

Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: The Bodley Head, 2019). 606 pp. Hardcover \$53.95.

Mao Zedong Thought, or more famously Maoism, was a collection of theories developed by Mao Zedong that distinguished itself from the earlier works of Marxism by adapting to the local Chinese conditions by identifying the peasantry as the revolutionary vanguard that would lead to a socialist revolution through class struggle and guerilla warfare. Despite its roots in the People's Republic of China (PRC), Maoism spread globally across the regions of Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, coinciding with the demise of European colonialism and the rise of the Cold War. Yet despite its global spread, scholars have thus far neglected to shed significant light on the legacy of global Maoism. It is for this reason that Julia Lovell, Professor of Modern China at the University of London, attempts to address in her book *Maoism: A Global History* and notes her work as a sort of unknown history, "why do we tend not to see Maoism globally? Why does this book not already exist?" (10).

Lovell introduces the reader to her definition of Maoism with a recapitulation of Mao's key political ideas and slogans: power comes out of the barrel of a gun; women can hold up half the sky; to rebel is justified; and others. To Lovell, Maoism is an ideology that is replete with contradictions, yet is the creed of the downtrodden and the oppressed masses (59). Lovell credits Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* (1937) as the birth of global Maoism for the book was translated and distributed for Indian nationalists, Chinese intellectuals, Malayan insurgents, Western radicals, Nepali rebels and many more (1). Snow's text was largely replaced by Mao's *Little Red Book*, of which more than a billion copies were printed during a period Lovell terms the era of high Maoism of the 1960s-70s (125-126).

In the next two chapters Lovell introduces the greater Cold War confrontation in which the PRC presented itself as an alternative to the Cold War binary between the United States and the liberal-capitalist system and the Soviet Union and its form of communism. While Lovell largely follows Odd Arne Westad's approach to the understanding of the global Cold War, she brings in an interesting take on how the various streams of Cold War propaganda helped shape the Western views of the red threat, which facilitated an Anglo-American obsession with "brainwashing" and its place in Mao's supposed secret plan for communist world domination (96). Yet, the chapter discussing the Sino-Soviet split adds nothing to the works already established by scholars such as Westad, Chen Jian, and Lorenz Luthi regarding the role the split had in forcing the Soviets to increase expenditure to the Third World so as to not be outdone by the PRC.

From there, Lovell branches out into eight scenarios across the world rang-

ing from the 1930s to the present to reveal the chronological and geographical scope of Maoism. These case studies, based on interviews and other personal recollections, look at Indonesia, Africa, Vietnam and Cambodia, the United States and Western Europe, Peru, India, Nepal, and contemporary China. This is by far the best part of Lovell's work and her use of prose and engrossing anecdotes will appeal to a wide audience both within and beyond academia. From here, the author is able to counter the claim that the PRC was isolated from the years 1949 to 1976 and was indeed highly active in international affairs during the global Cold War. Despite the PRC's economic weakness throughout this period, the author reveals that the Chinese supplied enormous amounts of financial, human, political, and military support to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is specifically the three chapters dealing with Indonesia, Africa, and Southeast Asia that are of particular interest due to the influence Maoism had upon these regions as well as the immense Chinese revolutionary investments they received. Lovell notes that the PRC's monetary support to these regions amounted to an estimated \$24 billion between 1950 and 1978, and this took multiple forms: interest-free loans, gifts, supplies of weapons, and the training of low-tech peasantries into revolutionary guerilla fighters. But, as she makes clear, the PRC's supports were also ideological, as Maoist ideas provided a mix of rhetorical defiance and practical strategies for empowering impoverished or dominated peoples against state-funded professional militaries (16). It is especially noticeable the imprint Mao and his ideology had on revolutionary leaders such as Sukarno, Dipa Nusantara Aidit, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Ali Sultan Issa, and Pol Pot, that had come to admire Maoism and the PRC. Despite Maoism's widespread appeal for solidarity with the people of what was then termed the Third World, the author correctly claims that Maoism's law of the universality and absoluteness of contradiction often clashed with the domestic conditions of these regions, which resulted in the death of millions both within and outside of the PRC.

While *Maoism* is easily accessible to all readers, its popular style has some drawbacks. The narrative is dominated by description and anecdotes, which means that academic readers might not see the contradictions, contingencies, and nuances of Maoism's global spread. The chapter dealing with the United States and Western Europe, for example, does not fully explain why Maoism developed in these regions. As Maoist policies did not primarily target Westerners, Lovell posits that pre-existing social conflicts surrounding class, ethnicity, gender, and immigration were largely the reason these regions became interested in Maoism. However, groups such as the Black Panthers and the Weathermen borrowed ideas from Mao and waved the *Little Red Book* as a form of social protest, rather than as devout Maoists. Furthermore, while the 'Red Brigades' of Germany and Italy are mentioned in Lovell's text, notable exclusion was Japan's Red Army which was known for its use of terrorist attacks. As well, it is odd that Lovell dedicates several pages to the cult figure Aravindan Balakrishnan of the British Workers' Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, yet omits the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) and

the Committee to Defeat Revisionism, for Communist Unity (CDRCU), both of which were active in Britain during the period of global Maoism. Likewise, in the chapter dedicated to Peru and the Shining Path, the author gives minimum coverage as to why the nation fell to Maoism in the 1980s and 90s. Finally, Lovell fails to elaborate on Maoism's influence on the Malayan Emergency, for which there are few scholarly works that examining Maoism and the PRC's influence, or upon India and Nepal, nations for which Chinese commitments and support were largely absent, despite the continued presence of Maoism in these nations. Albania, the PRC's main European ally during the Cultural Revolution, also receives very little attention.

Despite these shortcomings, Lovell is able to draw on multiple memoirs, personal interviews, and archival material from across the PRC, Britain, the United States, continental Europe, Mongolia, and Perú and weave them into an engaging read about an ideology that shook the world throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century. *Maoism* will attract non-academics and non-historians with its accessibility and the author's ability to explain complex political realities in simple terms. Scholars and historians of China and of the Cold War will find Lovell's work to be a balanced and well-researched text that addresses an under-studied and interesting topic, the global influence of Maoism.

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