruizhen and Li Yueran, who were Russian-language interpreters for the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee from 1957 to 1966, have published their accounts of the rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance. They interpreted for senior Chinese leaders such as Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen.

The Diplomatic History Research Office of the Foreign Ministry, compiled *Xin Zhongguo waijiao fengyun* (Winds and Clouds in New China's Diplomacy) and *Dangdai Zhongguo shijie waijiao shengya* (Diplomatic Careers of Contemporary Chinese Envoys) series.¹ Memoirs in these two series include those diplomats such as Wang Guoquan (Wang Bingnan's successor at the Sino-American ambassadorial talks), Luo Yisu (China's contact person at the Warsaw talks when Ambassador Wang Guoquan was back in China in the late 1960s), and Cao Guisheng and Wei Dong (assistants to Ambassador Huang Zhen at Paris when he held secret talks with Vernon Walters and Henry Kissinger) and others. Other important leaders, such as Bo Yibo (vice premier in charge of economic planning), Yang Shangkun (Director of the General Office of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee), Hu Qiaomu (Vice Director of the Propaganda Department of the CCP CC), and Wu Lengxi (editor the of CCP's mouthpiece *People's Daily*), also published their memoirs.

¹ The first five volumes in each series were all published by Shiji Zhishi Chubanshe (World Knowledge Press) in the 1990s.

Although not responsible for diplomatic affairs, they participated in crucial foreign policy decision-making process.²

Traditional approaches to the study of the diplomatic history of the PRC focus on nation-state actors too often personalized by the supreme leaders, and have hardly touched on a very important level of analysis: the function of diplomacy via the PRC's career diplomats. With the declassification of the PRC's Foreign Ministry archives and the publication of these important memoirs, it is now possible to investigate the input and output role of career diplomats in foreign policymaking. Indeed, career diplomats collect and analyze information, make assessments of situations, exchange views, and propose courses of action. On the basis of the materials generated by diplomats, the top leaders would draw inferences and formulate policy. It is now possible to examine and evaluate the role of senior diplomats, such as Wang Jiaxiang, Zhang Wentian, Zhang Hanfu, Qiao Guanhua, Huang Zhen, Huang Hua, Ji Chaozhu among others, played in foreign policymaking. The general questions are: What role did the PRC's diplomats play? Did it make a difference?

Ji Chaozhu's diplomatic stories first appeared in book by his wife Wang Xiangtong in 1997, and then as an oral history interview with journalist Su Weichun in 2003.³ The English version of Ji's memoir is no doubt a welcome addition to the growing English literature on Chinese foreign policymaking. To assess the significance of the book, H-Diplo invited seven scholars from different background, Chinese and Western, to comment on the book. Notwithstanding its value, the reviewers also expressed some reservations on how much the readers could get from Ji's revelation.

1) James Gao praises the value of the book. He writes, Ji's "frank and unperturbed narrative of his own experience and reflection points to a more sophisticated and very useful understanding of Chinese politics and Foreign Service."

2) Charles Hayford disagrees with Andrew Nanthan's view that Ji's lack of revelations is a phenomenon of the "tell-nothing ethos of a totalitarian era." Hayford argues that "Ji's book is not highly revelatory but it offers an authentic and readable voice."

² For new Chinese sources on Chinese foreign policy during the Cold War, see Yafeng Xia, "The Study of Cold War International History in China—A Review of the Last Twenty Years," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2008), pp. 81-115. Only a small number of these memoirs are available in English. Marshal Nie Rongzhen's memoir was translated as *Inside the Red Star: The Memoirs of Marshal Nie Rongzhen* (Beijing: New World Press, 1988); Qian Qichen's memoir was translated as *Ten Episodes of Chinese Diplomacy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006). Parts of Bo Yibo's memoir were translated into English published in *Chinese Historians* (Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1992) and *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (Issues 6-7, Winter, 1995/1996). Parts of She Zhe's memoir were also published in *Chinese Historians* (Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 1993). Parts of memoirs of Marshals Peng Dehui, Nie Rongzhen, Xu Xiangqian and generals Yang Dezhi, Hong Xuezhai, Du Ping and Chai Chengwen on the Korean War could be found in in Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett and Bin Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, the University Press of Kansas, 2001).

³ Wang Xiangtong, *Wode zhangfu Ji Chaozhu - 44 nian waijiao shengya* [My Husband Ji Chaozhu: Forty-four years of diplomatic service] (Taiyuan: Shanxi Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1997); Ji Chaozhu with Su Weichun, *Cong "Yang wawa" dao waijiaoguan: Ji Chaozhu koushushi* [Ji Chaozhu's Oral History: From a Foreign "Doll" to a Diplomat:] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2000).

3) Lorenz Lüthi notes Ji's book "is an insightful memoir for interested lay readers and specialists without Chinese language skills." But he complains that it "unfortunately reveals little about the substance of these talks, except for the Kissinger and Nixon visits in 1971 and 1972."

4) Raymond Ojserkis contends, "This is not primarily a book on politics, nor does it stray far from the Chinese Communist Party's accepted view of events ... But it is a fascinating series of recollections by an astute observer."

5) For Western readers, Patrick Shan contends, "[the book's] true value lies in its inside observation of Mao and Deng's diplomacy as it echoes in this voice from behind 'the bamboo curtain.'" But he also complains that "Ji never steps out of the communist model of thought to which he has become too accustomed to...[and] simply follows communist official documents in offering his judgments of important leaders."

6) Although "one will find rather little" in this book in terms of purely diplomatic new revelations, from a Western standpoint, Priscilla Roberts points out, "... the most valuable feature of Ji Chaozhu's memoir is that it opens an illuminating window into the thinking of one highly articulate, thoughtful scholar-intellectual whose devotion to new China remained unwavering through all the harsh vicissitudes of its first half-century."

7) Qiang Zhai states, "The book is more useful and instructive in the way Ji conveys his impressions of the leaders he has worked with and his experiences during Mao's numerous political campaigns than in the revelations he makes about how China's decisions were made at some critical moments of its foreign relations."

What do we learn from the English version of Ji's memoir? Has Ji added anything new to what we have already known? I think this is an important English addition to the literature on the four decades of the PRC's Foreign Ministry. It is a welcome volume for lay readers. What I found most valuable is Ji's frank description of his complicated relations with some of his Foreign Ministry colleagues, such as Han Xu, Nancy Tang, and Wang Hairong. We can't get much of these episodes elsewhere (not in the Chinese version). It's unlikely that we'll get any useful recollections of the PRC's diplomacy in those years from the "two ladies."

Participants

James Z. Gao is an associate professor at University of Maryland at College Park. He obtained his Ph.D. in history from Yale. He has written three books: *Meeting Technology's Advance: Social Changes in China and Zimbabwe in the Railway Age* (1997), *The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou: The Transformation of City and Cadre, 1949-1954* (2004) and *Historical Dictionary of Modern China, 1800-1949* (2009). He has published several articles, including "The Call of the Oases: The Peaceful Liberation of Xinjiang, 1949-1953," "War, Culture, Nationalism, and Political Campaigns, 1950-53," and "Discourse Analyses of the American Policy toward Taiwan."

Charles W. Hayford is a visiting professor of history at Northwestern University. He is editor of the *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*. His publications include *To the People: James Yen and Village China* (1990) and "Draft Bibliography of American-East Asian Relations," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* (1999; published 2002). He is now

working on a manuscript, *America's Chinas: From the Opium Wars to the 21st Century*, dealing with the books Americans living in China wrote for the home audience.

Lorenz M. Lüthi is assistant professor of the history of international relations at McGill University in Canada. He has been a post-doctoral fellow at the Olin Institute at Harvard and a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. As a Cold War historian, his research focuses on relations between socialist states, with a particular emphasis on China. He is the author of *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (2008). His articles have been published in *Cold War History*, the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, and the *Cold War International History Bulletin*. He is currently working on a book project about developments in East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe during the second half of the Cold War.

Raymond P. Ojserkis teaches in the History Department at Rutgers University Newark. He has an M. Sc. and a Ph. D. in International History from the London School of Economics, and has written the well-reviewed *Beginnings of the Cold War Arms Race* (2003). His areas of specialization are 20th century international relations and economic history.

Priscilla Roberts teaches history at the University of Hong Kong, where she is also Honorary Director of the Centre of American Studies. She has edited the Chinese Diaries of David Bruce, George Bush's predecessor as head of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing. Her research interests focus upon the development and influence of the U.S. foreign policy elite. She is currently working on a biography of the banker Frank Altschul, and a study of Anglo-American think tanks and the making of China policy.

Patrick Fuliang Shan is an associate professor in the department of history at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. He teaches Chinese history and East Asian history. His academic interest is modern China about which he has published numerous articles. He is currently working on a monograph about Heilongjiang frontier society in the early 20th century. He is also interested in Sino-U.S. relations during World War II, and coauthored the first written Chinese biography of General Claire Lee Chennault, the leader of the Flying Tigers.

Qiang Zhai is professor of history at Auburn University at Montgomery. He specializes in the history of Chinese foreign relations during the Cold War. He received his doctoral degree from Ohio University, where he studied with John Lewis Gaddis. He is the author of *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (1994), *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (2000), as well as numerous articles and essays on Sino-American relations. He is also co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (2008). He was president of the Chinese Historians in the United States.

Yafeng Xia is an associate professor of East Asian and Diplomatic history at Long Island University, and a research fellow at the Center for Cold War International History Studies, East China Normal University in Shanghai. He is the author of *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-72* (2006). He has also published articles in such publications as *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *The Chinese Historical*

Review, The International History Review, among others. He is working on a monograph on the early history of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tentatively titled *Burying the "Diplomacy of Humiliation": New China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1949-1956*.

The original Chinese title of the book, *Ji Chaozhu's Oral History: From a "Foreign Doll" to a Diplomat*, tells the reader better about the theme of the book. Instead of revealing inside story of Chinese diplomacy, it informs a human drama experienced by an individual with special family and education background serving in China's foreign ministry. The China-born "foreign doll" was growing up in the United States. In order to learn perfect English, he followed his father's instruction: "never go to Chinatown" and "stay away from other Chinese people." (23, 24) As the family hoped, Ji was enrolled to Harvard University. Ji does not describe what this education contributed to his diplomatic career. What he emphasizes in the book was his engagement in the Communist reading group at Harvard and his growing nationalist sentiment, as he writes, "for us loyal Chinese everything was China." (42) This feeling brought him back to China in 1950.

The reader, however, can sense from Ji's life the soft power of American high education. Harvard offered him not only training in chemistry or in the English language but also understanding of and affection for American culture, which equipped Ji to play an active role in the history of the U.S.-China relations. Ji repeatedly refers to China and the United States as "my two beloved nations." Even at the negotiation table of the Korean War, he recalled, "The people of America had paid for my excellent education... I'd felt nothing but the embrace of acceptance and protection" in the United States. (112) It is a rare and daring expression of the regret by a Chinese diplomat for the war that he "was on the side that was maiming and killing as many Americans as possible." (113) It is no surprise that this Harvard educated Chinese diplomat saw the U.S.-China rapprochement in the 1970s as "a dream coming true." (244)

Ji's book speaks to a common concern for whether a person who "drank too much American water" (77) could serve new China. Ji recalled, although Zhou Enlai "sometimes referred to me affectionately as his 'foreign doll'", (159) most bureaucrats took it as a pejorative nickname. To become a communist diplomat, the foreign doll found, "In addition to learning to speak Chinese, I also had to learn to be Chinese." (110) Understanding the bureaucratic hierarchy, keeping one's mouth shut, and not crossing lines are a long-held tradition associated with Chinese culture. More often than not, the foreign experiences and oversea relatives of Ji and his wife hindered their appointments, promotion and family reunion. Despite the ups and downs in his career and hardships for his family, Ji survived chaos, purges, and power struggles in the foreign ministry mainly because of Zhou's protection. This reveals the rules of the game in communist politics, explaining why the major concern of foreign minister Qiao Guanhua and the "two ladies" (Nancy Tang and Wang Hairong) was not foreign policy but how to get strong personal banking from top leaders. Many pages of the book are devoted to the China's domestic politics, and Ji's experiences indicate their impact on foreign affairs. When Ji served in the Chinese embassy to Washington, his liberal diplomatic behavior was disapproved of, leading to his dispatch to a land of "cannibals." His loyalty, ability and "unChinese Way" of diplomacy were not fully recognized until the further opening-up of the country. Then the pace of China's

diplomacy accelerated. Ji was made China's ambassador to the UK and eventually under secretary-general of the UN.

Ji sets different tones of description of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. In his eyes, Mao was remote, inaccessible iconic figure while Zhou a warm and human man whom he worshiped. (141) The views on Mao-Zhou relations he presents in the book are a little misleading. Ji writes, Zhou "had defied Mao behind his back." (256) Zhou let Mao's words "roll off him like water off a duck's back. Then Zhou went forward and often did what he felt was right." (203) The single example he gives is, "While Mao was railing against the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s, ...the premier made an agreement with the USSR to collaborate on aid to North Vietnam, allowing Russian military equipment to travel over China's rail network." (203-204) Recently available archival sources show, however, that the decision to let Russian equipment pass was made not by premier Zhou but by Chairman Mao. Interpreting Zhou's remarks "criticizing himself for not being able to keep up with the thinking of Chairman Mao" during his meeting with Henry Kissinger, Ji believes that, Zhou "was signaling to Kissinger that he did not entirely agree with Mao." (247) The reader cannot be convinced by Ji's reading of Zhou's statement. The book does not provide other evidence to subvert the common understanding that Zhou was living in Mao's shadow during the Cultural Revolution. Ji suggests, "Zhou's view had long been that China and the United States should have been allies from the beginning." (244) The controversy was that the Chinese government constantly decided not to ally with any powers in the Mao-Zhou era. Also, Ji's phrase "from the beginning" is very vague.

With vivid details and bibliographical truth, this book is extremely interesting and valuable. The author's frank and unperturbed narrative of his own experience and reflections points to a more sophisticated and very useful understanding of Chinese politics and Foreign Service. The book demonstrates that the history of international relations has moved beyond the analysis of foreign policies to a fruitful new field in the analysis of behaviors of individual diplomats.

Ji Chaozhu and the "Bridge Across the Pacific" Memoir

Andrew Nathan, reviewing Ji Chaozhu's book for the online journal *Slate*, complains that the "title seems to promise a timely exposé in the age of the tell-all memoir," but that in the end he was disappointed:

Open Ji Chaozhu's memoir, and you'll discover a very different kind of document, more of a memo to the grandkids than to history. As witness to a half-century of Chinese turmoil, at home and abroad, he says surprisingly little that is not already known. The revelation here is of how persistent the tell-nothing ethos of a totalitarian era can be.¹

Without disagreeing about the missing revelations, I think Nathan judges the book in the wrong category. The genre is not so much the "memo to the grandkids" as the "bridge across the Pacific" China book. Books of this type face generic quandaries: write in a way that is too authentically Chinese and your agent will toss back the manuscript; write something that the American public will buy and the learned professors will kvetch that you didn't tell them anything they didn't know; write something with too many revelations and you won't be able to go home. Prof. Nathan, to be sure, edited the recent *Tiananmen Papers* (2001), which are both revelatory and well received. They were leaked by a dissident insider – who remains anonymous.²

Bridge Across the Pacific Books

Have there been Chinese diplomats or political figures who wrote books for the Western public which were both frank and authentic but also attractive and commercial?

Before the late nineteenth century, Western travelers, missionaries, and diplomats informed the Western public about things Chinese. Chinese wrote in Chinese and for Chinese. The first to address Westerners directly was the Qianlong Emperor in his 1793 letter to George III, which, however was not translated into English for a century and had no visible effect on British policy. Lin Zexu's 1839 letter, later given the title "Moral Advice to Queen Victoria," was printed and circulated it in the streets of Guangzhou, where it was picked up and translated in the *Chinese Recorder*, a local missionary publication. Lin's audience was also more domestic than foreign.³

¹ *Slate* August 5, 2008 <http://www.slate.com/id/2196176/?from=rss> Accessed September 27, 2008.

² *The Tiananmen Papers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), compiled by "Zhang Liang," a pseudonym, and edited by Andrew J. Nathan, and E. Perry Link.

³ James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1995): 187-89, 238-39; John K. Fairbank, Teng Ssu-yu, eds., *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954) : 24-28.

When Chinese began to circulate abroad, they soon realized the advantages of putting their case directly to the foreign public. Both Phan Young Lee's *When I Was a Boy in China* (1878), the first book published by a Chinese citizen in the U.S., and Yung Wing's *My Life in China and America* (1909) had to play nice in order to be accepted by the public, though Yung Wing did mention the racist reactions to his marriage to a white woman.

The prize for first book written for the Western public by a serving Chinese diplomat goes to Wu Tingfang. Born in Singapore and educated in Hong Kong and England, Wu was the first Chinese to become a British barrister. When he came as envoy to the United States, his brief included dealing with the anti-Chinese race riots and anti-immigration agitation, but his *America through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat* (1914) mentioned these matters briefly and spoke with great frankness only about such weighty subjects as "The Importance of Names" and "Conjuring and Circuses." The chapter "America and China" does state that what is "most objectionable and unfair is that the Chinese should be singled out for discrimination" in immigration policy, and that because of this treatment, Chinese opinion of America might not be "altogether pleasant." He mentions his embarrassment when a railroad porter conducted him to the waiting room marked "For the White," but mildly observes that "in some towns in Southern States special schools are provided for colored people." The reformer Liang Qichao, writing at roughly the same time but as a private citizen and for a Chinese audience, was not so diplomatic in his description of lynching: "Had I only been told about this and not been to America myself I would not have believed that such cruel and inhuman acts could be performed in broad daylight in the twentieth century."⁴

Americans looked at China with a sympathetic curiosity they did not always extend to Chinese in America, yet the diaries of most diplomats published in Chinese would not have appealed. Opening a recent translation at random, we read (in its entirety) "26th of the Third Month":

I left Paris with my staff at noon by train. After crossing the Channel we boarded an English train; they run much faster than the French trains.⁵

This is not compelling reading, so something had to give. Entrepreneurs stepped in to provide what the public wanted to hear. They solved the problem of frankness by lying

⁴ Wu, *America*, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1914): 85, 55, 51. Liang Qichao's *Xin Dalu Youyi* (Notes from a New World journey), the record of his seven month visit to North America, is in the Tocqueville league. Useful excerpts appear in R. David Arkush, and Leo Ou-fan Lee, eds. *Land without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 81- 95, quote at p. 91. Neither Liang's diary or the other key works by Chinese visitors to the West were translated at the time.

⁵ The ambassadorial diary of Xue Fucheng (1838-94), published in Chinese in 1892, translated by Helen Hsieh Chien, with a useful introduction by Douglas Howland, *The European Diary of Hsien Fucheng: Envoy Extraordinary of Imperial China* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993): 70. J. D. Frodsham's translated the diaries of the first Chinese ambassador to the Court of St. James, published in Chinese 1892, and those of his colleagues, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West: the Journals of Kuo Sung-T'ao, Liu Hsi-Hung and Chang Te-Yi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

about it and met the need for authentic stories by making them up. Just as vaudevillians and movie actors mimicked African-Americans for their audiences, these facile Americans mimicked Chinese writers.⁶

Did the public want the “diary” of a Manchu courtier during the Boxer Intervention? Edmund Backhouse happily (and profitably) supplied one. Did they want the exotic critical views of a Chinese official on Western Civilization? G. Lowes Dickinson’s *Letters from John Chinaman* (1901) presented them so convincingly that William Jennings Bryan, soon to be Woodrow Wilson’s secretary of state, wrote an outraged response. Li Hongzhang’s visit to America in 1891 had made such a good impression that he was credited with the invention of that fashionable new dish, chop suey. *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang* (1913), “edited” by William Francis Mannix was warmly welcomed. A leading academic authority on China, F. Wells Williams of Yale, praised Li in the *American Historical Review*: “If others of his class have been as prolific as he has in expressing their sentiments on paper, we shall gain a new conception of the intellectual life of Chinese statesmen during the past century.” Williams did not challenge the memoirs’ authenticity, though he does note that the work “strikes the outsider as being singularly amateurish, fragmentary and unconvincing.” Payson J. Treat of Stanford, reviewing it in the *American Political Science Review* remarked that the translators rendered the Chinese into English which was so expressive that Chinese scholars “at first were in doubt as to the authenticity of the book.” As well they might, since Li’s *Memoirs* were a wholesale forgery.⁷

Looking through Yuan Tung-li’s standard bibliography of writing in Western languages about China, one finds remarkably few Chinese political voices from the 1920s through the 1940s. The Communist leadership did not address the western audience directly until Edgar Snow’s 1937 as-told-to “autobiography” of Mao, which was a tour de force of positioning no less masterly for having been carefully scripted by party leaders. Through Snow, Mao told the world that the Chinese revolution was alive, Marxist, loyal to the Soviet cause, but unique and nationalist. Lin Yutang, who had left China for New York, was one of the few Chinese who could write effectively in English for the middle brow public but his *Moment in Peking* (1939) was not direct reporting and in any case had little political leverage. Mme. Chiang Kai-shek spoke excellent English and addressed the Western public through newsreels and addressed a joint session of Congress in 1943, but scarcely provided a frank description of the Chinese political scene. For the hot stuff, Americans

⁶ The tradition goes way back. See Ch. 4 “Deliberate Fictions,” in Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York; London: Norton, 1998): 62-80; Michael Keevak, *The Pretended Asian: George Psalmanazar’s Eighteenth-Century Formosan Hoax* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2004); Ch 15, “Timid Exoticism: Or China of the Imagination,” in Alfred Owen Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: The Presence of China in the American Enlightenment*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1993): 244-263.

⁷ J. O. P. Bland, E. Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager* (London: W. Heinemann, 1910); G. Lowes Dickinson, *Letters from John Chinaman and Other Essays* (London,: G. Allen & Unwin ltd., 1946); William Francis Mannix, *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913; Rpr: 1923; with “The Story of a Literary Forgery,” by Ralph D. Paine; F. Wells Williams, *American Historical Review* 19.3 (April 1914): 633-35; Payson J. Treat, *American Political Science Review* 8.1 (February 1914): 119-20.

had to depend on the work of American journalists, such as Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby's *Thunder Out of China* (New York: William Morrow, 1946).⁸

During the 1950s, the most popular contemporary books written by Chinese were "I Fled Red China" adventures which illuminated the hardships of everyday life, not life at the top.⁹ These books, while not as crude as the internal "Mao Zedong Thought" narratives and certainly not as murderous, were frank and authentic enough, but not memorable or best selling. *Red Star Over China* went out of print. The Cultural Revolution eventually proved a seed bed for the sprouts of a new genre but during the early years full time China watchers, or perhaps "China voyeurs," tracked leaders and factions, the American public threw up its hands and had no way to hear individual voices.

New China Books from a New China: The Dish on Opening and Reform

Even before Air Force One landed at the old Beijing airport in 1972, former Red Guards in Hong Kong told their stories to Westerners.¹⁰ But the harvest ripened only at the publication of Liang Heng, with Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution* (1983), which made the initial splash, and Gao Yuan, with Judith Polumbaum, *Born Red* (1987). Both were revelatory and intelligent, both were written by husband/wife teams, and in both Sino-American romance proved a way to escape Chinese politics (the marriage of Liang and Shapiro had to be personally approved by Deng Xiaoping). Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1987) and Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* (1991) detailed the chaos and irrationality of Mao's China to an American public which by that point could hardly have been surprised by the news.¹¹

⁸ Yuan Tung-li, *China in Western Literature; A Continuation of Cordier's Bibliotheca Sinica* (New Haven, CT: Far Eastern Publications Yale University, 1958); Pt Four, "Genesis of a Communist," *Red Star Over China* (New York: Random House, 1938); Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003): 46-48; Yutang Lin, *Moment in Peking: a Novel of Contemporary Chinese Life* (New York: John Day, 1939). Han Suyin kicked off her remarkable series of personal political memoirs with *Destination Chungking* (1942), which is rare in giving an insider's view of the government. There were readable personal recollections, such as Koo Hui-lan with Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer, *Hui-Lan Koo: An Autobiography* (New York: Dial Press, 1943) a vivacious memoir of international diplomatic life and the social life behind Chinese politics with her husband, V. K. Wellington Koo. Of the memoirs, Chiang Monlin's *Tides from the West: A Chinese Autobiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945) stands out as charming and frank about selected topics, but it avoids the gritty side of politics.

⁹ Shao-t'ang Liu, *Out of Red China* (New York: Duell Sloan and Pearce, 1953); Maria Yen (Yen Kuei-lai), with Richard M. McCarthy, *The Umbrella Garden: A Picture of Student Life in Red China* (New York: Macmillan, 1954); Liu Shijin Dong, *Secret Diary from Red China* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961); Robert Loh, with Humphrey Evans, *Escape from Red China* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1962; rpr. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger 2007). The remarkable Bao Ruo-wang (Jean Pasqualini), translated by Rudolph Chelminksi. *Prisoner of Mao* (New York: Coward, 1973) is perhaps *sui generis*.

¹⁰ Gordon A. Bennett Ronald N. Montaperto, *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-Ai* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

¹¹ Liang Heng, and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1983); Yuan Gao, with Judith Polumbaum, *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (New York: Grove Press, 1987); Chang Jung, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

Twin genres had been born – or at least new publishing niches – the Red Guard memoir and the émigré intellectual memoir. Both types were written by recent émigrés, usually from urban intellectual backgrounds; most were composed in and published first in Western languages; with help from a friendly native (or spouse); and aimed at Western audiences. Many of the émigré intellectuals had, like Ji Chaozhu, either returned to China after study abroad or were educated in missionary or foreign schools in China.¹² The eye-witness point of view provided authority which the author would not otherwise have had. Nien Cheng, for instance, was in jail for most of the Cultural Revolution and had no particular knowledge of the Chinese leadership. Her experience is a tribute to the capacity of the human will for endurance, but many reviews assumed that it was qualification to analyze Chinese politics. The genre emerged at a time when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher's conservative revolution of the 1980s repudiated New Deal big government and reasserted values of individual initiative and profit, even greed. The gory details of these memoirs showed a China that fit into familiar frameworks and assumed that personal experience was more important than political analysis.

The historian Peter Zarrow suggested that the émigré memoirs confirmed the “ideological dichotomies of the Cold War – Western freedom, rationalism, individualism, and order versus Chinese despotism, irrationality, group-think, and chaos” but did not give “full consideration of such things as Red Guard freedom or Maoist rationalism.”¹³ Their stories reassured the American public that human nature was everywhere much the same and reaffirmed American values by showing that totalitarians had attacked them – much the same logic that affirmed Christian values by depicting martyrdoms.

The Western public and media framed the events of 1989 as a Democracy Movement, but the impact of the one shot on TV – the “tank man” – had much more impact than any of the memoirs by student leaders. This voiceless TV image became iconic, instantly recognizable, in a way which no book did. Strangely, while many 1989 student leaders came to study in the United States, their writings did not catch on. Carma Hinton's classic 1995 documentary presented the voices of student, intellectuals, and workers in ruminative interviews which might be called cameo memoirs, and the film argued in a realistic but not cynical way that their leadership style reproduced the Party style rather than offering an alternative, but no memoir was both frankly challenging and widely read.¹⁴

The stream of Red Guard and émigré intellectual memoirs rippled on, many of them gripping and fresh.¹⁵ Some younger authors, mostly academics, who had grown up in the

¹² Including Nien Cheng, Li Zhishui, and Wu Ningkun.

¹³ Peter Zarrow, “Meanings of China's Cultural Revolution: Memoirs of Exile,” *positions* 7.1 (1999): 165-91, quote at p. 172.

¹⁴ This argument is presented in the documentary *Gate of Heavenly Peace* (San Francisco: Long Bow Group, 1995). Cf. Ralph Litzinger, “Screening the Political: Pedagogy and Dissent in *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*,” *positions* 7.3 (1999): 827-850.

¹⁵ For instance, Ningkun Wu, and Yikai Li, *A Single Tear: A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993); Yang Rae, *Spider Eaters: a Memoir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Zhengguo Kang, translated by Susan Wilf, *Confessions: An Innocent Life in Communist China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).

PRC and trained in the West told a revisionist story of “youth without regrets” and some women wrote that they never had been more alive than when they were Red Guards. American readers now could read a variety of experiences to put together a more nuanced picture than ever before, but the view was still from the outside of politics and from the bottom.¹⁶

The last great émigré memoir, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (1994), came from Mao’s private physician, Li Zhisui. Random House, which some sixty years earlier had published *Red Star Over China*, commissioned specialists to rewrite Li’s drafts and buttress them with Western scholarship. Perhaps I am wrong, though, to call this the “last great émigré memoir,” as that distinction may belong to Chang Jung and Jon Halliday’s *Mao: The Unknown Story*, which is not a memoir but not exactly a history either.¹⁷

The Problems of Cultural Translation

We can now make a few observations based on our search for works by Chinese authors who wrote frank, revelatory, and authentic works for the American public.

1) It’s hard to find a frank discussion of China’s politics from any prominent Chinese political figure who expected to keep on living in China.¹⁸ On second thought, make that just “any prominent political figure.” From Phan You Lee’s 1878 *When I was a Boy in China* down to at least 1972, frank books about China did not and perhaps could not come from China. “Insiders” do not have the freedom to share their information until they leave the country.¹⁹ Outsiders, such as American reporters, are both cut off from insider information and also constrained by home office editors and agents who don’t want it; still, they cornered the market. Andrew Nathan’s own review of Chang and Halliday’s *Mao: The Unknown Story* implies that insider accounts pay for their gain in authenticity by their

¹⁶ Weili Ye, Xiaodong Ma, *Growing up in the People’s Republic: Conversations between Two Daughters of China’s Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Xueping Zhong, Zheng Wang, Bai Di, eds., *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing up in the Mao Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Dr. Li Zhisui, with Anne Thurston, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random, 1994). Thurston describes editing the draft manuscripts in “The Politics of Survival: Li Zhisui and the Inner Court,” *China Journal* 35 (January 1996): 97-105. For Chang and Halliday’s book, see Gregor Benton and Chun Lin, eds., *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday’s “Mao: The Unknown Story”* (Routledge, 2009).

¹⁸ Partial exceptions are the memoirs of dissidents, which were not intended for the general public, e.g. Chang, Kuo-t’ao. *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971); Wang, Fan-hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary: Memoirs, 1919-1949* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). Even the top figures in Nationalist politics who came to live in the United States did not write “tell all” memoirs, only oral histories, e.g. Li Tsung-jen with Tong Te-Kong, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979).

¹⁹ In addition to the *Tiananmen Papers*, see Gao Wenqian, translated [and edited] by Peter Rand and Lawrence R. Sullivan, *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary* (NY: Public Affairs, 2007). Gao was a researcher at a Party archive with privilege access. He secretly copied and smuggled internal documents out to Hong Kong, where he wrote comparatively critical biography of Zhou, which the translators adapted for this English version. See also Andrew Nathan “*The Tiananmen Papers: An Editor’s Reflections*,” *China Quarterly* 167 (2001): 724-37.

prosecutorial zeal and lack of perspective. Another specialist suggests that their book reflects the Maoist paranoid style of the Cultural Revolution.²⁰

2) As Tam King-fai, a literary critic, points out, turning experience into effective stories necessarily involved “cultural translation,” and, as with any translations, “something is gained and something lost in the process.” Authors suffer from a “double bind” in which to tell their stories in a non-Chinese language means “not only speaking in a foreign tongue, but also adopting the cultural baggage that comes with the language.”²¹

That is, straight translation doesn’t work. If you want Americans to chose your writings for their book clubs you have to smooth out Chinese quirks and insider detail. The books which sold well almost always had co-authors who were native English speakers (Mao chose Edgar Snow for his credibility and style). Not only is American idiom and narrative style different from Chinese, but Americans have different demands and expectations when they read books from China. In order to sell, Chinese writers had to brand their goods for the American public, often becoming disingenuously exotic and title their books “unknown,” “private,” “secret,” or “inside”; in order to be politically safe, they also had to be politically bland.

3) No Chinese writer in this period, with the possible exception of Lin Yutang, could challenge the popularity of Pearl Buck, no Chinese political writer had the clout of Edgar Snow or Theodore White, and no scholars who worked in China could equal the influence of senior professors in American graduate programs. American organizations and institutions are surely at fault for various forms of racism, ranging from timid reluctance in trying new ideas to linguistic retardation to restricted immigration policies. Yet it is also hard to fault the public, media, or schools for requiring the ability to communicate in the vernacular and fit into the exotic culture of America.

4) Both in Taiwan and the PRC, some patriotic Chinese felt a duty to dissent, others felt an obligation to keep their disagreements within the system, still others felt that expressing independent opinions to outsiders was not their priority, and some even explicitly said that they felt no hesitation in lying to outsiders. This symphonic range did not come across in writings for audiences in the West until after the 1970s. Only in recent years could Chinese of various opinions write in English and were there translators, though still quite inadequate in number, who could routinely provide access to those who could not.

In the light of these thoughts, I think we can cut *The Man to the Right of Mao* a little slack or at least judge it in the right genre. Andrew Nathan’s review is quite right to point out that the book is no exposé, but in light of our findings it’s not right to say that Ji’s lack of

²⁰ Andrew Nathan, “Jade and Plastic,” *London Review of Books* 27. 22 (17 November 2005) <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n22/nath01.html>; Timothy Cheek, “The New Number One Counter-Revolutionary inside the Party: Academic Biography as Mass Criticism,” *The China Journal* 55 (2006): 109-118.

²¹ Tam, King-fai, “Chinese Diaspora Memoirs in the United States.” In *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*, edited by Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, and Ian A. Skoggard (New York; London: Kluwer Academic Plenum Publishers, 2004, 2005): 341-347, quotes at 343-44.

revelations is a phenomenon of the “tell-nothing ethos of a totalitarian era.” I’m surprised that Nathan was surprised.

Rhetoric and Argument in The Man on Mao’s Right

My fellow reviewers in this forum are better qualified than I to comment on policy making and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, though Ji/Winans discuss policy and policy making only in the most general way.

Ji’s book is not highly revelatory but it offers an authentic and readable voice. The rhetorical strategies are worth glancing at. Like Mao and the successful memoirists, Ji had help. In his Author’s Note, Ji says that Foster Winans,²² an “experienced author and ghostwriter,”

took my somewhat disorganized and Chinese-specific manuscript and helped rework it into a compelling narrative that would appeal to a non-Chinese audience. My goal was to de-mystify China and the Chinese people – to explain in human terms how we got where we are today and what makes us tick. After a hundred or so hours of interviews, two months of research in China, and extensive historical readings, Foster succeeded in bringing the story to life. [xiv]

I would like to comment on how the rhetoric and story-arc are persuasive in their stated goal, “de-mystifying China,” that is, making it acceptable to the folks with the book buying dollars. I do not have the Chinese original, which Ji here calls “Chinese-specific,” but Winans clearly must have added a good deal from his interviews and research.²³ In addition to folksy details, such as Ji’s love as a boy for his mother’s noodles and chocolate milkshakes, the structure of the story is persuasive.

This structure of the story as laid out over time was a given, not invented, but contrasts with the Red Guard memoirs. Since most Red Guards were born just after Liberation (1949), their narratives naturally start with the Golden Age of the 1950s and then go to hell. Arrival in the U.S. is the happy ending, reinforcing the infernal quality of what they escaped. Unlike narratives of earlier immigrants from Europe, the Red Guard memoirs end when they come to the States. Ji, on the other hand, was born in 1929. His story starts in hell (fleeing the Japanese invasion, grandpa’s death), then has an idyllic interlude (ice cream and high school in Manhattan), which even the curmudgeonly Professor Nathan finds charming; then a tough rite of passage and coming of age (return to China, learning Chinese, the Foreign Service years, with Zhou as stern mentor); then heroic testing (the Cultural Revolution, though he is also frank about starvation and rationing during the Great Famines of 1959-61, more so than most of the émigré memoirs); and finally, triumph. Life in the U.S. is temporary; the happy ending is China. In the chronology of this life, although

²² <http://www.fosterwinans.com/> Accessed: September 28, 2008

²³ Chaozhu Ji, Weiqun Su, *Cong “Yang Wa Wa” Dao Wai Jiao Guan : Ji Chaozhu Kou Shu Hui Yi Lu* [From Foreign Brat to the Foreign Ministry: The Oral History Memoirs of Ji Chaozhu] (Beijing: Beijing da xue chu ban she, 2000).

not in the lives of the Red Guards, the Cultural Revolution was a great aberration, and more than in the émigré memoirs, New China ultimately triumphs.²⁴

In the last sections of the book, Nathan's critique hits the mark. Surely "Ji Whiz," as he reports the London *Economist* called him (323), had to have been shrewd and sharp elbowed to have survived the times and places he did, but you would never know it from the breathless descriptions of social events and backstage views of international personalities here. He is not writing a "tell *all*" book, but Ji could "tell *a little more*." Even a teetotaler must have more to spill when he has tossed back a couple of chocolate milkshakes.

This returns us to the generic problem of the "Bridge Across the Pacific Memoir." It's not like the famous bridge in Alaska, a bridge to nowhere: it's a toll bridge. You have to pay. If you want your story to reach the U.S. market, the various quandaries we have seen require that something has to give. Does Ji build a bridge across the Pacific? Well, if you believe that, I have a bridge you might like to buy. But at least Ji built a bridge, not a dam.

²⁴ Another frank account is in Yuan-tsung Chen, *Return to the Middle Kingdom: One Family, Three Revolutionaries, and the Birth of Modern China* (New York: Union Square Press, 2008).

The Man on Mao's Right is the incredible story of a Chinese boy who moved from a small farming village in Shanxi province to Manhattan, to Cambridge to study at Harvard University, to Beijing to work at the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and eventually back to Manhattan to serve at the United Nations. Its author, Ji Chaozhu, served as note taker for the Chinese delegations attending the Panmunjom armistice talks at the end of the Korean War, the Geneva Peace Conference in 1954, and the Bandung Conference of the Afro-Asian states the following year. He was a translator in the PRC's Foreign Ministry during the late 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s as well as the interpreter for Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping. Before being appointed to the United Nations by Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, he served as China's ambassador to the Fiji islands and the United Kingdom. His life certainly contains all the ingredients for a thrilling biography.

Throughout his memoir, Ji leaves no doubt as to which faction in the Chinese Communist political system he belonged. His older half-brother, who served as a double agent for the Nationalist Government and the Chinese Communist Party in the United States, had close contacts to Zhou Enlai that dated back to the 1920s. Through this personal connection, Ji became embroiled in Chinese Communist politics in the New York of World War II and the early Cold War. Leaving behind a prestigious Harvard education halfway through his sophomore year, he returned to New China to help build a better country. His superb English skills prevented him from fulfilling his dream of building the Chinese a-bomb; instead, he found himself working for the Foreign Ministry. He was one of the few and precious "America hands" the young PRC could not dispense with. Like Pu Shan and Pu Shouchang, he not only spoke English fluently but also understood American culture, customs, and thinking like very few did in 1950s Communist China. It was no wonder that he ended up working for some of the country's top leaders.

According to his testimony, he "spent hundreds and maybe thousands of hours participating in [Zhou's] conversations" (255-256). As a result, the reader obtains some interesting insights into the relationship between Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai as well as their disparate working styles (178-81). Throughout the book, Ji criticizes Mao's political style (145), his advocacy of unrestricted birth rates in the 1950s (170), the "knee-jerk" policies of the anti-Rightist campaign (175-77), the insanities of the Great Leap Forward (181-82, 187-94), and the disasters of the Cultural Revolution (225-237). In comparison, Zhou Enlai appears as the kind elder statesmen who took care not only of his subordinates (even when family matters were concerned; pp. 222), but also of the whole country. In fact, as Ji writes, Zhou often had to work around Mao's policies, or even behind his back, to prevent Mao's injustices (203-4, 215-16).

The Man on Mao's Right is one of many memoirs by Chinese officials who have served with one or several of the senior leaders of the early PRC. However, only very few reminiscences by former interpreters, who were present at the crucial meetings in Geneva or Bandung, or with Kissinger, Nixon, Carter, and so on, exist at all. Unlike the memoirs of the Russian

interpreters Shi Zhe and Yan Mingfu,¹ Ji's book unfortunately reveals little about the substance of these talks, except for the Kissinger and Nixon visits in 1971 and 1972. Ji claims to have been the figurative fly on the wall during the important meetings (127), but his memoirs make him appear more like what Mao considered him to be: a "talking machine" (197).

The reader also does not learn much about Zhou Enlai's strategic considerations, which he might have shared in the thousands of hours he spent with his interpreter. While Ji describes Zhou, the private person, vividly, as Prime Minister, Zhou remains an enigma. Ji's boss seemed not to have possessed Mao's habit of sharing his inner thoughts with his personal physician, his bodyguards, or anybody close to him,² or, if he did, Ji simply does not tell us. Yet, there are interesting insights into the inner workings of the PRC Foreign Ministry, the operational background of negotiations, and the struggle within the ministry during the Cultural Revolution. And there is Ji's conflict with Nancy Tang, whom he had known virtually since her birth in New York, and who would end up in Mao's radical entourage in the first half of the 1970s, thereby becoming Ji's professional rival (167, 233, 243, 256-57).

Amidst Ji's generally apolitical treatment of his professional work, the pages covering Kissinger's visits and Nixon's famous trip to China offer a refreshing break (242-265). Ji reveals details about Mao's and Zhou's signaling to the U.S. during Edgar Snow's long visit to China in the second half of 1970 and via the Pakistani channel early the following year. His portrayal of the clueless American table tennis team at the famous reception during which Zhou called for a new chapter in Sino-American relations is among the most bizarre events in a book that is already rich in strange episodes. The reader gets a good sense of the initial impression Kissinger made on Zhou during the secret visit in July 1971, how the ice was broken between the two, and how the Prime Minister signaled to his American guest his disapproval of the Cultural Revolution. Ji further reveals the severity of Mao's depression after the Lin Biao affair, and how it affected the Chairman's health and even threatened the personal meeting with the visiting President. Finally, the pages on Nixon's seminal visit not only provide a back-stage view but also reveal the intense infighting between the Qiang Jing faction, Mao, and Zhou over control of the foreign policy making process.

Despite the refreshingly lighthearted and self-deprecating tone, Ji's memoirs occasionally promote unsubstantiated views on China's foreign policy that unfortunately have become stock in Chinese historiographical folklore. Notwithstanding his repeated pronouncements of his sorrow over the inability of his two homelands—China and the United States—to understand each other for a quarter of a century, Ji reveals little attempt to understand the

¹ Shi Zhe, and Li Haiwen, *Zai lishi juren shenbian: Shi Zhe huiyilu* [At the Side of Historical Giants: Shi Zhe Memoirs] (Xiuding ben. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998). Yan Mingfu, "Yi Zhou zongli 1964 nian fangSu" ["Remembering Premier Zhou visiting the Soviet Union in 1964"], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* 65 (1998), 7-19. Yan Mingfu, "Huiyi liangci Mosike huiyi he Hu Qiaomu" ["Recollecting Hu Qiaomu Attending two Moscow Conferences"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 3 (1997), 6-21.

² Li Zhisui, and Anne F. Thurston, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994). Li Yinqiao, *Mao's Bodyguard* (Beijing: Chinese Culture Press, 1989).

Soviet Union, the older brother for most of the 1950s, or North Korea. It is questionable whether Stalin “had encouraged the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung to invade South Korea” (93); historical evidence, including that from China, tells the opposite story.³ While Ji is quick to blast South Korea’s President Syngman Rhee and Taiwan’s leader Chiang Kai-shek for being “cruel, incompetent, and corrupt” (114), the reader searches in vain for a similar characterization of Kim Il Sung. His misrule and adventurous war against South Korea certainly would have justified a similar judgment. Similarly, Ji’s claim that “the Soviets demanded repayment of earlier loans with grain exports” in 1960 when China was suffering from a man-made famine (201) is not based on any evidence but rather a rehashing of contemporaneous propaganda claims. In fact, Mao decided to repay loans ahead of schedule that summer in order to cancel the debt before the Soviet people.⁴

The Man on Mao’s Right is an insightful memoir for interested lay readers and specialists without Chinese language skills. For the historian already immersed in Chinese-language historiography, the memoirs fall short of what one might expect from a man who had been so close to many of the Chinese leaders. But maybe Ji will surprise us with another, tell-all volume. This would be more valuable since we are unlikely to get any useful reminiscences from the other important English interpreter of the early PRC, Ji’s childhood friend and Cultural Revolution opponent, Nancy Tang.

³ Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁴ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 178.

Ji Chaozhu was an interpreter and a diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC). His English language memoir, reworked from a 2000 Chinese version by ghostwriter Foster Winans¹ after hundreds of hours of interviews with Ji, makes for a fascinating read. It attempts to relate a life story in which such deep human qualities as loyalty, family honor, cultural assimilation, and suffering are evident, not to mention political intrigue and daily life in the leadership class of the most populous nation. This is not primarily a book on politics, nor does it stray far from the Chinese Communist Party's accepted view of events, and readers should not expect many exciting revelations about foreign policy formulation behind the Bamboo Curtain. But it is a fascinating series of recollections by an astute observer.

Ji was born to a relatively wealthy land-owning family that fled China in 1937, during the Sino-Japanese War, and moved to New York City. The book is steeped in a sense of duty he felt towards maintaining his family's honor. A twist is that his father and elder brother worked in senior positions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), before and after it came to power in the 1949 revolution. The irony of working for a political party that sought to destroy the landlord class of which his family was a member was not lost on Ji, and some of the early parts of his narrative are an effort to explain his family's rationale for supporting the party, and Ji's decision to return to China in 1950, the year after the formation of a communist government.

The opportunity costs of his decision to work for the newly formed PRC government were high. Ji left the cozy confines of Harvard University, where he was studying chemistry and enjoying life with the sons of America's elite, to venture to the PRC and live in student dormitories where rice was a rare luxury and Ji struggled to communicate, having limited Chinese language skills. His family connections helped him land job as an interpreter during the seemingly interminable Korean War armistice negotiations. For over a year, Ji lived in a mosquito-infested tent near the front lines as he wrote every English language word uttered by the United Nations team in person, the PRC being too poor to afford recording equipment.

Ji and his elder brother, who had made what was perhaps an even more difficult decision a few years earlier, abandoning his American wife and sons to work for the party in China, were sometimes viewed as outsiders by the Chinese, despite their obvious intelligence, education, and, eventually, accomplished careers. For Ji Chaozhu, the transition was steepest. As a college student in the United States, Ji felt an emotional pull towards China and the CCP, possibly fueled by his exasperation at the harsh anti-Communist rhetoric prevalent in the U.S., and his studious enjoyment of Mao's writings. But upon returning to China, Ji had to confront the reality of a country that he barely knew, in a time of revolutionary chaos.

¹ This is the same Foster Winans who became famous in the 1980s for his convictions for insider trading while a journalist at *The Wall Street Journal*, and subsequent book on the subject. Winans, J. Foster, *Trading Secrets: An Insider's Account Of The Scandal At The Wall Street Journal* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1986)

Still in his twenties, he revered Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, with a youthful zeal that Ji later viewed as naive. Ji explains his support for the CCP as emanating from hope, common among his generation, that the party might do a better job than its main rival, the Guomindang, in reviving China after the humiliations imposed on it since the days of the Opium Wars by Europeans, Americans, and, later, Japanese. As events turned out, Mao's various landlord pogroms, political crackdowns, and massive failures in reshaping the economy around collectivized peasants would mean that for the first three decades of the PRC's existence, successes the PRC had in imposing stability on China, regaining respect in international affairs, and ending the stigma of the 19th century "unequal treaties" took place during an era of extraordinary loss of life and brutal suppression of political opponents. Like many party officials, Ji was forced to work on communal farms during various purges of China's elites, made to endure ritual public denunciations, and forced to protect family members from unreasonable attacks by overzealous cadres.

Ji worked as an interpreter for the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai at famous events such as the 1954 Geneva Conference, where a settlement for the Indochina War was reached, and at the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, where concepts of Non-Aligned Nations and "Third World" solidarity gained world attention. But it was in his work with the Americans that Ji seems to take the most pride. His familiarity with American culture and language helped him act as a natural conduit between Chinese and American political elites, and Ji devotes ample space to his participation in meetings between Zhou and U.S. National Security Advisor (and later Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger, including the drafting of the Shanghai Communiqué, which very cautiously delineated limits in America's relations with Taiwan. Ji also worked on Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States in 1979, served as the PRC's ambassador to Fiji and the United Kingdom, and was an under-secretary general of the United Nations.

Ji is a proud, possibly smug, man. He was always eager to impress his bosses, deeply resentful when he was not given plum assignments, and devotes almost no space to those people who worked for him in his various duties. His anger at Nancy Tang, who served as Mao's interpreter and sought to sideline him, is on full boil, and he hints (more than he relates) at plots by Tang and Wang Hairong, Mao's grandniece, that left him out of the mainstream in the Foreign Ministry, calling them the "Two Young Ladies" in a tone that suggests young ladies should not interfere with his important work. The sense of importance is even more on display when Ji complains bitterly about being forced to accept the life of an ambassador in Fiji (a job that one would think many people would love to have) rather than continue the work he was doing at the embassy in the United States, a major power. He positively gushes about the perks of his job as Ambassador in London, including "a ride to Buckingham palace in a caravan of elaborate horse-drawn carriages" and the use of a Rolls Royce. (324) As for his five years working at the United Nations in New York, Ji devotes more time bragging about his "rolling reunion" with by now very prominent Harvard classmates than he does about his work, for which he only mentions that he managed to secure some United Nations pork, in the form of a loan for a water project in Shanxi, his home province. (332)

Ji's pride extends to China's image in the world, as well. From the standpoint of the West, the PRC of Mao's years was belligerent, taking Tibet, entering the Korean War, funding revolutionary groups in Asia and Africa, fighting India and the Soviet Union in territorial disputes, and generating a constant stream of anti-Western rhetoric. While Ji does not dispute the PRC's assertiveness, he emphasizes how poor China was, and how deeply Chinese resented a lack of respect from Westerners and foreign interference in China's affairs. He relates how Chinese diplomatic staff abroad often resorted to accommodations far worse than anything Western diplomats of the era could imagine, sometimes sleeping on the floor or in crowded conditions. And that was pure luxury compared to the life of the peasants whom Ji met during his forced work in the countryside. In one instance, a peasant family proudly offered Ji a plate that they licked clean so as not to offend him with their lack of hygiene. (Such passages suggest that Mao's phrase "paper tiger" might have as easily referred to the Chinese economy of his era, rather than the U.S. atomic bomb, his desired target.²) He is outraged at U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's refusal to shake Zhou's hand at the Geneva Conference, saying "this insult resonated in a way that no other could" (127), and makes similar statements about various similar failures by American generals in the 1950s to respect the official representatives of the PRC. In describing these insults, he makes an effort to explain to English-language readers the importance of "face" in East Asian culture, especially in matters of diplomacy. Ji also takes the official view that Chinese-Taiwanese relations are an internal matter, implying that the U.S. interfered in China's politics when it sent a fleet to patrol the Straits of Taiwan in the opening weeks of the Korean War.

As an English language expert, Ji worked primarily on negotiations with English-speaking countries, and therefore has few stories on relations within the Communist bloc, such as the Sino-Soviet rivalry. But he says quite a bit about Mao and the domestic repercussions of Mao's policies. Ji's description of Mao as detached from human connection and convinced in his philosophical pretensions rings true. And his description of the famine during the Great Leap Forward (1958-61) resulting from Mao's absurd notions of economic revolution and lack of planning are harrowing. While some readers might ask why Ji did not dissent more directly from government policies that created starvation, persecution, and, at times, mob rule, Ji's story suggests indirectly that he had reasons to avoid dissent or defection: fear for himself and family, patriotism, a desire to maintain the power and status that his job provided, and the possibility that he could best contribute by working for a faction that could (and to some extent did) emerge after Mao's death. His explanation of Mao's era falls within the current official CCP view, largely written by those who emerged in the power struggles following the 1976 passing of the "Great Helmsman".

We can only guess at the possible interplay of party-censorship, self-censorship, and Ji's true feelings towards the PRC's history in generating the book. Winans has claimed that

In working with Ji, it was clear from the start that he was neither in a position to reveal state secrets, certainly had no desire to appear unpatriotic, but did want to share what

² Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (China Books and Periodicals, 1990), p. 140

he experienced in the inner sanctum of Mao's government, albeit largely as a spear-carrier. As a journalist trained in investigative techniques, I advised him to stick to telling his personal story of how he came to know China returning from Harvard as an adult, how he came to love China warts and all, and came to see his mentor and boss, Zhou Enlai, as an unsung hero.³

Ji admits that he was part of "a Communist cadre system that strongly discouraged initiative or straying from the party line" (151), but also explains how Chinese culture and CCP politics placed a premium on subtle differences in language or symbols. Perhaps Ji's best example concerns Edgar Snow, an American journalist. In 1970, Mao arranged to have Snow appear with him briefly atop Tiananmen Gate at a rally, thinking this would send the message that China, bogged down by its raging competition with the Soviet Union, was ready to deal with the American government again. But Kissinger later had to half-seriously joke that Americans' "crude Occidental minds completely missed the point" (243). With this in mind, it is worth considering that Ji might hope that some of his personal anecdotes convey more political meaning than might be superficially supposed.

If so, he is perhaps too subtle. For example, if Ji meant his story of riding a bicycle towards Tiananmen Square on the day in 1989 when demonstrators there were violently suppressed to indicate his dissonance from the party's decision to launch the crack-down, he utterly fails to send a sufficiently powerful message, especially coupled with his other statements on the incident. He calls the Tiananmen demonstrations a "cause of great embarrassment", unsurprising given Ji's concern about the image of the PRC overseas, but hardly an effort to relate to the concerns or rights of the demonstrators.

Ji was proud at having been part of a reform faction that worked to undo many of Mao's ill-considered policies and much of Mao's cult of personality, but he seems angry that the protestors in Tiananmen would use a seeming relaxation in state control to advocate carrying reforms further:

We thought the students were misguided in complaining about leaders who had done so much to repair the damage of the past, improve living standards, and strengthen China's position in the world. We were particularly chagrined by the vehement attacks leveled at Deng himself, the person responsible for the repudiation of the Cultural Revolution and the liberation of millions of good people. (p 326)

Naturally, Ji does not point to the cyclical nature by which groups which seize power in the name of reform almost inevitably, and quite naturally, become targets for future reformers.

Ji's life story is distinctly Chinese. Many of the key issues of 20th century Chinese history touched his family: opium addiction (which killed one brother), civil war, war with Japan, Maoism, and the Cultural Revolution, just to name a few. His life story is also generational:

³ Slate reader discussion forum "What the Man on Mao's Right Did Say", August 5, 2008
<http://fray.slate.com/discuss/forums/thread/1587250.aspx>

in the first half of the 20th century, numerous other young non-Westerners (mostly males and often from relatively wealthy or educated backgrounds), such as Ho Chi Minh, Kwame Nkrumah, Zhou Enlai, and Jawaharlal Nehru, studied in the West, where they often integrated nationalistic ideas, left wing political philosophies, and resentment at Western imperialism before returning home to enter politics. Most of all, as a personal narrative, Ji Chaozhu's story is compelling. From his family's escape from Japanese troops in the 1930s, to their emigration to the United States, to his decision to return to the PRC during the Korean War (shortly before PRC troops entered Korea to fight the Americans), to his work interpreting for Mao and Zhou, Ji's life story is a fascinating one, his cleverness is undoubted, and his story-telling abilities are top notch.

The value of the book depends largely on the expectations one has. The book is a series of interesting recollections and basic historical knowledge rather than a researched work of history. For a novice to modern Chinese history, Ji's explanations of key events, such as China's entry into the Korean War, the Cultural Revolution, and Mao's passing are explained in an adept but brief fashion. But for a scholar in Chinese studies or international relations, the value of this insider's account of the formation of Chinese foreign policy is more limited, especially given recent works in English based on research in Chinese archives. This is a fascinating story but not a required read.

Review by Patrick Fuliang Shan, Grand Valley State University

Ji Chaozhu's autobiography recounts his own odyssey as a top Chinese diplomat. In chronological order, he introduces his personal upbringing, his bicultural education and his decade-long dedication to foreign services. Ji reflects a recent trend: many high-ranking Chinese officials place a premium on memoirs purporting to disclose their glorious past to a large number of avid readers. Ji's book surely is a self-reconstruction of personal image; nonetheless, he differs from other autobiographers in that he has transcended historical, geographical and cultural divergences by climbing the diplomatic ladder to become one of the most internationally famed ambassadors of Communist China.

A close examination of Ji's memoir shows that Ji was an accidental diplomat. He was not trained in the foreign services; rather he endeavored to be a scientist. The mischance of time conveyed him to a different field. This does not mean that he did not possess the quality needed for a diplomat; rather, the changing international climate enabled him to show off his talents and to excel in the diplomatic world.

Fleeing from war-stricken China, Ji's elite family escaped the advancing Japanese invaders, traversed continents and oceans, and landed in New York City in the late 1930s. During the next twelve years, Ji immersed himself in American culture, overcame racial barriers, outmaneuvered competitors, and ultimately enrolled in Harvard University with the dream of becoming a chemist. It is unimaginable to surmise that such a Harvard student would voluntarily drop-out to embrace the communist cause in his homeland.

As Ji narrates, his family maintained a tie with the Chinese Communist Party to which his brother Ji Chaoding was an early member. Chaoding was sent by the party to pursue higher education in the United States where he earned his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Ji Chaoding married an American communist but went back to China to be a top financial official for the newly established People's Bank of China. Under the influence of his brother, Ji Chaozhu leaned toward communism, as he vividly illustrates by recounting his participation in a study group at Harvard reading the works of Mao Zedong, Karl Marx and Vladimir I. Lenin. He gradually became a semi-clandestine Chinese communist even though in a foreign land. With his revolutionary zeal, Ji relinquished his elite college and headed off for his native land. His twelve-year education in America and his mastery of the English language, however, would be an invaluable asset for him in his accidental diplomatic career.

Although we do not know if he was truly converted to communism at Harvard, Ji portrays himself then as an enthusiastic lover of the communist ideal. It was at Harvard that he celebrated the People's Liberation Army's conquest of his hometown Taiyuan and wept with joy at Mao's declaration that the Chinese people "have stood up." Before long, he decided to go back to China to participate in the so-called socialist construction. All these seem to be the corollary of a logical sequence; yet the real reason for his dropping-out during the junior year, as the author himself reveals, might have been an economical one,

as the U.S. government ordered his stipend to be terminated, obviously a McCarthyite move against those alien nationals from communist countries.

Despite not being a formal member of the Communist Party and his lack of preparation as a diplomat, he was employed by new China's Foreign Ministry. The urgent need during the early years of Mao's China explains this. Having been involved in launching revolutions and mobilizing peasants in the rural area for more than two decades, the communists barely had any experience operating in an urban setting, let alone in managing foreign relations. New China maintained close ties with the Soviet Union, and quite a number of communist leaders spoke fluent Russian. Yet, diplomacy with the West, in particular with the English speaking countries, posed an obstacle and Maoist China desperately needed qualified personnel. The returning students from either America or Britain filled the void. In fact, Ji was keenly wanted by the newly created Foreign Ministry for his command of English and his familiarity with Western culture.

To enter the foreign service, to keep contact with top leaders and to read top-secret documents, an employee like Ji Chaozhu must be trusted by the party and the government. For this, his family ties played a role. Ji's brother was a close friend of Zhou Enlai who invested his confidence in the young Ji. Throughout the book, Ji Chaozhu frankly and honestly tells his readers about this special relationship. Zhou's help enabled Ji to put down roots in the Foreign Ministry. Indeed, the title of this memoir should be "The man on Zhou's Right" rather than "The Man on Mao's Right." Ji's love for Zhou was genuine and profound. It was in Zhou that he invested his most intimate trust. Ji's two sons (one is now a history professor in the U.S.) got their given names from Zhou Enlai. No wonder he insisted on paying secret personal respects to Zhou's body after the latter's death.

Working in the Foreign Ministry required long-term patience and devotion, which Ji seldom relaxed in his job performance. As matter of fact, he encountered quite a few staggering problems, such as learning Chinese (which was his native tongue but almost a second language), his marriage with a woman whose father lived in Taiwan, and internal competition within the Foreign Ministry. Because of his special tie with Zhou Enlai and his assiduousness, Ji rarely encountered setbacks; on the contrary, he enjoyed incremental promotions to attain an important position in that ministry.

Ji devotes a large number of pages to the relations between his "two beloved nations" – China and the United States. Even though he became a dedicated communist, he did not forget his second homeland. Whenever mentioning China's conflicts with the United States, such as the Korean War, he neither condemns America nor the U.S. government; rather, he denounces certain individuals like Douglass MacArthur, John Forster Dulles and Joseph McCarthy for their wrongdoings. In this way, he deliberately endeavors to show his affection for the United States and the American people. A cynic might censure him for being hypocritical in this regard, because he himself served the communist regime to the best of his ability in an adversarial capacity during the Korean War in negotiations at Panmunjom against the United States.

However, to question his tender feelings towards America is unsupported. In his long diplomatic career, he played a role in facilitating the improvement of Sino-American relations. Even though he was not a policy-maker, he maintained a close working relationship with top policy-makers, and participated in significant events such as Henry Kissinger's secret talks with Chinese leaders and Richard Nixon's ensuing visit to China. Although Ji does not disclose any confidential information, a disappointment to the reader, one can still feel that he was working to promote the normalization of bilateral ties. In the early 1980s, Ji was Deng Xiaoping's special envoy to the Reagan administration and contributed significantly to solving some tough issues between the two countries. He was trusted by the both sides – in China by Deng as a loyal communist and in America by Reagan as a reliable confidant. He even became minister counselor, the second ranking diplomat at the Chinese Embassy in Washington D.C. charged with the particular task of fostering the bilateral political ties.

It was his closeness to his second homeland that cost him his high profile job. Internal jealousy and inner strife led to his removal. He was “promoted” as China's ambassador to three south Pacific nations: Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu, a phony elevation and a very real demotion. Naturally, he was in a “miserable mood” and “suffered the assignment.” Nevertheless, Ji did his best to defend communist China's interest which he saw as his foremost task. In the South Pacific, Ji had to compete against Taiwan for diplomatic recognition as the sole legitimate government of China. For that, his diplomatic skills paid off, even though he found that “the aid war between the People's Republic and the Taiwan regime benefited the locals” more than China.

Ji depicts himself as a champion for China's image in the capacity of a diplomat. After serving in Fiji for a few years, he was transferred in 1987 to become the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom. During his five years in London, Ji encountered taxing problems, including the Hong Kong issue between China and Britain, and more seriously “the work of salvaging relations” after the Tiananmen massacre. Ji made full use of every opportunity, such as TV interviews, radio broadcasts and personal contacts with British politicians and business leaders, to safeguard China's interests. For example, he lashed out at Chai Ling, one of the student leaders at Tiananmen Square in 1989, for her egotistical call for blood-shedding while Chai herself, according to Ji, “would not sacrifice her life because she was the ‘commander-in-chief.’”

Ji's story ends in 1991 when he was appointed as the undersecretary general of the United Nations, an important job he held for many years, which deserves another memoir. In this current autobiography, however, he offers a vivid story of his personal life as a top Chinese diplomat. Thanks to the ghost writer Forster Winans, the book turns out to be a fluent, clear, easy-to-read and enjoyable volume. For the English reader, its true value lies in its inside observation of Mao and Deng's diplomacy as it is echoed in this voice from behind “the bamboo curtain.” Even if he exposes himself as “a flea on the collar,” his personal tale is an embodiment of the great transformation of the most populous nation on earth. In particular, numerous personal anecdotes reveal the internal mechanism of the Foreign Ministry. Without doubt, Ji's memoir will be useful for anyone researching this important branch of the Chinese government.

Nevertheless, the reader might not feel contented after finishing the book. Even though nobody doubts the truth of Ji's narration, the reader might question what degree of the truth he actually reveals. One fears that top secrets in regard to communist diplomacy are not divulged. The taboo of China's archival policy might act as a barrier to his revelation of anything further, a letdown for anyone seeking in-depth analysis of China's diplomatic workings.

Another vexing complaint the reader might lodge concerns Ji's assessment of Chinese leaders. An autobiography should reveal the writer's intimate feeling; yet the reader might find Ji never steps out of the communist model of thought to which he has become too accustomed to. It seems that Ji simply follows communist official documents in offering his judgments of important leaders. He was the long-term interpreter for Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, Jiang Qing, Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping and so forth. This naturally enables him to know all of them so well that he could render his own independent assessment. However, Ji's remarks blur the boundary between private recollection and official evaluation. Scant difference can be spotted between them. His mood mirrors the Chinese official tone.

Furthermore, tedious historical background information fills many of the pages. This might be interesting to those who know little about China; but for anyone with a rudimentary background, it might prove unexciting and wearisome. The reader expects to extract intimate details drawn from personal life, rather than the monotonous data of modern Chinese history.

Overall, Ji Chaozhu's autobiography is a valuable addition to the expanding literature by those historical actors of communist China. By and large, it should provide a pleasing read for those who desire to probe China's diplomatic workings under Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

As the author of this memoir remarks, within China during the past quarter-century, “[b]ooks by retired government officials ha[ve] become popular, with entire sections of bookstores stocked with them.” (xiv) Most such works, however, are designed primarily for domestic consumption. The salacious recollections of Chairman Mao Zedong’s physician, published in 1994 in the West, generated considerable interest abroad primarily because of their scandalous revelations regarding Mao’s often erratic behavior, physical ailments, and compulsive womanizing.¹ Absent such sensational disclosures, personal narratives by mid-level Chinese functionaries have attracted relatively little attention overseas. Since the ending of the Cold War, autobiographical accounts by former Soviet bloc officials have, by contrast, proliferated, forming almost a special subgenre of their own.

The speedy publication of Chinese translations—sometimes authorized, sometimes pirated—of the autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries of Americans and Europeans who have figured largely in the making of China’s relations with the West has become close to routine, but the reverse process is far less common. Chinese frequently complain that Westerners are far less interested in understanding China than Chinese are in comprehending them. This English version of the memoirs of Ji Chaozhu, a senior Chinese diplomat and expert on the United States who served as ambassador to Fiji and the United Kingdom, ending his career as deputy secretary general of the United Nations, is therefore extremely welcome in terms of going some way to redress the balance. Based on the autobiography he published in Chinese in 2000, it is the fruit of intensive work with a well qualified ghostwriter, who interviewed his subject for more than one hundred hours and also did substantial historical research. Ji explains with apparent candor: “My goal was to demystify China and the Chinese people—to explain in human terms how we got where we are today, and what makes us tick.” (xiv)

His motives may, however, be somewhat more complicated. Like all memoirists, he has a story to tell, a life to justify, and things he wishes to explain to others. In Ji’s case, the last may be the most significant. One cannot forget that Ji spent his entire career in the Chinese Foreign Ministry, where for his first twenty-five years he was a protégé of China’s revered premier Zhou Enlai, an old family friend and political associate of Ji’s much older half-brother, Ji Chaoding. It is said that retired espionage operatives never really retire, but are always on call. Much the same is probably true of former diplomats.

We learn, moreover, that Ji possessed rather formidable public relations skills. He was one of the team the Chinese Foreign Ministry dispatched in 1973 to open its new Liaison Office in Washington, DC, serving as deputy chief in charge of the political mission. From 1949 until fall 1950, when Chinese involvement in the Korean War persuaded him to abandon his studies at Harvard and return to China, Ji had lived and attended school in the United

¹ Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao’s Physician* (New York: Random House, 1994).

States. His written if not his spoken English was better than his Chinese. Once back in the United States, on Foreign Ministry instructions he turned his energies to winning influential friends for China among the American political elite. Within weeks of Ronald Reagan's inauguration in January 1981, a development that Chinese leaders feared meant the United States would resume sales of technologically advanced weaponry to Taiwan, Ji returned to Washington on a special mission, to contact top American politicians, especially conservatives, and convince them that renewed U.S. military support for Taiwan was undesirable. When Ji was third in command of the Chinese embassy in Washington from 1982 to 1985, Ambassador Zhang Wenjin authorized and encouraged Ji and his wife to live in an apartment where they could entertain and socialize informally with influential Americans, in the hope of winning their friendship for China. As ambassador to Britain from 1987 to 1991, Ji made a habit of appearing on radio and television shows to defend China's position on such controversial issues as Taiwan and Tibet, and his relaxed and easygoing style attracted favorable mention in the *Economist*. In the aftermath of the Chinese government's June 1989 suppression of student protests in Tiananmen Square, Ji "plunged into the work of salvaging relations" between China and Britain, "accepting all requests for written interviews, and accepting all requests for TV and radio interviews, but only on condition that they be broadcast live, so my words could not be edited to say something other than what I meant." His greatest concern was to "reassure" British officials, members of parliament, businessmen, community leaders, and the media "that China's course toward reform and openness would not change." (328)

What, then, is the underlying agenda of this particular volume? Ji has, it seems, at least two significant points to get across. His personal devotion and gratitude to the late premier Zhou Enlai, his greatest patron and protector, comes across very clearly. In recent years, controversial biographies of both Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai have appeared, that suggest that Mao felt a lifelong rivalry with the premier and effectively blackmailed Zhou into deferring to him, thanks to politically suspect associations Zhou had unwisely formed early in his career. Such fears, it is alleged, made Zhou pusillanimous in opposing Mao's worst instincts. These works, by Jung Chang, Jon Holliday, and Gao Wenquan, also suggest that, when Zhou fell ill with cancer in the early 1970s, Mao sadistically denied him the advanced medical treatment he needed.² Ji suggests that the relationship was considerably more complex, rather ironically tending to echo the assessment of the veteran U.S. diplomat David Bruce, first head of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing, who remarked in 1973: "[T]he relationship between [Mao] and Chou . . . struck me as being like that between devoted brothers, with the younger one showing affectionate deference to the elder. . . . It seems to me impossible to credit rumors of any rift between them; their easy intimacy is proof of that—it is too clear to be feigned."³

² Jung Chang and Jon Holliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); and Gao Wenquan, *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary: A Biography*, trans. Peter Rand and Lawrence R. Sullivan (New York: PublicAffairs Press, 2007).

³ David Bruce, diary entry, November 12, 1973, in Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City: The Beijing Diaries of David Bruce, 1973-1974* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2001), 348-349.

Zhou Enlai is perhaps the closest thing Communist China has ever possessed to a secular saint, a man of principles and integrity, often seen as a benign deity whose spirit, through his protégé Deng Xiaoping, has effectively endorsed and presided over China's post-Mao modernization. Recent characterizations of Zhou have implicitly cast serious doubts upon this image. While never mentioning any of Zhou's critics by name, Ji paints a very different picture of Zhou, whom he first met personally at the 1954 Geneva Conference, recalling: "I had long admired him from afar. Now I worshipped him." (130) Ji ascribes Mao's dominance within the Chinese Communist Party to his appreciation of the importance of the peasantry and land reform, whereas Zhou had sought to rely primarily on revolution spearheaded by urban workers, a course that brought disaster to the party in the late 1920s. He recalls that: "[O]f the two men, Mao was the flame and Zhou was the keeper of the flame. Zhou always consulted Mao before making major policy decisions." (178) Speaking of the early 1960s, Ji recalls:

It is difficult for many foreign historians to understand the mood in China at this time, and they often cite Premier Zhou for what they perceive as his slavish obedience to the chairman. Having spent as much time with Zhou as I did, and seen the two men together, I saw their relationship as far more complex. Sitting together after a foreign guest had departed, the two seemed in every respect like a couple of old war buddies, sharing a joke or a memory. I never observed a harsh word between them.

Over the years, Mao would punish and destroy many of the people who had been with him from the beginning, seeing in them real and imagined ambitions to replace him, or to take China in a direction he disapproved of. The premier received his share of rebukes, but rather than challenging Mao or forming anti-Mao alliances with others, he let the chairman's words roll off him like water off a duck's back. Then Zhou went forward and often did what he felt was right. (203)

....

Of all China's top leaders, the premier seemed to be the one with the least ambition and the greatest desire to achieve harmony, both within our government and with foreign governments. Harmony is an important concept in our culture. Many ancient sites and buildings are named in praise of it. While Mao saw contradictions in everything, the premier sought harmony. Zhou Enlai had a knack for defusing tensions in virtually any situation, or finding common ground where none was apparent. He was China's greatest asset on the international stage, a gifted speaker, an excellent listener, and a sharp wit. (204)

This relationship, a very effective team of two in which the premier surprisingly often came out ahead, seems almost a political marriage; later in his memoirs, Ji even says: "Mao was the stern father of China, and Zhou its nurturing mother." (256) As often happens in close unions, one only outlived the other by a matter of months.

Ji also highlights Zhou's role in seeking to protect and hide prominent Cultural Revolution targets, however ineffective such efforts may have been at times, and to moderate the impact of the era's extremism upon China's international relations. The reason Zhou himself became such a target for Jiang Qing, Mao's politically ambitious wife, in the early 1970s was, Ji states, that Mao fell into deep depression immediately after the still mysterious death in an air crash of Marshal Lin Biao, his designated successor, believed he was dying, and wished for a while to relinquish all his power to Zhou, a decision that horrified Jiang, who sought from then onward to destroy the premier and leave Mao "the last man standing". (281) There is an almost touching account of the ailing chairman grimly and stubbornly working to improve his physical health, so that he would be fit enough to meet with his expected American visitors. Ji also implies that Mao's initial decision to deny Zhou advanced medical treatment for bladder cancer may have been because the chairman genuinely believed that such measures were usually ineffective in prolonging life and merely added to a cancer patient's suffering.

According to Ji, throughout his career Zhou deliberately encouraged China's Foreign Ministry to function as "an island of accommodation in a sea of political zeal." (151-152) Moreover, Zhou had a very long-time interest in improving Communist China's relations with the United States, and believed that over the decades far too many opportunities to do so, beginning with Joseph W. Stilwell and Patrick Hurley during World War II, before the Communists won power, had been missed. Zhou had little time for the Soviets and perceived the Americans as more desirable long-term partners. For Zhou, therefore, the reopening of Sino-U.S. contacts in 1970-1971 was not merely a response to changing international circumstances, but the culmination and fruition of over a quarter-century of hopes and careful planning. "I knew," Ji wrote, "Zhou's view had long been that China and the United States should have been allies from the beginning." (244)

Ji may believe this, and clearly wishes others to accept his view. For Ji, brought up in the United States, with a brother and sister who chose to remain there, Sino-American reconciliation was naturally deeply welcome. Although as a Harvard student he decided quite deliberately to cast his lot with New China in late 1950, when American troops were fighting Chinese soldiers, and even at one stage hoped to become an atomic scientist developing nuclear bombs for China, Ji never jettisoned his abiding affection for the country where he had spent so many of his formative years; nor could he lose his taste for American hamburgers, ice-cream, milk shakes, and "throne" toilets. Giving up these staples of U.S. daily life was part of the self-conscious sacrifice he gladly made in returning to the People's Republic.

Whether it is genuinely true that Zhou always leaned towards the United States is another matter. At a time when nationalist sentiments in China have for some time been strong and rising, and popular resentment of what is often perceived as arrogance, insensitivity, and outright threats on the part of the United States is easily stoked, the imprimatur of the still much respected late premier on close and cordial Sino-American relations remains politically significant. It is worth remembering that Chinese and many American historians responded with considerable skepticism to suggestions in the early 1980s by the Americans Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker that there was a strong possibility

of a Sino-American rapprochement in 1949 and early 1950, and only the outbreak of the Korean War prevented this. Speculations as to the potential for understanding between the United States and Communist China failed, these critics argued, to take into account the salience of ideological factors in the worldview of Mao and his followers at that time.⁴ Experienced diplomats rarely depart from the script or lose the plot, and Ji almost certainly has his own perfectly good and sufficient reasons for depicting Zhou Enlai in this light.

In truth, in terms of purely diplomatic new revelations, one will find rather little in this volume. There is an intriguing suggestion that in late November 1963, President John F. Kennedy tried to send “an important message” to top Chinese officials through Henrik Beer, secretary-general of the League of Red Cross Societies, a plan aborted by the American leader’s assassination. (209) Ji is also surprisingly frank about personal tensions within the Foreign Ministry. By his own admission, Ji was far closer to Huang Zhen, first head of China’s Washington Liaison Office, and Zhang Wenjin, ambassador to the United States in the early 1980s, than to the latter’s successor Han Xu. Huang and Zhang felt comfortable in allowing Ji to establish warm personal contacts with a wide range of influential Americans, whereas Han was clearly far more distrustful of Ji’s skills in this area, and did not even want him as a subordinate.

The Foreign Ministry was not quite the apolitical bastion Zhou Enlai might have preferred. Indeed, within every Chinese ministry and agency, Ji suggests, there were two camps, one a “radical faction [who] were fanatical believers in the Chinese brand of Marxism the chairman espoused. They read his writings and heard his speeches as though receiving the word of God.” The “politically ambitious” also often joined this group. “On the other side

⁴ The controversy over whether a genuine opportunity for Sino-American rapprochement existed in 1949-1950 gave rise to a substantial literature. Those who believe this was a possibility include Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy 1949-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Warren I. Cohen, “Acheson, His Advisers, and China, 1949-1950,” in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, ed., *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); John Lewis Gaddis, “The Strategic Perspective: The Rise and fall of the ‘Defensive Perimeter’ Concept, 1947-1951,” *ibid.*; June M. Grasso, *Truman’s Two-China Policy* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1987); Ronald McGlothlen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia* (New York: Norton, 1993), esp. chs. 4-5. Less favorable assessments of the potential for genuine understanding may be found in Yuan Ming, “The Failure of Perception: America’s China Policy, 1949-50,” in Harry Harding and Yuan Ming, eds., *Sino-American Relations, 1945-1955: A Joint Reassessment of a Critical Decade* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1989); Su Ge, “The making of American Foreign Policy Towards Taiwan, 1948-1955,” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 30 (1992); Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. chs. 11-13; Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), chs. 1-2; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 2: The Roaring of the Cataract* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 509-531; articles by Warren I. Cohen, Jian Chen, John W. Garver, Michael Sheng, and Odd Arne Westad, in “Symposium: Rethinking the Last Chance in China,” *Diplomatic History* 21:1 (Winter 1997); Edwin W. Martin, *Divided Counsel: The Anglo-American Response to Communist Victory in China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), esp. 231-237; Thomas J. Christensen, “A ‘Lost Chance’ for What? Rethinking the Origins of U.S.-PRC Confrontation,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4:3 (Fall 1995); and articles and commentaries by T. Christopher Jespersen, Priscilla Roberts, Jean S. Kang, Victor S. Kaufman, Qiang Zhai, John W. Garver, Noam Kochavi, and Gordon H. Chang in “Special Issue—Considering Opportunities: American Efforts to Reconcile U.S.-China Relations during the Great Interregnum,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 7:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1998).

were true revolutionaries like Premier Zhou En-lai, Marshal Chen Yi, and others.” (178) We learn a good deal about the brutal internal political infighting within the Ministry during the Cultural Revolution. Ji clearly detested Jiang Qing, Mao’s third wife, whom he characterizes as “universally disliked by those who knew her. Paranoid, controlling, jealous, ambitious, childish, and manipulative”. (221) By Ji’s account, for several years Jiang was allied with “the two young ladies” in the Foreign Ministry, Nancy Tang and Mao’s great-niece Wang Hairong, both of whom often interpreted for the chairman when he met foreign visitors. As leaders of the radical faction, during the Cultural Revolution they sought to oust Zhou Enlai and other moderates. According to Ji, by the time of Mao’s death Jiang had broken with these women, leading to a bizarre scene beside his bier when his widow and Wang Hairong physically fought each other and Wang seized Jiang’s hair, which proved to be a wig and came off in her hand, leaving Jiang’s scalp bald. Ji also reveals that during Mao’s last months Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua and his wife Zhang Hanzhi sought to take advantage of this falling out among the three by moving closer to Jiang as a means of dislodging Tang and Wang and regaining control of his own ministry. This tactic failed and even rebounded upon its architects once Jiang and her allies were driven from power, as Qiao lost his job due to suspicions that the couple had been too close to Jiang.

These machinations brought Ji himself into close contact with Mao, as—with the help of Mao’s private secretary—Qiao assigned him to be the chairman’s interpreter in his last meetings with foreign visitors, including Prime Minister Robert Muldoon of New Zealand and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan in May 1976. Official photographs of these encounters reveal that the eighty-two-year-old Mao, who died in early September, appeared desperately ill, but according to Ji he himself was “astonished that his mind seemed to be working just fine.” (288) This was not the first time Ji had interpreted for Mao on significant occasions. In 1959 he was summoned back from re-education in the country to interpret for Mao and other Chinese leaders as they stood with visiting foreign dignitaries on top of Tiananmen Gate for the October 1 National Day celebrations. In 1970 Ji was once more present with Mao for these ceremonies, and on this occasion the famous American writer Edgar Snow, a long-time admirer of the Chinese communists, was there as a guest, in an episode Chinese leaders tried to use as a means of signaling to President Richard Nixon’s administration their own interest in better relations with the United States. (Ironically, he was air brushed out of the official photographs, and Wang Hairong inserted in his place.) Although this particular effort to convey that invitation proved unsuccessful, in November 1970 he was Zhou’s interpreter in conversations with Pakistan’s President, Yahya Khan, and the only other person in the room when Khan passed on a confidential personal message from Nixon, that the United States was ready to send a high-level emissary to China for discussions aimed at reopening relations. Ji also did much of the interpreting during subsequent visits by National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and Nixon himself.

For much of the 1950s and 1960s, Ji was also one of Zhou Enlai’s foremost interpreters, forming part of his entourage at the 1954 Geneva Conference and the 1955 Bandung Conference of non-aligned nations, and eventually becoming “the Foreign Ministry’s principal English interpreter”. (151) According to Ji, Zhou encouraged Chinese diplomats to be relatively frank, open, and reasonable when dealing with foreign counterparts. Given

subsequent complaints by many Western representatives over the formulaic nature of Chinese diplomatic communications and discussions, and how closely and unrelentingly their officials hewed to the party line, one wonders if veneration for his former superior has not led Ji to exaggerate, at least in this respect. Ji accompanied Zhou on personal visits to many non-aligned nations, as China sought to win allies in international forums. Whereas Mao, fearful of assassination, tended to live in seclusion and rarely traveled outside China, the premier “chose to go anywhere and meet anyone he thought could be a natural ally of China.” (210) In the 1970s, the first two heads of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing, David Bruce and George H. W. Bush, both commented on how successful China had been in winning over third world nations, in part because Zhou and other Chinese officials made the effort to treat leaders of even the smallest states with the same honors accorded to large powers.

Ji describes Zhou’s insistence that on visits abroad all his staff show respect for foreign customs, however bizarre these might appear, and never criticize the food or living accommodations provided, no matter how unattractive or spartan these might seem. Ironically, describing his time as ambassador to Fiji, Vanuatu, and Kiribati in the mid-1980s, an appointment he and others in China clearly regarded as a marked demotion from his position as second-in-command in the Washington embassy, Ji makes little effort to observe these precepts. He and his wife disliked Fiji and the other islands to which they were accredited, detested the vicious mosquitoes, thought many of the local customs outlandish and unpleasant, and found the local people uninterested in working hard when Chinese economic aid programs sought to teach them how to grow rice or establish local industries. They socialized primarily with the islands’ small diplomatic community. Their “year and a half of living with the bugs and the humidity and the primitive politics” was clearly a form of purgatory, a season in hell redeemed only when they were transferred to London. Interestingly, his prestigious new appointment owed much to pressure exerted on his behalf, not just by his allies within the Foreign Ministry, but by foreign friends, notably Republican Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska. A decade and a half after China had begun opening to the West, Chinese diplomats were establishing their own networks of influential overseas contacts.

Ji’s recollections add some interesting detail and local color but few if any major new facts to the story of China’s diplomatic dealings with the world during the first half-century of Communist rule. There are occasional minor errors. Ji exaggerates U.S. casualties in the Korean War, stating that over 50,000 Americans died there. The real figure was around 33,000. More fascinating, perhaps, in this personal memoir is his account of his own family background, an illustration of the often complex reasons and forces driving Chinese intellectuals to support the Communists before and after they came to power, and the difficulties they faced in doing so. Ji was a scion of the enlightened scholar-gentry, officials and landlords who from the late nineteenth century sought to redeem their country from its century of humiliation and rebuild it as a modern power. His grandfather, a landlord in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, fed the poor in times of famine. His father, a law professor and commissioner of education in Shanxi between the world wars, fled before the Japanese in 1937 and—on instructions from Zhou Enlai, with whom his eldest son, Ji Chaoding, a Nationalist economic official, had secretly been closely associated since the founding of

China's Communist Party—moved his family to New York in 1939, so that the younger boys could be well educated and then come back to build new China. (The father, asked in 1938 to become deputy attorney general in the Nationalist government, had declined, joking that one spy in the family was enough.) During World War II, the elder Ji (his name is not given in the book) ran a Chinese-language newspaper, the *China Daily News*, its purposes to encourage American support for China in the war against Japan and clandestinely to promote the Communist cause.

Different individuals in families with overseas connections chose divergent paths, and this was true of the Jis. In 1946 the senior Ji went back to China, where three years later he and his son Chaoding were instrumental in persuading the city of Beijing to surrender peacefully to Communist forces. Ji Chaozhu and another brother likewise returned to China, but one other brother, Ji Chaoli, and their sister, Ji Chin, opted to remain in the United States. These family divisions, plus their “bourgeois” and “intellectual” background, became major political liabilities for those who cast their lot with Communist China. Chaoding's long service in the Nationalist government left him open to charges of being a spy for Chiang Kai-shek. Ji Chaozhu recounts his own long struggle to establish his political bona fides and be inducted into the Communist Party. From the late 1950s onward, he had the blessing of a rock-solid marriage to fall back upon in times of trouble, but his wife's own political background was also suspect, as most of her family had been caught in Taiwan in 1949-1950. In some respects, however, the family was lucky. They came under the influential protection of Zhou Enlai, which meant they escaped many of the worst excesses of the anti-rightist campaigns and the Cultural Revolution. Ji Chaozhu also traded on his role as interpreter to Mao Zedong to safeguard his elderly mother and father from attack during the 1960s, with a photograph of himself next to the chairman atop Tiananmen Gate prominently displayed in his parents' living room. And, though over two decades he spent four stints laboring on farms in cadre re-education school, his own special skills as an interpreter and American expert meant that he was repeatedly recalled back to Beijing to work once more in the Foreign Ministry.

This did not, however, mean that his life was particularly easy. Ji describes twenty years of constant personal stress, from the late 1950s until the late 1970s, recalling how, when Deng Xiaoping finally regained power in 1978, and he himself was finally rehabilitated: “For the first time in two decades, I now had the mental space to devote myself fully to work.” (298) Writing thirty years after Mao's death, he still respects Mao as the founder of China, and has little good to say of the Nationalists he replaced. With hindsight, Ji is nonetheless highly critical of many of the chairman's tactics, and the brutal social discord and divisions he deliberately generated. Ironically, in the late 1950s Ji originally strongly supported the anti-Rightist movement against those dissenters who had been flushed out during the earlier Hundred Flowers campaign, thinking this essential to maintaining Chinese unity. The persistent Cultural Revolution he found a nightmare, describing it as a phenomenon “so horrific and irrational that people all over the globe wonder how it could have happened. So do we Chinese.” (225) He compares the savage behavior of young Chinese Red Guards in the 1960s to that of the feral marooned children in William Golding's novel *The Lord of the Flies*.

Outsiders often find it difficult to comprehend how well-educated, intelligent, and able Chinese have been able to remain committed to serving their country despite the ferocious ill treatment so many of them encountered. Ji is a case in point, and his memoir is perhaps most valuable in that it makes this stance somewhat easier to understand. His fundamental loyalties to China, pledged back in 1950, seem never to have wavered. Ji did not, for example, ever consider defecting when on one of his trips overseas, and not, it seems, simply because this might have rebounded on his wife and children. “[T]he deprivation was,” he thought, “the crucible in which I was being molded into a good Communist. . . . And while I indeed began to have some doubts about Mao himself, I never doubted the Party as a whole, and was confident that it would successfully pull through.” (176) Once Deng Xiaoping had solidified his hold on power after Mao’s death, cadres such as Ji rallied round and began trying to make up for lost time. It is worth realizing that to many, such as himself, who had bitter memories of the 1960s Red Guards, the swelling student demonstrations held in Tiananmen Square in early summer 1989 “felt frighteningly like the start of the Cultural Revolution.” He was not the only old hand to believe that, though there might be problems with corruption and growing economic inequalities, “the students were misguided in complaining about leaders who had done so much to repair the damage of the past, improve living standards, and strengthen China’s position in the world.” (325) Officials such as Ji were almost desperate to ensure that the suppression of the protests, however distressing and undesirable, did not derail China’s progress since 1978.

In retirement Ji, who spent five years in New York as United Nations deputy secretary general during the early 1990s, had the opportunity to settle in the United States, working with one or other prominent foreign policy think tank. He was obviously deeply attached to the country where he had passed much of his youth; he and his wife had bought an apartment in Queens, New York; and one of his sons married an American woman. His English was still better than his written Chinese. Even so, Ji chose to return once more to China, reaffirming the choice he had made almost fifty years earlier. For a century or more, Chinese governments of all complexions have appealed to the patriotism and national pride of their best educated intellectuals, at home and abroad, and then often proceeded to treat them abysmally. To non-Chinese, the mindset that has permitted Chinese elites to tolerate and forgive the sufferings they have endured at the hands of politically motivated officialdom and maintain their commitment to their country is often almost incomprehensible. From a Western standpoint, perhaps the most valuable feature of Ji Chaozhu’s memoir is that it opens an illuminating window into the thinking of one highly articulate, thoughtful scholar-intellectual whose devotion to new China remained unwavering through all the harsh vicissitudes of its first half-century.

Review by Qiang Zhai, Auburn University Montgomery

Ji Chaozhu has an extraordinary career in the Chinese Foreign Ministry, bearing witness to the ups and downs of Sino-American relations during the first four decades of the People's Republic of China. Raised in a prominent family with a long Communist association and educated at Harvard University, Ji first served as an English interpreter for such Chinese leaders as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping before becoming China's ambassador to Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu, and Britain. His autobiography was first published in China in 2000. The Random House is to be commended for publishing its English version. The book is more useful and instructive in the way Ji conveys his impressions of the leaders he has worked with and his experiences during Mao's numerous political campaigns than in the revelations he makes about how China's decisions were made at some critical moments of its foreign relations. As Ji acknowledges in the preface, the Chinese Foreign Ministry did not allow its officials to keep diaries and journals, and as a result, he has to rely on his memory and recollection to prepare his memoirs. Ji does not tell us much that we do not already know about such key events as the Sino-American negotiations in 1971-1972 and Deng Xiaoping's talks with Carter administrations officials during his visit to the United States in early 1979.

Although the title of the book mentions Mao, the hero of Ji's narrative is actually Zhou Enlai. Ji's account is brimming with praise and admiration of the former premier. Ji recounts his role as Zhou's translator during the 1954 Geneva Conference, the 1955 Bandung Conference, Zhou's fourteen-nation tour of Asia and Africa in 1963-1964, and the Sino-American rapprochement talks in 1971-1972. Ji describes Zhou as "warm and human" (141), calling him "the country's greatest asset on the world stage" (274) and a "beacon of hope in a storm-tossed sea" (283). Ji's adulation of Zhou is not unique. At the Third International Conference on Zhou Enlai Studies hosted by Nankai University (Zhou's alma mater) in April 2008, I met several former secretaries and bodyguards of Zhou, who were unanimously effusive in their eulogy of Zhou. In Chinese historiography, Zhou's reputation continues to be over-valued. He is considered to be an urbane and common-sense leader, who did what he could to hold the party apparatus, the government bureaucracy and the military establishment together and protect China's international image amid mounting domestic political and social turmoil and chaos, and who struggled to blunt the worst of Mao's radical and disastrous adventures.

Ji's account on the destructive effect of the Cultural Revolution on the Foreign Ministry is very disturbing. He recalls his predicament between two factions within the Foreign Ministry in the early 1970s. Nancy Tang, Mao's English interpreter, and Wang Hairong, Mao's grandniece, gained influence in the Foreign Ministry because of their direct access to the aging and erratic Mao. (Ji calls them "the two young ladies.") To out-manuever the two young ladies and to establish his control of the Foreign Ministry, Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua ingratiated himself with Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and a member of the Gang of Four, and on one occasion, asked Ji for help to obtain a meeting with Mao. Ji had to comply. After the fall of the Gang of Four, Qiao Guanhua was purged, and Ji was condemned to "repeated struggle meetings" (288). The entire episode makes for depressing reading. It

demonstrates how the inner-party politics and personal intrigue during the Cultural Revolution had degraded and undermined the normal functioning of the Foreign Ministry and divided and weakened the foreign affairs establishment.

One surprising revelation of Ji's book is the unexpected role Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska played in Ji's career. According to Ji, he was appointed as China's ambassador to Fiji in April 1985. Before that appointment, Ji occupied the number-two position (minister counselor) in the Chinese embassy in Washington. Many people believed that the new assignment represented a demotion for Ji. Ambassador Zhang Wenjin wrote to the Chinese Foreign Ministry lamenting that Ji's Fiji appointment would "either give people the very wrong impression that Ji had committed some major mistakes, or make people think that the leaders of the Foreign Ministry were incompetent in the judgment of their staff" (316). Senator Stevens also wrote several letters to the Chinese Foreign Ministry expressing his dismay. In early 1987, Ji became China's ambassador to Britain. Ji indicates that his dispatch to the Court of St. James's was the result of a great deal of pressure, including a visit to the Chinese head of state, Li Xiannian, by Senator Stevens. Ji does not explain why he believed that Senator Stevens was able to wield clout over Chinese officials.

Ji disapproves the student protest and demonstration during the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. At the time, Ji was on a home leave from his post as China's ambassador in London. Ji writes: "We thought the students were misguided in complaining about leaders who had done so much to repair the damage of the past, improve living standards, and strengthen China's position in the world. We were particularly chagrined by the vehement attacks leveled at Deng himself, the person responsible for the repudiation of the Cultural Revolution...." (325-326).

In this English version of his memoirs, Ji discusses more frankly his personal relationships and interactions with his superiors in the Chinese mission in Washington than in the Chinese version. He calls Zhang Wenjin, Chinese ambassador to the United States (1983-1985) "good friend and role model" (310) while expressing his dislike of Han Xu, deputy director of the Chinese Liaison Office in Washington in the mid-1970s. "Of all the senior officials I had worked in the United States," Ji writes, "my relationship with Han Xu had been the least friendly" (311). This sentence is absent in the Chinese version of Ji's memoirs. In general, when former Chinese officials, diplomats, and generals publish their memoirs and autobiographies in China, they usually avoid making negative or critical comments about their superiors and colleagues. Their recollections tend to be more detailed and straightforward on official affairs than on private emotions and grievances.

Ji's volume is marred by several overstatements and historical inaccuracies. He mentions the activities of two Chinese graduate students, Pu Shan and Pu Shouchang, in the United States in the late 1940s. At the time, the Pu brothers, who were members of the Chinese Communist Party, were working on their doctoral degrees in economics at Harvard. Ji writes that they "played important roles in whipping up support for the Chinese Communist Party among overseas Chinese. They were instrumental in convincing American politicians that Chiang's Kuomintang government was so corrupt that it was undeserving of continued U.S. financial and military support. Their lobbying effort helped

undermine Chiang and hastened the exile of the Kuomintang from the mainland.” (123). Ji, however, produces no evidence to support his claim that the Pu brothers were successful lobbyists. Whose views did they influence? Administration officials? Congressmen? Ji says nothing about the influential pro-Chiang Kai-shek “China Lobby” during that period. Ji’s understanding of the sources and making of American foreign policy is limited. He hints that in order to isolate the People’s Republic of China, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, pressured the United Nations to create the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (135). In fact, the United Nations had nothing to do with the establishment of SEATO.

Ji’s volume joins a growing body of memoirs published by former Chinese diplomats in recent years. Memoirs in China often have a didactic purpose that promotes the creation of edifying images and stereotypes, and they are penned in an atmosphere that encourages conformity and punishes deviance. These memoir sources are most useful for revealing the authors’ later recollection of how they felt or thought rather than what they did or said. They often shed light on hidden motives and calculations behind bland policy situations; they also sometimes represent the only evidence available on the alliances and groupings within the Chinese Foreign Ministry that were the stuff of Chinese politics.

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