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ing one dynasty with another. Other scholars have recently taken up where Yao left off, arguing that throughout China's history, most peasants revolted against individual oppressors, not against the imperial system or even against a ruling class.

The revisionists take a more "realistic" view of Chinese history than the Maoists, Liu contends. Conveniently, their studies also help legitimate the pragmatic economic policies of China's current leader, Deng Xiaoping. For example, one historian has equated the failed "leveling" programs of 19th-century Taiping rebels with the disastrous "equalizationalism" of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Another has theorized that material progress was most marked under stable political conditions, feudal or otherwise—a backhanded slap at "permanent revolution."

Yet, Liu writes, some Chinese revisionists have gone too far in denigrating the peasants of old China. More and more, Chinese scholars are now taking an easy way out—citing peasant origins and the "heavy baggage of history" to explain callousness and domineering "bureaucratism" among the New China's cadres.

What Changed in Poland?

"Poland and the Soviet Imperium" by Seweryn Bialer, in *Foreign Affairs* (America and the World 1980), 428 East Preston St., Baltimore, Md. 21202.

Polish workers have often rebelled (in 1956, 1970, and 1976), but their 1980 victory—gaining the right to form an independent trade union—is unprecedented. What changed? Mainly the Polish worker did, answers Bialer, a Columbia University political scientist.

During his decade in power, Communist Party leader Edward Gierek promised greater prosperity than he could deliver. Chosen to solve the 1970 labor crisis, Gierek tried to revive Poland's economy by purchasing Western technology on credit and pouring investment into heavy industry. His strategy briefly boosted wages and output (nearly 7.2 percent and 11 percent, respectively, each year from 1971 to 1975). It also raised workers' economic expectations.

Unanticipated high energy costs and recession in the West during the mid-1970s wrecked Gierek's plans. With exports stagnating, and with most domestic investment tied up in heavy industry, shortages of consumer goods and accelerating inflation struck simultaneously. Poland's heavy-handed state planning slowed the diffusion of Western technology and prevented the completion of many investment projects. From August 1979 to August 1980, industrial output nose-dived 17 percent. The housing industry fell far short of goals. And the 19-million-ton grain harvest in 1980 was officially described as being eight million tons below the country's needs. Yet Gierek never told the Poles their country was in trouble. And the Communist "workers'" party lost most of its credibility.

The Polish proletariat no longer consists of former peasants grateful

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for jobs in urban factories. Workers today are largely city-born, highly trained, and more self-assured than their predecessors were. Permitted to travel abroad, millions have seen the good life enjoyed by Westerners. And the workers have learned from past mistakes. In 1980, rather than confront the government in the streets, they occupied factories, putting the onus of violently ejecting them on the authorities. They eschewed the traditional hodgepodge of short-term economic demands and unrealistic political goals to focus on one aim—union recognition—designed to give them permanent leverage with party leaders.

Finally, the alliance between Poland's dissident intellectuals and the working man (with the latter firmly at the helm) was unique. Unlike the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 or the Czech heresy of 1968, contends Bialer, Poland's unrest cannot be quelled by imprisoning a few writers and academics.

Peace Dividend

"Vietnam in 1980: The Gathering Storm?" by Douglas Pike, in *Asian Survey* (Jan. 1981), University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif. 94720.

Vietnam's communist rulers won their wars against France and the United States, but they are losing the peace. Economic and diplomatic blundering has stirred discontent in the party and among the populace, reports Pike, a U.S. Foreign Service information officer.

Vietnamese living standards have plummeted since the communists took Saigon in 1975. Food production has averaged between 15 and 20 percent below the country's needs. The basic monthly rice ration for civilians has shrunk from 15 kilograms (during the Vietnam War) to 10 kilograms. Since 1975, consumer goods have become scarcer by half; even coffins are in short supply. Only an annual \$900 million worth of Soviet economic aid keeps the economy afloat.

Pike blames the aging leadership in Hanoi for too hastily collectivizing the South's agriculture, dismantling its capitalist commercial system, and making refugees of skilled ethnic Chinese and middle-class Vietnamese. The regime's bellicose approach to foreign affairs (war with China, periodic threats to Thailand), he adds, has alienated potential Western aid donors. Vietnam's economy has been hamstrung by military outlays. Hanoi's \$3.8 billion 1980 military budget represented 47 percent of government spending. The country maintains a 1.1-million-man Army (fourth largest in the world). Nearly 200,000 soldiers are bogged down fighting ragtag, tenacious Khmer Rouge forces in Kampuchea (Cambodia).

According to Pike, 1980 witnessed the first signs of major public unrest in communist Vietnam's history. Antigovernment graffiti appeared on public buildings in Hanoi. Food demonstrations, strikes, rising crime, and other "counterrevolutionary activity" were discreetly reported by the state press. Meanwhile, the party replaced 20 Politburo-level officials last winter (mainly in economic, military, and police