

In Memoriam

Roderick Lemonde MacFarquhar, 1930–2019

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Roderick MacFarquhar was a leading China specialist his generation, Leroy B. Williams Professor of History and Political Science at Harvard University, a member of the British Parliament, founding editor of *The China Quarterly*, journalist and TV commentator. His remarkable scholarship sets the standard for the writing of PRC history in general and the study of the Cultural Revolution in particular.

Early Life and Education

Rod was born in Lahore, then part of India, now part of Pakistan, and lived there until age nine. His mother was born in Calcutta, where her father worked as a civil engineer, but she had returned to England for her education. His father, Sir Alexander MacFarquhar, a native of Scotland, was a highly respected British civil administrator who conducted a cadastral survey of all of India. He later served as under-secretary for personnel at the United Nations and Britain's highest-member of the UN Secretariat. His mother Berenice once aspired to be an opera singer and passed on a life-long love of music to her son. She was known as a gracious hostess who welcomed many an Indian intellectual to their home; though they employed servants, she was an outstanding cook. His only sibling, David, was born when Rod was five but sadly died a year later.

A long-time friend recalls that “Rod’s mind was in China, but his heart was in India.” When he returned to India in 2009 to trace his roots, Rod discovered the name of his father still displayed on the doorposts of his former “cottage” and one of his mother’s famous dishes still featured on the menu of a Delhi hotel as “Lady MacFarquhar’s chutney.” He found that he could even still use some of his childhood Hindi.

At age nine, Rod left India for boarding school in England and later transferred to Fettes, a prestigious boys’ school in Scotland (sometimes referred to as “the Eton of the North”) which sent graduates to Cambridge and Oxford.

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After graduating in 1948, he served as a second lieutenant in the Royal Tank Regiment in Egypt. Upon returning to the UK, he read philosophy, politics and economics at Keble College, Oxford University, from which he graduated in 1953. At Oxford Rod had already decided he would pursue a career in politics, but realized he needed a job before he could be a politician. Rather than pursue the typical path to politics, by becoming a teacher or barrister, he decided to work as a journalist. Rod had little interest in following the usual pattern of spending three years reporting on local events, and decided instead to develop a specialty. Many others knew about India, so he chose another focus: “There had been a revolution in China and people would need to know about that, so I would learn about China.”¹

Following the advice of Prof. Homer Dubs, an Oxford China specialist, Rod became one of five students who enrolled at Harvard in a new two-year master’s degree programme in Far Eastern studies. There he began the study of Chinese language. Rod reports that for the first time in his life he developed a passion for scholarship. John Fairbank (who had studied Chinese history at Oxford himself) was particularly impressed with Rod’s exceptional academic ability and promise. At Fairbank’s suggestion, he wrote his MA thesis on the Huangpu Military Academy, the training ground for key Nationalist and Communist elites. In the early 1980s, Fairbank led an effort to recruit Rod back to Harvard as a faculty member. When Fairbank later undertook the herculean task of editing the multi-volume *The Cambridge History of China*, he invited Rod to serve as co-editor of the two volumes on the post-1949 period.

Early Career

After completing his Harvard MA, Rod worked from 1955 to 1961 as a journalist with *The Daily Telegraph* in London, where he followed Chinese developments as part of his reporting responsibilities. Working under David Floyd, an experienced Soviet watcher, he covered the 20th Congress of the CPSU and its implications for China, an early assignment that would serve him well when he decided some years later to undertake an in-depth study of the origins of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

In early 1959, at age 28, Rod was invited by Walter Laqueur to launch *The China Quarterly*. Laqueur was editor of *Soviet Survey*, a journal established by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a Cold War union of Western intellectuals intended to counter the ideological influence of the Soviet Union. Rod had contributed an article to a special issue of *Soviet Survey* devoted to China’s Hundred Flowers Campaign. Laqueur was much impressed with the article and, believing that Communist China was important enough to warrant its own journal, asked Rod to serve as founding editor.

1 MacFarquhar 2017.

Rod approached this new opportunity with gusto. In preparation for the first issue to be published in 1960, he visited leading China specialists in Europe and the United States to learn about the field and solicit manuscripts. At the time, however, very few China specialists could claim any serious knowledge of post-1949 developments. Fewer still were writing research articles suitable for publication in an academic journal. For the inaugural issue, Rod tapped several former and current government officials with insider knowledge to write brief overviews of the first ten years of the People's Republic of China. The lead article was by Howard Boorman, who had been a US Foreign Service officer in Beijing in 1947–50. In his contribution, Boorman argued that China was already “the most formidable political and military power of Asia.”² Rod underscored Boorman's assessment in an editorial, declaring that “the present fact of Chinese power is sufficient justification for launching this journal.”³ Consistent with its mission of informing Western intellectuals of developments inside the Communist world, each issue of *The China Quarterly* included a “Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation” section that summarized recent political events.

During the next nine years Rod edited the first 33 issues of *The China Quarterly* before he relinquished the post in 1968. In 1964 he married Emily Cohen, a brilliant Wellesley graduate. Like Rod, Emily was a budding journalist whom Rod had hired as his editorial assistant and who had earned an MA from Harvard in East Asian studies in the early 1960s. Rod's successor as editor, David C. Wilson, succinctly summarized his predecessor's accomplishment: “During the past nine years ... *The China Quarterly* has established itself as the leading Western journal on developments in and affecting contemporary China.”⁴

Relieved of the burdens of reporting and editing, Rod turned his attention to scholarship. Frederick Teiwes notes that “Rod was the first to approach the study of elite CCP politics with a truly unfettered truth from facts mindset, plus the energy and relentlessness to pursue the complex, multi-layered evidence wherever it led.” In 1969 Rod spent a year on a Ford Foundation fellowship at Columbia University, devouring new source materials on the Cultural Revolution and discussing his discoveries with political scientists A. Doak Barnett, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Michel Oksenberg. By the time he began writing the first volume of his authoritative trilogy, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Rod could draw upon a unique background that combined insider journalistic reportage (from his time at *The Daily Telegraph* as well as the BBC documentary series *Panorama*) and comprehensive editorial oversight (from his years at *The China Quarterly*) with the benefits of rich documentary resources and stimulating intellectual exchanges (from his days at Columbia).

2 Boorman 1960, 3.

3 MacFarquhar 1960, 1.

4 Wilson 1968, i.

Political Career

Brilliant scholar though he was, Rod found the halls of Parliament more alluring than the stacks of Butler Library. Since his time at Oxford he had envisioned a career in politics. He returned to England to run for election as a member of the Labour Party (a political orientation he adopted after reading the work of a popular British socialist philosopher of the 1940s, C.E.M. Joad). After two unsuccessful runs in the late 1960s, Rod was elected in 1974 to represent the Belper constituency. Historically the area had been a manufacturing centre and from the 1940s a Labour stronghold. But by the 1970s, due to a growing population of middle-class voters, Belper was becoming more conservative. Still, Rod managed to win two back-to-back elections in 1974, increasing his margin of victory from about 7 points in the first election to about 10 points in the second. He lost in the 1979 general election by a close margin of less than two points. Although he was a Labourite, Rod's politics tended to be on the right wing of the party. After his defeat in 1979, he defected along with more high-profile Labour figures. In 1981 he joined the newly formed Social Democratic Party out of opposition to the power of the "militant faction" in the Labour Party.

As an MP, Rod was widely regarded as a principled politician, though with more of an academic air than most. Despite a privileged life, his concern for the disadvantaged in British society was obvious. In his constituency work – which he enjoyed – and in his work in Parliament he lobbied on behalf of those with intellectual disabilities, for better schools, and for more economic nationalization. He was in favour of reducing the privileged power of traditional public schools in UK society and for reducing class differences that hindered economic development. In one of his more moving speeches in Parliament (likely inspired by his wife, Emily, who was writing for *The Economist* and caring for their two young children) he made an impassioned and rigorous argument for policies supporting gender equality.

Rod's academic interests showed through, of course. He often lobbied on behalf of one of his smaller constituencies – British Sinologists. He pressed the government to do more to help British China specialists gain access to Chinese archives and scholars after relations with China were put on a more normal footing. (The UK had recognized China in 1950, even though the two countries did not exchange ambassadors until 1972. Like other Western countries, the breakthroughs in cultural, economic and military exchanges came in the early 1970s.) Rod's efforts in this regard may have reflected his own difficulties to visit the PRC. He first applied for a journalist visa in 1955, but it was not until 1972, when no longer a journalist, that he was granted a visa for his first visit to the PRC as part of a delegation from the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA). To obtain that visa, Rod had applied as a "correspondent" for the RIIA's monthly magazine. As he recalled, "The Chinese duly gave me a visa, but on arrival in Guangzhou in October 1972, one of our minders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later an ambassador to a major Western

power, looked me sternly in the eye and told me that since this was a goodwill visit, the Chinese had decided to admit anyone whom the British said was a journalist. In other words, don't try this trick again!"⁵

Given his background as a China scholar and international journalist, it is not surprising that Rod had much to say in Parliament about foreign policy and international relations. From his teens on, he was an internationalist and a supporter of a democratic united states of Europe. As a politician he advocated for the improvement of democracy both at home and abroad, endorsing devolution in the United Kingdom and direct elections for a European parliament.

While an internationalist, Rod also advocated a sophisticated realpolitik approach to foreign policy. His analysis of the Soviet threat was not rigid or rabid. In the late 1970s the Soviets were increasingly active, directly and through proxies, in defending their interests in the developing world. Although sceptical of Soviet intentions, Rod believed Moscow was cautious and therefore deterrable. He was confident the Soviets would eventually lose out in the developing world, but in the meantime would be opportunistic and destructive. Britain was no longer a powerful country and could not repel Soviet advances around the globe. He suggested that the UK encourage developing countries to oppose the Soviets diplomatically, while the West could hint at threatening detente as a cost for Soviet adventurism. Realistic about the limits of UK power and uninclined to exaggerate the Soviet threat, Rod still supported modernizing the UK's sea-based nuclear deterrent and exploring other military possibilities such as cruise missiles.

Rod's views of China were prescient. In 1978, in a major speech in Parliament he argued that China, not Japan, was the main contender for superpower-hood. Echoing his rationale for founding *The China Quarterly*, he emphasized the rising power of China: "If the Chinese People's Republic modernises at the rate that it hopes to do in the next 25 years there might be another major challenge to our export industries."⁶ China was not only an economic challenge; it was also a systemic one: "China has attempted and is still attempting to evolve a distinctive form of society from the Western model which it originally copied through Marxism....The reasons include the great self-confidence conferred as a result of the long and continuous cultural tradition of this area....the cohesive social structures which have been used as building blocks for modern societies...[and the] enormous stress which traditionally is put on education."⁷

In the face of this China challenge, Rod argued that traditional historical responses of exclusion and/or containment were unrealistic. He instead advocated "incorporation and cooperation." This solution required better understanding (language study, cultural studies, research); more international consultation

5 MacFarquhar 2011.

6 Roderick MacFarquhar's intervention at House of Commons, 8 June 1978 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1978-06-08/debates/ba8fe61c-fad1-4a06-81db-466faa3c9db2/ForeignAffairs>).

7 Ibid.

with other countries (including Japan) to study experiences and share information; and more direct relations with the PRC (including limited arms sales) – both to better know and interact with Chinese power and to benefit economically and politically): “[S]ooner or later this vigorous nation of 900 million people will become a great Power.... As it becomes a great Power in the course of the next 30, 40 or 50 years, its leaders will look back and ask ‘Who helped us? Who decided to stand aside from this tremendous enterprise?’ I would prefer the thought that in the twenty-first century, when China emerges as one of the two or three decisive nations in the world, its leaders should be thinking that Britain, among other nations, was prepared to help at a decisive turn in Chinese development.”⁸

Much as Rod relished his role as MP, his political career ended when Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative Party swept into power in the general election of 1979. Nearly 50 years old at the time, he began to contemplate a less fickle occupation.

Harvard Years

Although Rod’s preference had been to continue as a Member of Parliament, he responded to electoral defeat with characteristic resilience. On the advice of his mentor John Fairbank, who had long sought to lure Rod back to the ivory tower, Rod submitted part of his ongoing study on the origins of the Cultural Revolution to serve as a doctoral dissertation at the London School of Economics. He was granted a PhD in Government from LSE in 1980.

At Harvard the recent resignation of Roy Hofheinz had created a pressing need in the Government Department for expertise on China. The serendipitous offer of a professorship from his alma mater persuaded Rod in 1984 to take the transatlantic leap yet again. Having laboured on the first two volumes of *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution* while serving as a journalist and politician, he imagined that reinventing himself as an otherwise unencumbered scholar would enable him to complete his trilogy expeditiously. As it turned out, however, the distractions and demands of academia would tax his time even more than his previous lines of work.

Shortly after arriving in Cambridge, Rod assumed the directorship of the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard’s principal hub for the study of modern China. For the next six years, 1986–92, he threw himself into this administrative assignment with exceptional energy and initiative, spearheading a development drive that resulted in the creation of several new China/social science faculty positions (including the first chaired position in the US for the study of China’s international relations), the introduction of the Reischauer

8 Roderick MacFarquhar’s intervention on Harrier Aircraft (Sale To China), House of Commons, 12 December 1978 ([https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1978-12-12/debates/3496f6a9-1549-45ed-93ef-bbba48b42b19/HarrierAircraft\(SaleToChina\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1978-12-12/debates/3496f6a9-1549-45ed-93ef-bbba48b42b19/HarrierAircraft(SaleToChina)))

and Neuhauser annual lectureships, and the convening of interdisciplinary research teams. One team, under the supervision of Rod's former SOAS colleague, political scientist Stuart Schram, set to work on a definitive multi-volume translation of Mao Zedong's pre-1949 revolutionary writings; another team, co-directed by sociologist Andrew Walder and anthropologist James L. Watson, focused on the Cultural Revolution. Rod took a special interest in building the Fairbank Center Library, under the direction of Nancy Hearst, into a world-class collection on contemporary Chinese history and politics. The effect of these combined efforts made the study of China at Harvard, long renowned for humanistic scholarship thanks to the Harvard-Yenching Institute, a leader in the contemporary social sciences as well.

Within his home department, as the Leroy B. Williams Professor, Rod worked assiduously to recruit and retain the next generation of colleagues in the China field: Jean Oi, Alastair Iain Johnston, Elizabeth Perry. His impact on the Government Department was not limited to the China field. For two successive terms from 1998 to 2004, Rod served as an exceptionally engaged and effective department chair, engineering and overseeing multiple personnel hires and promotions across the various fields of political science. Astute politician (and wine connoisseur) that he was, he increased attendance and improved collegiality by offering better-quality vintages at department faculty meetings! Beyond the department, Rod served as Faculty of Arts and Sciences Parliamentarian, his expertise in Robert's Rules of Order rescuing his colleagues from many a procedural quagmire.

Despite embarking upon an academic career rather late in life, Rod was an enormously gifted and inspiring teacher. Drawing upon lessons learned from delivering speeches on the floor of Parliament, he gave mesmerizing lectures (without recourse to any notes) that attracted hundreds of enthralled Harvard undergraduates each semester to his legendary classes on the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Uprising. Professor Tang Shaojie credits Rod with teaching the first lecture course on the Cultural Revolution to be offered anywhere in the world, nearly twenty years before his own course was introduced at Tsinghua University.

Rod was also a revered and endearing mentor to graduate students. They remember him not only as an "intellectual giant" but also as an exceptionally warm and gracious person, blessed with a "dry wit" and "wicked sense of humor," who became a true friend and whose distinctive brand of scholarship continues to inspire them today. Minxin Pei recalls Rod's commitment to "evidence more than theory" and the need to "get the chronology right." Yasheng Huang appreciates Rod's conviction that "history has shaped and is continuing to shape contemporary Chinese political and economic developments at the most fundamental level." As an undergraduate, Edward Steinfeld first encountered Rod "lecturing – as always – without notes, and as if he were Gibbon himself extemporaneously reeling off *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* from the top of his head.....I decided that's what I wanted to be when I grow up." Victor Shih strives to emulate Rod's "skillful weaving of participant recollection,

party documents, and observations by diplomats into seamless accounts of the typically opaque elite politics of China.” Daniel Koss notes that “Chinese leaders’ biographies, official documents, and organizational histories might be an acquired taste. Yet Professor MacFarquhar transmitted to us...the passion to read these materials as fascinating reflections of the innermost workings of elite politics.” Meg Rithmire recalls that Rod’s legendary seminar, *Chinese Authors on Chinese Politics*, “had a punishing workload, and he pushed his students to remember details. But it was worth it; any student who worked with him has a timeline of elite Chinese politics indelibly etched in her mind.” Kristen Looney remembers Rod encouraging her to read everything she could get her hands on “and to take delight in the details. He was always, without exception, insightful, kind, and humorous.” Kyle Jaros was struck by “how much confidence (deserved or not) Rod was willing to place in his students, and by the generosity and lack of fussiness with which he shared his own immense knowledge and his own connections in the field.”

Rod made major contributions to the study of Chinese politics at Harvard, and he in turn was much affected by his new environment. He continued to work on the final volume of his magisterial trilogy on the origins of the Cultural Revolution but, to his surprise and chagrin, at a slower pace than the previous two volumes. The delay was due in part to the flood of new primary sources, but the demands of teaching and administration also exacted a toll. The slowdown had a silver lining, however, as Rod credited the move to academe with enabling his progression “on to a new learning curve.” When Volume three finally appeared in 1997, he generously attributed its panoramic perspective to his interactions with a wide range of China scholars and political scientists at Harvard. The result is a tour de force that devotes almost as much attention to conditions in the countryside as to elite machinations in Zhongnanhai. In 1999 the 733-page masterpiece, subtitled *The Coming of the Cataclysm*, won the Joseph Levenson Prize of the Association for Asian Studies for the best book on twentieth-century China.

The impact of his environment on Rod’s scholarship can be traced through the dedications of his books. The earlier works, Volumes 1 and 2 of *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, are dedicated to his family: his wife Emily and his children Larissa and Rory, respectively. Later works, suggest the importance of his newfound academic home; his 1993 textbook *The Politics of China*, is dedicated “to the memory of John King Fairbank” and *The Origins*, Volume three, is dedicated to another Harvard colleague: “Benjamin Schwartz, the pioneer in the study of Chinese Communism.”

Rod’s Harvard days were marked by changes in his personal life as well. His beloved wife Emily died of a brain tumour in 2001 at age 62. In 2012 he married Dalena Wright, a scholar of British foreign policy who formerly worked for the US government. His daughter Larissa became a writer for *The New Yorker*. His son Rory worked in the National Security Council during the Obama administration and later as Director for Global Economic Policy at Google.

Rod's growing circle of influential colleagues was not limited to the Fairbank Center and the Government Department. Over the years he invited many party historians from the PRC – Hu Hua, Li Rui, Liao Gailong and Wang Ruoshui – to spend time in residence at Harvard, often engaging in studies that were politically impossible to conduct at home. His appreciation for this wider academic community is evident in the poignant dedication of his 2006 co-authored book with Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*: “To all the Chinese whose works and words on the Cultural Revolution have enlightened us – and to future generations of Chinese historians who may be able to research and write on these events with greater freedom.”

The esteem in which Rod held his Chinese colleagues was mutual. Wang Haiguang notes that “in China, the name ‘Roderick MacFarquhar’ has a thunderous resonance . . . his rich sources, penetrating insight, and objective narrative have opened Chinese people's eyes to their own history.” Han Gang commends Rod's books as “classics” whose multifaceted attention to “Chinese Communist tradition, ideology, elite politics, Sino-Soviet relations, and international context have laid the narrative and analytical foundation for Cultural Revolution history.”

Rod maintained his interest in India and enjoyed continuing friendships with Indian intellectuals. In the last years of his life he was beginning to prepare a book comparing the development of Indian and Chinese civilizations, looking to answer the age-old question: Why from an early period was India “all society” whereas China was “all state”? He hoped that after his death his vast personal collection of books on China would be donated to a library in India to encourage Chinese studies there.

Scholarship

Roderick MacFarquhar's name will forever be linked to *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, his three-volume *magnum opus* on the political intrigues and struggles that culminated in 1966 in China's traumatic “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.” The account begins with brief but insightful sketches of Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai, the top three players in China's political arena. Others would soon be introduced – Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Peng Dehuai – but it is the reactions and interactions among Mao, Liu and Zhou as they confronted challenges abroad, particularly from the Soviet Union, and at home that would end in confrontation. Rod begins his story in 1956, a decade before the onset of the Cultural Revolution. This was the year that Mao's crash programme of agricultural collectivization – accelerated by his famous accusation that his colleagues were tottering along like women with bound feet – had been accomplished ahead of schedule. The year 1956 was also when Khrushchev's secret speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU accusing Stalin of a personality cult and mass murder sent shockwaves across the Communist world. Riots in Poland raised issues of nationalism and internationalism, of

centralization and decentralization; uprisings in Hungary ended only when Soviet tanks enforced socialism and the Warsaw Pact. Rod presents a tale of hardened revolutionaries – all powerful personalities in their own right – reacting to events and to each other, debating questions of leadership, bureaucracy, and the “masses.” It is a dramatic story, one of global importance, that ends in tragedy. And no one tells it better than Rod.

When Rod first began research for *The Origins* he obviously could not have known that the events he was then witnessing were setting the stage for the Cultural Revolution. But by 1968, during his fellowship at Columbia, Mao’s Cultural Revolution was in full swing and Rod realized that what had originally been conceived as a one-volume work would have to be expanded into three volumes to make sense of its complex origins.

Volume one revolves largely around the Hundred Flowers Movement, a campaign stimulated by the 1956 events in Eastern Europe, which had raised the question of the relationship between the ruling party and the people it governed. Mao advocated an “open door” rectification in which non-party people could and should criticize party cadres. This approach was staunchly opposed by Liu Shaoqi, and when intellectuals and others acted on Mao’s invitation to criticize the party, often vigorously, the sense of *schadenfreude* among his colleagues was palpable. Cleavages began to take shape. Volume one was published in 1974, the year that Rod was elected to Parliament. His political career did not diminish his commitment to the project, and he would credit his time in Parliament with sharpening his political acumen. Britain, he stressed, was not China, but there were certain universals in politics, and Rod believed his five years as a politician afforded greater insight into the machinations of political actors in China.

Volume two, published in 1983, a year before he joined the Harvard faculty, deals with one of the greatest tragedies in human history, the Great Leap Forward. Rod presents a riveting account of how economic problems descended into illusion, fervour, and mass starvation. Policy failure begets political turmoil in any system; the concentration of power in China heightened such tensions. The confrontation between Peng Dehuai and Mao Zedong at the Lushan Plenum in 1959 – “High Noon at Lushan” in Rod’s memorable words – makes for one of the most dramatic chapters in any study of the PRC. That Mao won this showdown, silencing his colleagues, set the scene for the unleashing of the Cultural Revolution.

A major challenge in writing the trilogy was the ever-expanding number of primary documents. Even as he was reviewing page proofs for Volume one, two important volumes of Mao’s Cultural Revolution writings became available. Following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, additional new “internal” material became available just as he was finalizing the draft for Volume two. The problem of proliferating source material was even more acute during the preparation of Volume three. A treasure trove of new memoirs added depth and breadth to the story, forcing Rod to

modify his view of Mao (unfavourably) and to pay greater attention to the countryside, which he describes as “fundamental to an understanding of the origins of the Cultural Revolution.”⁹

More than one hundred pages longer than either of the first two volumes, Volume three traces the ever-deepening cleavages between Mao and his colleagues from the 7,000 cadres conference of 1962 (which assessed the disaster of the Great Leap Forward) and the Socialist Education Movement of 1963–64 (which re-introduced class struggle) to the emergence of Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, as a political actor, and Mao’s famous 1966 swim in the Yangtze marking his return to political activity. Fearing the death of his revolution and a descent into “revisionism,” not unlike that in the Soviet Union after Stalin, Mao unleashed society on his party.

The trilogy took more than forty years to complete. Written in tandem with Roderick MacFarquhar’s own illustrious career, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution* shines with a special brilliance that reflects the author’s richly variegated life and experience.

Rod’s understanding of the Cultural Revolution informed his complicated and even paradoxical analysis of trends in contemporary China. He was a strong critic of the human costs of Mao’s rule and of the repression during the post-Mao era, whether the Tiananmen massacre under Deng Xiaoping or the increased ideological orthodoxy, or the crackdown on political dissent and mass incarceration of Uyghurs under Xi Jinping. But he was optimistic about eventual political liberalization in China. Rod believed that for all the violence Mao inflicted on the Chinese people, he destroyed the people’s blind faith in bureaucracy, including the party bureaucracy. Under Deng Xiaoping’s reforms the Chinese people had been materially and intellectually sufficiently liberated to transform their own lives for the better. These legacies from the Mao and Deng periods meant that the CCP would be unable to keep popular demands for more agency bottled up forever. Although Rod was cautious in forecasting the future, in a 2017 interview he concluded that “people as dynamic as the Chinese and as numerous are not going to be ruleable from one centre, one party or one person, Xi Jinping or whoever it is, for very much longer; they are going to be too savvy, too much wishing to spread their wings and do their own thing, and the idea that the party knows best and only the party can rule, I think it will disappear. ... in the long run China will end up with some form of democracy.”¹⁰

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⁹ MacFarquhar 1997, viii.

¹⁰ MacFarquhar 2017.

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Biographical notes

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Ezra F. VOGEL was professor at Harvard from 1967 to 2000. A sociologist of China and Japan, he succeeded John Fairbank as second director of the Fairbank Center and was founding director of the Asia Center. His books include *Canton Under Communism* (1969), *Japan as Number One* (1979), *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (2011) and *China and Japan: Facing History* (2019).

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