

China After Mao

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

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

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

In short, Mr. Buultjens's opinion that the present trend in China to concentrate on urban development to the serious detriment of the rural sector is, to say the least, in the minority. Few students of China seriously believe that the Chinese will attempt to develop their urban industrial sector without a concomitant investment in the economic infrastructure of the countryside. The

Chinese themselves, after years of careless experimentation, readily recognize the intrinsic danger in unbalanced economic development and the serious social dislocation it provokes....

M.S. Breiner

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Ralph Buultjens Responds

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

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

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