prison system or the incorrect use of its asylums in treating "dissidents" or criminals is something that is highly unlikely.

The appearance of an Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn on China's literary and social scene is virtually impossible, given the enormous party and police controls, as well as the self-censorship among the writers themselves. During the last campaign against "spiritual pollution" it was remarkable just how silent China's leading literary figures were.

Since the time of the emperor Qin Shi Huang, who buried Confucian scholars alive and burned their books, the role of the Chinese intellectual and writer has been a perilous one. To be an intellectual in contemporary China is still downright dangerous. Spiritually and psychologically wounded by one political and literary campaign after another, China's writers have learned not to trust each other very much.

The crime of being a "counter-revolutionary" is enshrined in the constitution. Being critical in China is tantamount to being unpatriotic. Provided one has a sufficient number of influential political friends, the party and the state can tolerate a fair degree of criticism. But it will only be tolerated while those people remain influential. ◻

the two poverty-stricken intellectuals in *Nest Egg* (by Wang Zhecheng and Wen Xiaoyu), who fear a meeting with an old college friend who has made good in the United States; the couple in Dai Qing's *Anticipation*, who have been separated for 15 years, and the tragic romantic in Zhang Jie's *Love Must Not Be Forgotten*. In each of these pieces the characters long for a time past when, had they been less naive, they would not have sacrificed themselves so willingly for the party.

Another theme is evident in *The Good Luck Bun* by Liu Qingbang, which is a story as much about the high-handedness of rural party officials as about starvation during the Great Leap Forward. Cao Guanlong's tragi-comic tale, *Three Professors*, captures the mindless persecution of intellectuals by ignorant party "investigators."

Although there is wry humour in some stories, the collection's most famous story, Chen Rong's *At Middle Age*, exposes the hardship, neglect and slow destruction of Lu Wenting, an oculist. True to form as a gritty socialist heroine, she is old long before her time. Chen touches on just about every problem faced by Chinese intellectuals since 1949: persecution, low social status and poor pay, to name but three. (In China anybody with an education is classified as an "intellectual.")

The tale, which ought to have been a cry of rage, is marred by sentimentality, weak characterisation and formula writing. "You need your health for the Revolution! We must be responsible towards the Revolution, and towards the party!" Nowhere does Chen — or any of the other authors — challenge the party or condemn it for the waste of lives. The scapegoats are always the Gang of Four or cadres who have been corrupted by power.

On the other hand, the stories do paint a picture of Chinese society which Western leftists long refused to accept — and which many still do. One wonders, however, for how long Chinese writers will have to stick to attacking such an obvious target as the Gang of Four, or continue harping back to the 1950s? How long will writers remain unable to deal with the problems of intellectuals and of peasants more honestly? The answer would seem to be "for as long as the party continues to control art and literature for its own political and cultural ends."

— IAN FINDLAY

IDENTITIES

Bangkok, Taipei, Peking — the unsettling eternal triangle

By Bertil Lintner in Ban Mai Nong Bua

Two events have socially and economically altered the structure of northern Thailand more than anything else: the arrival of the railway in the 1920s and the 1949 communist victory in China. After more than 10 years of hard work, blasting through the hills, the first train steamed into Chiang Mai and the king in Bangkok could expect to control his northern subjects more effectively. But with the railway came — not exactly surprisingly — thousands of enterprising Teochew (Chao Zhou)-speaking Chinese from Bangkok. With trading partners and relatives already well-established in business in the capital, they swiftly took over most of the commercial activities in the north as well.

Today, the Teochew can be seen in shops and company offices all over Chiang Mai, though bearing Thai names and being just as assimilated as their cousins in Bangkok. Only the older generation meet to chat, play checkers and read Chinese newspapers at the old-fashioned Samakom Dontri Chin (Chinese Musical Association), just behind the Warorot market, where many of them sell agricultural produce from the surrounding countryside.



Democracy Wall: a short-lived spring. CHRIS MULLIN

Their children and grandchildren show little interest; they seem to prefer the company of young Thais of their own age in the bowling alleys, discos and ice-cream parlours.

While the degree of integration is rather high among the Teochew-Chinese in Chiang Mai and other northern urban centres, the Mandarin-speaking settlements in the hills remain very much culturally and linguistically isolated from the mainstream of Thai society. Even the outer appearance of the village of Ban Mai Nong Bua is unmistakably Chinese: walled compounds and wooden gates with Chinese characters written on sheets of red paper. A Chinese temple, erected in honour of the goddess Kwan Yin,

stands at the foot of the hill. Nearby is a small spa. The caretaker, who is also the headman of the village, is a retired Kuomintang (KMT) officer who fled Yunnan when the communists marched in 35 years ago.

In early 1950, several regiments of beaten nationalist soldiers streamed south, across the border to Burma's Shan states. From there, they tried in vain to reconquer China — only to find themselves driven even further south into Thailand 10 years later (REVIEW, 6 Sept. '84).

Gradually, relatives, wives and whole families, including eligible young women of marriageable age, also migrated south from Yunnan, and the KMT military men were able to settle down to a more orderly family life. With thousands of soldiers around, the young women were especially welcome, but they came in insufficient numbers and tended to marry into the officers' class. Many of the other ranks intermarried with local women generally from the Yao and Lisu hill tribes.

Thus, in the early 1960s, their former, purely military base camps along the northern Thai border had become more permanent settlements. The Thai authorities, however, shrewdly perceived that these new, officially "illegal" immigrants could fulfil a useful role in bolstering the security of the kingdom. The KMT remnants were used as border police and for collecting intelligence from across the frontier; they were sent to protect road construction crews in communist insurgent areas in Thailand's north and northeast, and some of them even participated in actual combat. More than 1,000 KMT troops are said to have taken part in drives against the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the Khao Kor mountains as late as January 1981.



PHOTOS: HSENG NOUNG LINTNER

Samakom Dontri Chin: chat and checkers.

Today, most of the ex-KMT soldiers have settled down in border villages such as Ban Mai Nong Bua as merchants and farmers. Despite their relatively small number — 10-20,000 — they play an important role in northern Thailand's economy. In addition to the traditional source of income — cross-border trading with Burma — they also act as middlemen between the local Thai farmers and merchants in the towns.

But the policy never was to fully integrate them in Thai society. A resettlement deal was made in 1971, when about 3,000 — or roughly 25% — of the KMT-Chinese were given Thai citizenship. In accordance with this agreement, it was officially announced that they were expected to close down their Chinese-language schools, to learn Thai and to become ordinary residents. Two years later, on 6 May 1973, a headline in the English daily *Bangkok Post* read: "KMT to disband — pledge to disarm." And on 15 April in the following year: "KMT-run schools face axe — Government says obey Education Act or else."

However, that the same orders were repeated in June 1984 demonstrates quite clearly that nothing really changed. The future of the KMT-Chinese settlements in northern Thailand is still uncertain — and so is the legal status of their inhabitants. This appears to have contributed to the obvious sense of ambiguity in their national loyalties.

Politically and culturally, links with Taiwan remain strong. Newspapers, periodicals and teaching material for the local Chinese school arrive regularly from Taipei and this is undoubtedly appreciated by the KMT-Chinese here. Some even refer to the Taiwan Government as "our government" — but quickly add they are also loyal to the king and queen of Thailand, that they would like to stay here and, if possible, acquire Thai citizenship.

Out of about 700 children in the school in Ban Mai Nong Bua, less than 20 are Thai citizens. Chinese is still being taught early in the morning and in the late afternoon, while Thai is the medium of instruction in regular hours. That poses no problem up to the sixth year of primary schooling, but without citizenship, most children are barred from further education in Thai schools in the towns. The Taiwan Government offers 40 scholarships a year for studies in Taiwan and another 160 go there annually at their parents' expense.

Thais or nationalist Chinese?

Flavoured by fluctuating fortunes

The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, 2: The Great Leap Forward 1958-60 by Roderick MacFarquhar. *Oxford University Press.* £22.50 (US$26).

"Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends . . . Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make a decision with real knowledge of the subject."

With this aptly chosen quotation from Friedrich Engels, MacFarquhar begins the second volume of his masterly account of the tensions in the Chinese leadership leading up to the Armageddon of 1966-67. With the wisdom of hindsight, we see that these tensions fundamentally arose from Mao Zedong pushing at the limits of the humanly possible, which increasingly aroused the misgivings and opposition of other leaders.

It is, however, a mistake to imagine that Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi vigorously opposed Mao's Great Leap Forward. They and Zhou Enlai were closely identified with the policies of the day, and it was not until thoroughgoing remedial work was needed in the early 1960s that their difference of outlook became fully discernible. For instance, as MacFarquhar points out, Liu and Deng were personally accused in the Cultural Revolution of having excessively promoted grain production at the expense of other crops — which was in itself the central flaw in Mao's later agricultural policy.

It is interesting to find Zhao Ziyang, now China's premier, caught up in the logical tangles of the Great Leap Forward and its failure. Zhao wrote in 1979 that his former boss, Guangdong provincial party chief Tao Zhu, was attacked by Mao for trying to stop the peasants from concealing a portion of their grain harvest. Regardless of the economic issues, this showed the budding of Mao's later obsession with grain storage, of which concealment is only one form. Tao, and presumably Zhao, already showed a flicker of the idea of rural cash-flow on which Deng's present policy is based.

The cyclic nature of Chinese politics nowadays has been reduced from a dynasty at a time to about a decade at a time. It is too early to say whether the cycle has been broken now by Deng and his supporters. But at the "high noon" conference at Lushan — as the author calls it — Peng Dehuai was in 1959 vigorously attacked by Sichuan party boss Li Jingquan for criticising the Great Leap Forward. Only eight years later Li himself fell victim to the

Bangkok or Taipei? — "I live here with my father in Thailand. My elder sister is in Taiwan. I have cousins and nephews in mainland China, and a younger sister in Burma. My father-in-law is in Malaysia and I have other in-laws in Australia and the US. It's hard to say what I am," joked Mah, 34, a teacher in the local school here.

Their perception of China — the "part of China which is occupied by the communists," as they say — is also complex. Since diplomatic relations were established between Bangkok and Peking in 1975, it has been possible for them to write letters and send money to relatives in China, so there is a contact despite the political differences. Lately, Chinese broadcasts over Radio Peking, according to people here, have praised them as "brave fighters" who should "return to the motherland." But despite a cautious optimism concerning the new policies in China, the Chinese in Ban Mai Nong Bua remain extremely sceptical of the leadership in Peking.

"If life is easier in China now, that's good. But how can we trust the communists? They can change anytime," said Min Chai, a 57-year old former KMT colonel who had fought the Chinese communists as well as the CPT. Liu Te-shin, another KMT officer, recalls that 15 years ago he trekked over the hills of Burma, across the Chinese border, to meet his relatives. But he was not impressed with what he saw and says he would not like to return: "I invited my relatives for dinner and the waiter scolded me for ordering too much food. That's not the Chinese way," he said.

Given their capitalist lifestyle, a return to the Chinese mainland seems to be out of the question, even if things are changing there. Taiwan is no option either, since they say they have a sense of belonging to Thailand, rooted in the many years they have lived here.



Ban Mai Nong Bua: rural Chinatown.

In contradiction to this stands their isolation in the hills and their strong feeling of cultural and national identity. Assimilation, which would require the adoption of Thai language as their mother tongue, Thai customs and social behaviour, seems remote and would hardly be achieved even within this generation of KMT-Chinese.

Possibly at the Samakom Dontri Chin, the old Teochew men one day will be replaced by the second generation KMT-Chinese, repeating the old habits; spending the days in the newspaper-room — and complaining in Thai, spoken with a broad Chinese accent, about the young ones who cannot speak Chinese properly anymore and who have forgotten their Confucian concepts.

Red Guards for his "monarchic" rule in the rich western province.

With another twist of fate, Chen Boda was attacked by Peng at Lushan, took his revenge during the Cultural Revolution, but then, after Mao's death and the purge of the Gang of Four, himself fell victim drawing a long prison term at their trial in 1981.

It is the succession of ups and downs in the fortunes of Chinese leaders that lends the country's modern politics its special flavour. MacFarquhar has succeeded in showing that the phenomenon has its origins in the early 1950s. Whether this represents a throwback to foreshortened dynastic cycles, or a set pattern which will continue and occur again after the disappearance of Deng from the political stage, the next decade will show. Meanwhile, all students of modern China look forward to the third volume of this scholarly series. It is a great pity that atrocious proof-reading should mar the work's authority.

— DAVID BONAVIA

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