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GAO, Hua. 2018. *How the Red Sun Rose: The Origins and Development of the Yan'an Rectification Movement*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

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- 1 I only met Gao Hua once, a few years before his premature death, and it was not an occasion for asking questions. By that time, his famous book published in 2000 – and now, thanks to the Chinese University Press, available in English translation as *How the Red Sun Rose: The Origins and Development of the Yan'an Rectification Movement* (2018) – carried a weight, exemplified in dense pages and copious footnotes, ill-fitted to his renown for “grey zone” dissent. Joseph Esherick’s helpful preface to the translation relates how Gao persevered in this research despite the impending restrictions, the professional and related livelihood costs, and the proscription of his manuscript on the mainland; and we learn something of the admiration China specialists based outside the mainland have openly expressed for Gao’s courage and contributions as a historian. Less emphasised is the fact that Gao, like a number of the

most important scholars of CCP history and post-1949 history, was ensconced as an academic at the highest elite-university level in China, where a space, constrained as it may have been, emerged for genuine inquiry for over two decades. Left unremarked in the preface, furthermore, is that the appearance of this translation represents, intentionally or not, the latest entry in the decade-long contestation over Gao's legacy – one that has often seemed more concerned with contemporary politics than historical research. I would have liked to have asked Gao about this. And, I must confess, at one level, I would be seeking the insights of the organic historian who, before the book was published, inspired me and so many other students of history in Nanjing with his passionate pursuit of understanding and explanation of the recent past, and then, with his book, seemed to epitomise speaking history to power. My current, older self would also like to share my thoughts about his contributions and the lessons he still has to teach.

- 2 This translation immediately has become the best single, thorough account in English of the rise of Mao Zedong and Maoism in the CCP wartime state. This is good news for non-Chinese reading comparativists, general readers, and teachers who want to assign sections in class. We should be grateful to the translators for their Herculean task of rendering this tome (718 pages) in lucid prose; yet, the press must undertake further revisions. A volume of this quality should not be marred by translations that refer to “fighter jets” at the 1937 Battle of Shanghai, render *sixiang zizhuan* 思想自傳 as “intellectual autobiographies,” or even *xinren* 新人 as “New Man,” and that include 77-pages of endnotes and bibliography that, without Chinese characters, are next to useless to anyone who would actually consult them. These caveats do not detract from this edition's significant potential impact: just as the original Chinese version, along with the Taiwan-based Chen Yung-fa's studies, did for its readership, this English version should finally demolish, for a global audience, whatever remains of the Edgar Snowian mythology of the CCP's original moment of purity in Yan'an. Even if general readers or students lose patience with Gao's meticulous tracking of the intricacies of Mao's political machinations, the accounts of the CCP's long history of paranoid suspicion and brutality within their own ranks and the vivid, revised images of Yan'an he leaves us with are not easily forgotten. There are the Dutch milk cows for the high-ranking party members' fresh milk; security chief Kang Sheng 康生 in his Russian-style long, leather coat and high leather boots, leading his large foreign dog on a leash and always accompanied by four bodyguards; Mao and Jiang Qing 江青 driving about in a donated ambulance – the only automobile in Yan'an; as well as the strict “marriage system based on cadre ranking” – to mention a few.
- 3 At the same time, the fact that a monograph written two decades ago can now be considered the foremost work on this important subject in English is telling in less sanguine ways. Even for undergraduate-level research, this book should not be read alone, but alongside more recent works, most notably those drawing on the archives of the Soviet Union. In fact, one of the most striking aspects of Gao's book originally was the manner in which it pushed across boundaries of CCP history, pointing to ways forward for subsequent research. He drew on memoirs published in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and wanted to learn from Soviet archives as he highlighted the role of the Comintern; he pointed to pre-existing, “traditional” concepts and practices that informed CCP practices; he hinted that some of these methods of “rectification” were evident in other Chinese regimes. Gao could see the necessity, in effect, of making CCP

and revolutionary history part of the broader tableau of Chinese history. Yet, this book ultimately did not travel very far in that direction. Indeed, like most dissenting histories of the CCP, it remained entangled in the constricting dialogic confrontation with a highly particular species of the Leviathan. Hence, in Gao's account, Mao dominates, albeit as an "arbitrary and dictatorial" genius of political manoeuvring, just as he came to dominate the CCP; the narrative is imbricated with Maoist terminology, agendas, a relatively limited cast of characters and documents, conferences, debates, situations, and settings selectively permissible to record in published archives, memoirs, and other sources produced in the CCP's political sorting out of itself through the closed-loop processes of de-Maoisation and, for a time, post-Maoisation in the 1980s and 1990s. In this respect, it echoes similar studies of post-1949 CCP elite politics published overseas. Gao, of course, as he demonstrates, knew well that telling and rewriting the history of the Party was central to the CCP's Marxist-Leninist political practice. Party history, with its significance to the process of ideological judgement determining a single perpetual linear progress of the correct line to the national and universal revolutionary past, present, and future, was a powerful weapon for concretely determining power between competing contenders and factions and justifying party policies, regardless of the costs. History as illumination may never in any country be entirely extricated from history as judgment and politics, and the possibility and desirability of such constitutes a subject of honest debate; but in China, where the CCP that Mao Zedong led to victory in 1949 remains in power, the scale and the intensity of this entanglement perdures such that even the finest historians of this era, such as Gao, may eventually be recognised most for prophetically pointing the way to another approach. This new work, happily, has been underway in China for some time at many levels, and one day may even re-tell the Yan'an story within a fuller, complex richness of Chinese history. I am confident Gao Hua would be pleased.

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