

“vital link” between prisons and society. The remaining discussion focuses on prototype legislation [McCloskey: H.R. 1730, 97th Congress] that would require all 17 year old males and females to register under “pain of criminal penalty” with a national service system (207).

While Jacobs' argument is based on voluntary service, he has stumbled upon troubled terrain. First, he fails to consider the role prisons play in promoting adherence to prevailing cultural norms, which, in my opinion, would quash the notion of idealism these young people would bring with them. Second, he has proposed a program that would have a drastic impact on Blacks and other minorities because (1) in the event of conscription (as the McCloskey bill proposes), they would be required to either serve in the military or “volunteer” for correctional service, thus (2) relegating them to the lower strata of societal opportunity. To my dismay, this program would suggest a pre-determined form of control, under which certain groups would be routed into the criminal justice apparatus with minimal opportunity to develop skills useful once this “voluntary” service was completed.

Regretably, *New Perspectives on Prison and Imprisonment* does not take the prison or its outside components to task for encouraging the type of behavior it is supposed to discourage. Nor does the book accomplish a comprehensive and integrative social analysis of prisons as Jacobs promises in the preface. Nevertheless, the book will lead its readers through several interesting essays that contribute to our knowledge of the historical transformation of American prisons brought about by our legal system.

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Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 284 pp. \$19.95 (cloth).

There are several factors that make Chinese society immensely interesting as a field of study for sociologists. First of all, it is the oldest continuous civilization in the world. It is therefore fascinating to those interested in studying continuity of social organization, structure and culture over time (which is measured in millenia in the case of Chinese society). Second, the size of the population of China raises perplexing questions about how it is even possible to organize and coordinate political, economic and social policies for a single society which contains over one billion people who represent over fifty diverse ethnic cultures and are scattered over a vast geographic region. The fact that eighty percent of that population lives in isolated rural areas further complicates the problems of social coordination and control. A third feature of Chinese society of interest to many sociologists is that it is a revolutionary society undergoing purposive and rapid social change from a traditional, rural and impoverished country to a modern, industrialized and prosperous nation. Interest in China is further intensified by the fact that it declares itself a socialist society striving to become Communist. As such, it piques our interest as an example of a successful or unsuccessful attempt to become egalitarian as well as prosperous. The world watches its economic, political and social experiments as its leaders attempt to engineer both structural and ideological change.

Unfortunately, China watchers were severely limited during the first three decades of the existence of the revolutionary society due to a lack of access to the country. It is really only now that researchers are beginning to collect evidence in a more systematic fashion that will enable us to understand the events and changes that have occurred in China during these decades. *Chen Village* is a brilliantly planned and executed study of a single farming village in rural Guangdong (Kwangtung) Province in southern China. All of the factors which make China so intriguing—the continuity, the large and ethnically diverse population, the purposive attempts to engineer rapid social change, the problems of conducting an on-going revolution and the mysteries—are all illuminated by this careful study.

Unlike many less meticulous studies of China, this research offers a balanced and rich account of the effects of a series of tumultuous government-sponsored political campaigns designed to reorganize the Chinese countryside. These authors, unlike many others, do not cheat the reader by presenting only one side of the story. They act neither as apologists who glorify and sentimentalize the harsh realities of revolutionary change nor are they excessively critical of the way the Chinese have conducted their revolution. Their penetrating analysis includes a fair presentation of the amazing accomplishments and the agonizing failures of the policies created by the national leadership. The uniqueness of this village study is that the people of the community come alive for the reader as the beautifully written story unfolds and the *angst* and pathos is revealed. The tensions between continuity and change, resistance and acceptance, stagnation and progress are dramatically highlighted in the experiences of real people.

The narrative is organized chronologically beginning with a brief presentation of the pre-revolutionary village and the immediate post-revolutionary decade of the 1950s. More detailed accounting of people, events and struggles begins with mid-1964 when fifty urban young people from Canton go "down to the countryside" to live in Chen village. These students were part of a voluntary national movement of young people who hoped to demonstrate their dedication to the revolution and to experience the hardships of rural life in order to develop better "class feelings" through their experiences of living with the peasants. Each subsequent chapter focuses on the effects that each major political campaign by the national leadership had on the individuals within the community and how the social organization of the village changed over time.

Underlying the political, social and economic turmoil of the last two decades, the story reveals tortuous but progressive change in the material status of the residents of the village. As the drama unfolds, the economic conditions improve dramatically from gross poverty to a level of prosperity that most could have never imagined or hoped for prior to the revolution. But this economic improvement was marked by uneven development and major setbacks from time to time as political and economic strategies from above kept changing.

By the time the students arrived in 1964, land reform had already been accomplished. That is, the landholdings in the village had been redistributed from the rich to the poor and the influence and power of the rural elite had been broken. Every family had been

systematically evaluated and categorized as "landlord," "rich peasant," "middle peasant" (which was further divided into upper-middle, middle, and lower-middle) or "poor peasant." A new village leadership had been formally installed. All of this had been accomplished under the guidance and direction of a work team of cadres that had been sent to the village for these tasks. The new village leadership formed small "mutual-aid teams" in which small clusters of families began cooperating with one another to exchange labor, tools and animals during the busy agricultural seasons. These grew into more complicated schemes called "cooperatives" in which peasants actually pooled their lands in order to create larger fields that could be cultivated and irrigated more efficiently. Yearly profits were divided to each household according to the labor, land, tools and animals they had contributed to the effort. In 1956 Mao launched a national campaign to form "collectives" in which profits were divided only on the basis of labor inputs.

But before everyone had become familiar with working in the collectives, however, the village experienced the blundering and chaos of the "Great Leap Forward." This was the national campaign to create much larger units of rural production in order to more rapidly advance both production and the movement toward socialism. The collectives were organized into large "people's communes" and Chen village became part of a commune that included some twenty thousand people. This campaign was a bureaucratic mess with disastrous material consequences for the peasants who began to face starvation as they saw that the bulk of their produce was siphoned off to other less productive villages. Production broke down as peasants simply refused to continue to work the fields.

By 1961 the government began to correct the errors of the Great Leap Forward. The village was divided into five production teams and each team received one-fifth of the land. The teams were designed to encourage increased production because each team was able to keep their own produce and the material conditions of each family household within the team would be directly proportional to the success of the team's production. In less than a year the famine of previous years ended. Each team was managed by a committee elected by its membership. The five teams together comprised what was called the "production brigade" which was coordinated by two committees, one in charge of production and village-wide projects and the other in charge of carrying out the national party's directives and ensuring that the village

acted according to official regulations. The brigade leaders reported to the leadership of the larger commune organization.

In order to bolster the morale of the peasants after the disasters of the Great Leap Forward, the next political campaign was initiated to "clean up" the corrupt practices of local officials. During the beginning of this campaign, a phase called the "Small Four Clean-ups," the village was responsible for conducting their own "struggle sessions" to identify and humiliate their own corrupt officials. By 1965, however, another work team of cadres from the outside came in to initiate the "Big Four Clean-up Campaign" to identify the corrupt practices of the local cadres and rejuvenate the peasants' awareness of the politics of the class struggle against the "four bad types" (former landlords, former rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and "bad elements" that had been found guilty of political or social infractions). The outside cadres were responsible for organizing the grassroots, the masses, to "speak their bitterness" about their local cadres and officials. That is, they were to expose and denounce them for both small and large offenses that had occurred. Those who were accused were interrogated over and over by the "masses" and they were expected to confess and repent for their alleged wrongdoings. This was followed by similar emotional "struggles" against the "four bad types." The official purpose of stirring up these conflicts was to teach the peasants to be able to identify the "contradictions" among the people and intensify these contradictions to a revolutionary fervor in the name of "class struggle" in order to resolve the contradictions among them. In the process, the structure of authority in Chen Village was dismantled, rebuilt along "better" class lines, thus creating a foundation for the village's future political campaigns.

After the corruption of local cadres and the "four bad types" had been "exposed" and "corrected," the peasants were guided into the next political campaign directed at transforming the ideology and economic structures of the village. A new Mao Zedong Thought Counselor Corps was set up to produce a "spiritual" change in the peasantry by teaching them the thoughts of Mao. This new Mao study was designed not just to achieve an intellectual grasp of Mao's principles but to make them morally and emotionally committed to them so that the peasants would become passionately involved in working for social and economic progress. The power and glory of Mao's thought was to fill the ideological void left after the destruction of any remnant of traditional

beliefs and practices, particularly any residual religious or superstitious ideology.

The narrative continues through revelation of subsequent campaigns: the Cultural Revolution (1966-68) to identify class enemies, the Cleansing of the Class Ranks (1968) to correct for the overzealousness of the Cultural Revolution, and the Celebrating the Three Loyalties (1969-70) which was a campaign to renew allegiance to Mao, Mao's thought and his revolutionary line. Further less extensive campaigns followed with national discreditation of Vice Chairman Lin Biao. This anti-Lin campaign was transformed in 1973 to the Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius Campaign with attacks led against the Zhou Enlai and other "moderates" by the radical leadership (the Gang of Four). Next was a drive to get urban-born youths who had gone down to the country in the six counties close to the border with Hong Kong transferred to the island of Hainan to stop the flight of these disenchanting youth to Hong Kong. The Line Education Campaign (1974-75) was an unpopular attempt to make the peasants turn their attention away from private economic endeavors and become more involved with team agriculture.

During the seventies the village was forced to pursue a variety of ill-conceived agricultural experiments and innovations that were created by the radical top party leadership without regard to the economic realities of the village. The peasants had managed to become quite prosperous (in terms of former standards) during the 1960s despite all of the disruptions of the political campaigns. In the 1970s they began to see policies instituted that disrupted this progress. Agricultural research was taken out of the hands of experts and placed in the ill-prepared hands of the local masses. The village was forced to cultivate crops unsuitable for its subtropical climate in order to make the southern areas self-sufficient in case the Russians attacked from the north. Peasant labor and equipment were taken away from agricultural production in order to level mountain slopes to create new fields. This leveling, however, buried the topsoil and made it unsuitable for any type of agriculture. These and other economic policies and reversals led to agricultural failures, labor shortages, lowered morale and declining income for the peasant families.

Throughout this long series of political and economic campaigns and reversals, and crisis in both national and local authority and leadership, one is impressed by the Chinese peasants. They remain creative, patient, and resilient in the face of this turmoil and political fervor. By

the end of the 1970s, however, they have become very cynical about politics and ideology, having learned to use the political "line" to achieve their own material interests. Years of purges and "mass struggles" have made them cautious. Their lives have been disrupted not just by the unlimited amount of social change being engineered from above but by the machinations of local leaders struggling for power among themselves.

One is constantly reminded that despite an unremitting level of Party Commandism at the national level, local political and economic realities continue to be asserted at critical stages in the process. Time after time peasants have been able to turn the tide of political rhetoric and turmoil by simply refusing to be coerced any further. Despite the most radical politics of the national leadership at any given time, those leaders had to remain sensitive to the level of production. Peasants found that one of their most effective strategies was to quit producing in order to demonstrate their disenchantment. There was a quiet resistance to any change that endangered material well-being that has been effective to some extent in curbing the political and economic excesses and blunders of the party leadership.

*Chen Village* is an excellent study in that it provides the reader with a firm foundation of information about the past three decades of rural life in China. From this foundation one can more easily understand the surprising changes currently taking place under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping in his efforts to reprivatize the country's agricultural production in an attempt to restimulate productivity and motivate the peasantry. Because the authors present such a balanced view of the events and people, readers are able to draw their own conclusions about the successes and failures of the revolution. Whether the reader is interested in social continuity or change, in problems of social organization of a large and diverse population, or in the practical problems of conducting a revolution, this book will prove itself useful and thought-provoking.

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Jonathan H. Turner, Royce Singleton, Jr. and David Musick, *Oppression: A Socio-History of Black-White Relations in America*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984. 215 pp. \$11.95 (paper).

*Oppression* is a neat little book: a mere 215 pages in total. For many sociologists, especially those specialists in race relations and historical sociology, *Oppression* will be too neat and too short. After all, the authors set themselves no small task as the subtitle, *A Socio-History of Black-White Relations in America*, indicates. Add to the socio-history a concluding chapter devoted to extending Turner and Singleton's (1976) theory of ethnic oppression and one has good reason to be suspicious of this little book achieving all it sets out to accomplish. Yet, Turner, Singleton and Musick's concise presentation will be appreciated by those who do not assume the value of a book is directly proportional to its length. Specialists will be disappointed by what could be viewed as a superficial historical treatment of the racial oppression of blacks in America. Although in many respects the authors offer the broad historical overview that is much needed in an introductory text on race relations in America.

Chapter One, "The Nature of Oppression," suggests why the authors wrote a book about the history of oppression as opposed to a history of discrimination. They suggest that when one examines the prejudice, discrimination, ethnic antagonism, and racism in the history of black-white relations in America the cumulative effect warrants the term oppression. This history, according to the authors, is one of "institutionalized discrimination against blacks that resulted in, and to a large extent still perpetuates, their relegation to the bottom ranks in the stratification system" (9). According to the authors, oppression exists when:

identifiable segments of the population in a social system systematically and successfully act over a prolonged period of time to prevent another identifiable segment, or segments, of the population from attaining access to the scarce and valued resources of that system. (1-2)

Oppression is conceptualized here as varying in degree according to the extent to which three universal resources are denied—material well-being, power, and prestige.