

Dec. 6, 1970

Dear :

Now that I'm completing the final draft of the Xao chapter I should have your name and I forgot what name you gave me; I knew I didn't wish to use _____ but wanted the Chinese name; also I didn't know whether you are using your own last name. So will you please write me exactly how you wish me to refer to you as having assisted?

Somehow I failed to read July-Sept. 1969 special 20th anniversary issue of Chinese People's Republic in the China Quarterly till just yesterday. I had the most fantastic reactions to the very last article from the pen of Joseph R. Levenson, "Communist China in Time and Space: Roots and Rootlessness." It was as if he were speaking to me from the grave. What I mean is that when I spoke to him for those long hours before he went on his fateful canoe trip that was to take his life I was naturally very happy that he had consented to lend his name to my chapter, and perhaps even he would write an Introduction. Naturally, also, I said I would leave all my work for him in his box since he told me he would be away. But I myself felt all this was too good to be true, that he would not actually do it since it was clear we were disagreeing on the meaning of the Cultural Revolution. He felt it was induced by fear of imminent war from USA and therefore was ready to forgive some insanities.

It turns out now that I had met him at a very crucial point for his own attitudes on the question, and in this article it is clear he was already developing other ideas than the ones he was defending to me. Franz Schurmann introduces it, and it is clear he is very upset by it, but feels since it was the last from his pen, he has no right to "edit", so we get it exactly as Levenson had written it. And what he writes is that after 1957 there already was "confusion, the explosion of the Cultural Revolution was in the offing." (p. 8). And when he asks "what happened in the 'sixties'?" he says nothing at all about immanence of war, but that "Empathy was out; not the agonics of transitional man, caught between the old society and the new, but the florides of the hero, unambiguous and unambivalent and larger than life, made the subject-matter for art. And further "Cosmopolitanism, that is, was out. Sophistication, nuance were out. The Cultural Revolution had a provincial cultural spirit... Mao's spirit, then (very much Mao's province) would have to be given priority... Unlike their western acolytes on the 'New Left', they were not seeking to banish 'alienation'. They were deprecating the importance--the ultimate importance--of machines of war." Meaning laughing even at nuclear war. "Politics takes command, superstructure takes priority, over the substructural means of production--and of destruction." And he doesn't let go there either for he accuses them of provincialism: "The provincialism of the culture of the Cultural Revolutionaries is a mark of loneliness, too, a cutting off from their past and contemporary world around them."

Have you read it, studied it? Do tell me what you think. It often happens when, philosophically, one reaches a dividing line but cannot face the reality of the disillusion that one either makes "a great leap forward" or goes to total escapism. I believe him at that moment. I wish I had met him sufficient months before to have influenced him philosophically. He is very, very dialectical in his writing. I told him so, and he smiled, saying he knows very little about Hegel, but he was way too modest.

How are you? Looking forward to a fast answer. Yours,

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thanks for early cards