

Dr Gillian Sutherland contributes one of the two essays in the book to deal directly with social history. Her subject is the beginnings of women's university education. She finds the origins of the movement not so much in the pioneering efforts of individual women – although these played their part – as in “the wholesale shift in society towards formal, institutionalised schooling, a movement spearheaded by the bourgeoisie and owing [much] to the activities of a self-consciously liberal intelligentsia”. This essay by itself would justify the purchase of the book. Dr Ross McKibbin discusses a “theory” of the behaviour of the unemployed suggested, on rather slim evidence, by P. F. Lazarsfeld on the basis of a study of Marienbad, near Vienna, in the early 1930s. Lazarsfeld traced a pattern of decline of the unemployed from indignation to despair and apathy. In Britain at the same time, however, the dole was “a kind of wage and it permitted a good deal of social continuity”. Some reference to W. G. Runciman's theory of relative deprivation would not have been out of place here.

The remaining essays all discuss aspects of Labour Party or trade-union history. Professor Richard A. Rempel, of McMaster University, where Bertrand Russell's papers are now located, traces Russell's conversion from Liberalism to Labour, occasioned by his opposition to the First World War. Dr R. C. Whiting provides an account of the Labour Party's commitment to the Capital Levy between 1918 and 1924. In spite of the savage post-war deflation, which increased the burden of the National Debt, the British economy proved resilient to high taxation, and the levy was thought by the other political parties to be “not worth the trouble”. Dr Gordon Phillips, whose work on the General Strike was well received a few years ago, considers whether the T.U.C. engaged in “corporatist politics” when it expressed willingness to collaborate with the Mond group of employers, as has been suggested by some authors. He finds, on the contrary, that the T.U.C. remained closely committed to the Labour Party, and that its attitude to the state was “imbued with wariness and scepticism”. In the final essay in the book Dr Robert Waller discusses “Sweehearts and Scabs” in the twentieth century. He concentrates rather narrowly on Havelock Ellis's National Union of Seamen and the two Nottinghamshire miners' breakaways of 1926 and 1985. As he quite correctly says, they were not “scabs” but represented a genuine constituency of workers. It is a pity that he did not investigate the categories of “staff associations” and “professional organisations” which he only mentions in passing, as they would also qualify under his definition.

*Henry Pelling*

**LADANY, LASZLO.** *The Communist Party of China and Marxism 1921-1985. A Self-Portrait. With a Foreword by Robert Elegant.* C. Hurst & Company, London 1988. xx, 588 pp. £ 32.50.

Laszlo Ladany is a familiar name to those who write or teach about People's China. Born in Hungary in 1914, Ladany studied the violin at the Budapest Conservatoire, obtained the degree of Dr Iuris Utrisque at the University, and went to China as a

Jesus in 1940. In 1949 he left China for Hongkong, where in 1953 he founded *China News Analysis*, a weekly newsheet that specialised in reporting on sides of China that the Chinese authorities would rather hide from the outside world. Its tenor was fiercely anti-Communist, but it was well researched and widely used by journalists and academics. It lasted until 1982, when Ladany retired; in 1984 it started up again under a different editor.

This book is the fruit of the first several years of Ladany's busy retirement. It is introduced by Robert Elegant, another well-known anti-Communist writer on China, who showers compliments on the book ("a fast-moving, yet comprehensive *tour d'horizon* [ . . . ] that will require of us all substantial revision of many basic concepts [and] will therefore be attacked vigorously by part of the scholarly community").

Ladany's book follows the development of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and of Marxism in China, from the beginning through to the 1980s. Its reconstruction of the revolutionary years, before 1949, is based mainly on memoirs and other sources that were published in China in the early 1980s. Later chapters on the years since 1949 summarise what Ladany reported week by week in *China News Analysis*. The part dealing with the period 1983 to 1985 is based on *People's Daily*.

Ladany sets himself three main tasks: to write in such a way that non-initiated readers will come to understand the nature of Communism in China; to write a book that, by using only Party sources, can justify its claim to be a self-portrait of Chinese Communism; and to explain what Marxism has meant to China. The book lives up only partly to these aims.

Ladany has not written in such a way that readers who know little about China will draw great benefit from his book. Books for beginners must be clear and economic in design, and stick always to the point. Ladany's book fails to do this. Instead of proceeding resolutely along a proclaimed route, it makes a thousand and one excursions along sidetracks that catch the attention of its author. For the initiated, much of the delight is in the unexpected vistas opened up by Ladany's anarchistic rambling (though sometimes the ramble becomes a plod). But I will be surprised if most uninitiated readers do not abandon the course after getting lost along innumerable byways.

Nor can Ladany fairly claim to have composed a self-portrait of Communism in China. If I were to steal Ladany's photo album and make a composite mugshot of all the most unflattering details, the result would be not a self-portrait by Ladany but a caricature by me. Ladany's book is a patchwork of criticisms and self-criticisms by Chinese Communists. The crimes and scandals he unearthed are important, but there is little balance in the books: wherever Communist reminiscers recall the strengths and achievements of the revolution, Ladany's attention drifts until the next atrocity or back-stab.

Ladany's discussion of the reception of Marxism in China is lucid and coherent by comparison with much of the rest of the book, and is on the whole compelling. Ladany believes that Marxism came to China "almost by accident", through the agency of the Comintern in Moscow. Here he goes too far. True, the link between China and the Soviet Union in the 1920s was forged by Comintern envoys like Sneevliet and Voitinsky, but it would quickly have broken had it not corresponded to deep-felt needs of the Chinese intelligentsia and proletariat. However, Ladany's

other comments on Marxism in China are hard to fault. Early Chinese Communists, he writes, knew little or nothing about the previous history of Marxism in Europe. It was not until sixteen years after the founding of the Party that they became acquainted with Marxist theories. But by then, says Ladany, Marxism was no longer a critical theory with competing schools: instead it had become the official dogma of Stalin's Russia. It was in its "closed, compact, Stalinist form" that Marxism reached the Chinese Communists after 1935. This was the Marxism that Mao embraced and used as a tool to shape his tyrannical regime. Mao has often been praised for having developed Marxism creatively: in fact "he served trite Stalinist Marxism to the Chinese public on a plate garnished with Chinese frills". Ladany's view of Marxism under Mao is (*pace* Elegant) not new, but the picture he draws of it is filled out with interesting new details culled from confessional articles by Party veterans published between 1979 and 1982.

Two other interesting sections of the book are on the Party underground in the cities before 1949 and on the Party's "dirty linen" – the jealousies, persecutions, and betrayals that stain its early history. Ladany knows China well, and is more aware than many academic China-watchers of the central importance of groups, cliques, friendship, and kinship in the political life of the CCP. Between 1921 and 1949 Communist moles tunnelled out a vast labyrinth of underground connections in Chiang Kai-shek's government and army, using social ties to do so. This was a crucial but often unremarked factor in the Communist conquest of power in 1949. After 1949, the gap between the Party's underground city workers and the rougher guerillas from the countryside proved hard to bridge. Hostility soon broke out between the two groups and culminated in a huge purge of the former by the latter. The chapter on "dirty linen" will sadden people with illusions in the CCP, and delight all addicts of scandalous tales about supposedly virtuous people in high places.

In his foreword, Robert Elegant describes Ladany with towering hyperbole as a present-day Xenophon and Herodotus, a "formidable historian" and "a journalist of great distinction". Actually the quality of Ladany's scholarship is highly uneven. The book contains egregious blunders that a good journalist or historian should not have made. Here are some examples. Ladany says that the August 1st Declaration of 1935 was issued "in the godforsaken northern corner of Xigang" during the Long March and concludes of the Communists that "even when they were in the most miserable circumstances, they never forgot their national ambitions and always spoke with an air of grandeur". The general point may be true, but the example used to prove it is false, for it has been known for many years that the Declaration was issued in Moscow, without Mao's knowledge. Another example of sloppy research is Ladany's claim that Ye Ting, the famous Communist general and martyr, "was not a Party member in 1927" and "died in an aeroplane accident in 1936". In fact Ye Ting joined the Party in 1925 and died in 1946. Other elementary mistakes are Ladany's assertion that Xiang Ying was the only proletarian in the Communist hierarchy (he is forgetting Chen Yun) and that the Long March started from Ruijin in August 1934 (it started in October).

Ladany's command of Chinese spelling, and particularly of his Zs and Cs, is shaky throughout. He spells Zunyi as Cun Yi, Chen Duxiu as Zhen Duxiu, and Chongqing as Zhongqing, rendering these names unrecognisable; there are other spelling

errors, in English as well as in Chinese. A thorough editing would have spared the reader these irritations. The book teems with sentences and phrases that cry out for the editor's blue pencil. Here are some examples. "Hu Qiaomu [. . .] was thirty-three years old in 1945 and sixty-nine in 1981." "Zhang Wentian presided and opened the meeting." "The city was not yet the capital of China and was called Peking [. . .]. It was still known as Peiping."

Ladany's achievement is to have made a one-sided but reasonably accurate summary of a small part of the revisionist history-writing published in China in the early 1980s, and to have contributed toward correcting the Mao-centric bias that cheapens many studies of the Chinese revolution. But his book is spoilt by many eccentric and unacceptable generalisations. For example, he says that the Communists injected violence into Chinese politics: but violence was enshrined in the elite gentry culture (whose passing Ladany so regrets) even before the collapse into warlordism that sped the birth of the CCP. Ladany also claims that in the 1920s and 1930s "Shanghai was a free society" and that the years of the Republican decade were "the best China has known this century": but the tens of millions of victims of famine, civil war, official corruption, fascist repression, and Japanese bullying would not agree with him. On Marxism, the central topic of his study, Ladany displays an alarming ignorance. It is not surprising to learn that he thinks that Karl Wittfogel is "probably the greatest authority on Marxism in the Western world".

The book is also spoiled by its general inability to see any good whatsoever in Mao and his supporters. Mao is shown as a cunning, rough, and ignoble schemer. Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen, is portrayed as a vain woman who went over to the Communists because her sister, the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, stole the limelight after Chiang took power: Song "could only shine among the Communists", says the spiteful Ladany.

*Gregor Benton*