

# Book Reviews

## Mao: The Unknown Story

by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday

Alfred A. Knopf • 2005 • 823 pages • \$35.00

Reviewed by Richard M. Ebeling



In their new book, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday estimate that under Mao Zedong's rule in China at least 70 million people were killed in one way or another in the name of making a socialist utopia. Jung Chang was a youthful victim of Mao's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, and wrote about this gruesome episode in modern Chinese history in her earlier work, *Wild Swans* (1991). Having been among Mao's multitudes of victims, she has spent more than ten years researching the history of the man who brought so much tragedy to her native country.

Anyone who has read *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (1996) by Mao's longtime personal physician, Li Zhi-Sui, would already be disgusted with the man: his failure to bathe or brush his teeth for decades; his wanton use of hundreds of innocent peasant girls (to whom he passed a variety of venereal diseases) for his seemingly insatiable sexual desires; his pleasure in humiliating and hurting even his most loyal followers and fellow communist leaders; and his total disregard for any human life other than his own.

But Jung Chang and Jon Halliday show Mao to be a man of absolute evil. Like many Marxist leaders, Mao was not born into a working-class family. At the time of his birth in 1893, Mao's father was a relatively successful middle-class farmer in the province of Hunan in south-central China. From an early age Mao was interested neither in physical labor nor systematic education. He preferred to loaf about and read on his own. (Throughout his life he absorbed a vast amount of literature on many subjects, and had special editions of books prepared for himself that became forbidden works for the masses.)

Like Stalin in the Soviet Union, Mao seems to have had neither personal charisma nor the gift of oratory. Rather, he had the ability to manipulate people and situations to his own advantage, slowly rising to the top of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1920s and 1930s. He was ruthless with both friend and foe, viewing everyone he encountered as mere tools to use and then dispose of in pursuit of absolute power.

Mao was married four times. He treated each wife miserably, as he did most of his children, whom he often abandoned to their fate and sometimes to their deaths. During the famous Long March in 1934–1935, when Mao led the Chinese communist forces from south-central China to a new Red-controlled territory in the northwest region of the country, he made his third wife abandon their baby son as Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist armies were trying to surround them. Years later, she unsuccessfully hunted the countryside to find her lost child. Her only clue was the assumption that the son might have two of Mao's distinguishing characteristics: oily ears and an especially pungent underarm odor.

Both before and especially after the Long March, Mao instigated reigns of terror and tyranny on the Chinese peasants who fell under the sway of his forces. Slave labor, starvation rations, and merciless propaganda and indoctrination sessions late into the night became the hallmarks of Chinese communist rule. Cruel and excruciating tortures and methods of execution were devised to assure destruction of all opposition and disobedience to Mao's power. (The authors describe many of them in indelicate detail.)

Contrary to the leftwing myths of the time, especially in the American press, that Mao's Red Army was the main Chinese fighting force against the Japanese during World War II, Mao instructed all his commanders to avoid battles with the Japanese. Instead, he worked to conserve his forces as a prelude to the Chinese Civil War that began in 1945 and ended in the communist conquest of the Chinese mainland in 1949.

The authors detail how Mao's victory would have been impossible without the assistance of Stalin's Soviet army, which overran Manchuria in the last weeks of the Pacific war. Stalin allowed Mao's forces to occupy most of Manchuria behind the Soviet shield and turned over vast stores of captured Japanese weaponry.

The authors also explain how General George C. Marshall, then secretary of state in Harry Truman's administration, was totally manipulated and duped by Mao and his chief diplomatic negotiator, Chou En-Lai. They persuaded Marshall that they were merely "agrarian reformers" wanting justice for the Chinese people in a coalition government with the Nationalists. All the while they were strengthening and positioning the Red Army for a grand attack to seize the rest of China. They succeeded in making Chiang Kai-shek seem to be the stumbling block to a political compromise, which resulted in the U.S. government cutting off all armament sales to the Nationalist government in 1947, just as victory was possibly in the grasp of Chiang's armies.

Using Chinese and Soviet archival materials, the authors show that Mao happily assisted, with Stalin's help, in the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950. Mao began assembling Chinese forces to enter the Korean War long before the United Nations forces pushed back the North Korean offensive and then crossed the 38th parallel to unify a free Korea. Mao was ready to continue the war indefinitely to kill tens of thousands of Americans in a conflict of attrition, even at the cost of hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers' lives. Only Stalin's death in 1953 and the desire of the new Soviet leadership to calm international tensions forced Mao to accept a ceasefire and an end to the Korean conflict.


At an international conference of communist parties in Moscow in 1957 marking the 40th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Mao delivered a speech calling for the start of a nuclear World War III against America. He declared that it did not matter if half of China's population was killed in the cataclysm, because there would still be hundreds of millions of Chinese left to rise out of the rubble to rule a communist world. Shortly after that, Chou En-Lai told a Soviet envoy visiting Beijing that they should be planning a new capital city for such a communist-controlled world somewhere on a man-made island in the Pacific, since both Moscow and Beijing would likely be incinerated in the nuclear destruction that was to come. That didn't seem to bother Mao at all.

In the 1950s and 1960s Mao pushed China into a crash program to make his country an industrial and nuclear superpower. Ignorant of all economic concepts,

including the ideas of scarcity and tradeoffs, Mao crushed the Chinese population into abject poverty in an attempt to make himself ruler of the world.

While tens of millions of Chinese starved and died, he lived a life of luxury with dozens of atomic bomb-proof mansions built for his pleasure around the country, all with large swimming pools constantly heated in case he were to show up. But he spent most of his time in Beijing, lying in bed for days on end, eating his specially prepared foods, reading books banned for everyone else, and enjoying group sex whenever the urge came over him.

The authors explain that the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976 was all a grand plan of Mao's to settle scores with real and imaginary enemies in order to assure his absolute and unchallenged power over China. In the process, the country was pushed into horrific violence and terror that almost destroyed everything left of civilization in China.

Mao Zedong died in bed, an old and sick man in 1976, at the age of 82. His legacy was the murderous destruction of an entire society. 

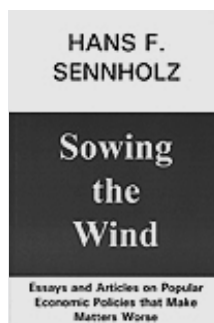
*Richard Ebeling (rebeling@fee.org) is the president of FEE.*

### **Sowing the Wind: Essays and Articles on Popular Economic Policies that Make Matters Worse**

by Hans F. Sennholz

Libertarian Press • 2004 • 323 pages • \$19.95 paperback

Reviewed by Bettina Bien Greaves



The world we live in today is a global economy. Entrepreneurs, traders, and investors are always searching for opportunities to better serve consumers. As a result, we are all interconnected. When the United States sneezes, so to speak, China, Argentina, or Mexico catches cold.

In our economy of complex interrelationships, economic crises with wide-ranging consequences have become almost daily occurrences. Yet practically no one seems to understand what causes them. Most modern economists look at statistics and try to anticipate what

will happen by extrapolation. Only Austrian economists understand the economy as the outcome of complex interpersonal relationships and transactions. Only Austrian economists trace economic crises back to the actions, decisions, and choices of individuals under various circumstances. As one of this country's leading Austrian economists, Hans Sennholz not only analyzes many economic crises, but also suggests needed reforms.

This book contains 42 articles written during the years 1997 to 2003 by Professor Sennholz, who served as FEE's president from 1992 to 1997. He was the first student in this country to earn a doctorate under Ludwig von Mises. During almost 40 years as a professor at Grove City College, Sennholz introduced Austrian economics to thousands. He retired from Grove City in 1992, but Sennholz can't retire from teaching and communicating; he continues to lecture, write, and comment on current events.

When new technologies are developed, production can be improved and expanded. Economies in transportation and communication make the world smaller so that it costs less to deliver raw materials and finished goods to users. As information and money can now be transmitted almost instantaneously throughout the world, it is easier, faster, and less expensive to carry out transactions. Consumers throughout the world benefit. Despite all our progress, however, we still find that economic troubles beset many nations. The blame is almost always misplaced—on business greed, on foreigners, on the environment. Sennholz makes it clear that the seeds of economic troubles are sown by bad governmental policies.

Among the crises Sennholz considers here are stock-market bubbles, inflation in Mexico, the bankruptcy of Argentina's government, economic recession in Japan, the collapse of the Thai exchange rate, Germany's new welfare society, and the rise (or fall) of the Euro. According to Sennholz, a crisis creates the opportunity for a new beginning; it is never too late to reform.

Sennholz blames the Fed's monetary policy for the United States' soaring deficits and the shrinking purchasing power of the dollar: "No central bank on earth, not even the Federal Reserve, can continually inflate its currency and defy market rates of interest without harming both its currency and the economy," he writes. He recommends that we abandon the Fed's monetary

manipulation and return to gold money. "[T]here cannot be any doubt that a gold dollar would restore justice in international relations and reassert American power and leadership. It would clear away much conflict and strife and pave the way toward a more equal and peaceful world order."

Regarding Argentina's disastrous experience with inflation and bankruptcy, Sennholz states, "Great crises call for extraordinary measures that redress the causes of the evil. The Argentinian crisis presents not only great dangers to the country's political and economic order but also an opportunity for a new beginning. . . . In a free and unhampered contract system, creditors and debtors, banks and depositors would soon come to reasonable and fair agreements about their contractual relations. A contract system would call for no new taxes, not even compensation for harm done by law and regulation. It would reopen all banks and allow them to meet their obligations to the best of their ability. It would expect the government to honor its peso obligations. But it would also demand that government cease and desist from any more regulations, new outlays, new taxes, and new disruptions of any kind. Argentinians need time and a period of peace for recovery."

That's the essence of the Sennholz approach—freedom works; government control doesn't.

Whether Sennholz is discussing an economic crisis in the United States or elsewhere, his analysis is always sharp, incisive, and enlightening. He makes understandable even the most complex situations. In the last analysis, he traces the origin of almost every crisis to government-fostered inflation and credit expansion. The scenario varies from time to time and country to country depending on many factors: government spending, regulations, interest rates, taxes, and more. But the culprit is always monetary manipulation.

The excellent essays in *Sowing the Wind* will convince just about any reader that the economic troubles of our times are rooted in government policies that interfere with the functioning of the free market and that the way to escape them is to rely on the voluntary mechanisms of production and exchange.



*Bettina Greaves (bbgreaves@aol.com) served FEE for more than four decades as a senior staff member, resident scholar, and trustee. She now resides in North Carolina.*

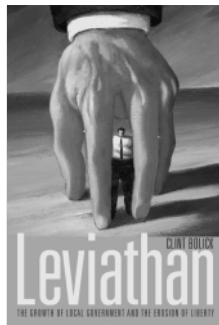
## Leviathan: The Growth of Local Government and the Erosion of Liberty

by Clint Bolick

Hoover Institution Press • 2004 • 173 pages

\$15.00 paperback

Reviewed by George C. Leef



Does government have too much power? Certainly—just think of all the freedom Americans have lost on account of the income tax, Social Security, Department of Labor regulations, the threat of antitrust prosecution, and so on.

Note that in my short list of examples, each one is due to action

by the federal government. In *Leviathan*, Clint Bolick reminds us that Americans have every bit as much to fear from authoritarian laws, regulations, and confiscations at the hands of local government officials as they do from the great circus of government camped in Washington. In fact, he argues that we actually have more to fear from our local Pooh-Bahs, writing, “If the president starts an unpopular war or raises taxes, people know who to blame and they direct their energy accordingly. But if your kid gets a lousy education in public school, or your local government decides to exercise eminent domain to take your home or business, it is often impossible even to find out who is responsible, much less to fight it.”

Bolick, an attorney who has fought many legal battles against intrusive and authoritarian local government actions, gives us a depressing catalogue of the rights infringements that are becoming commonplace—violations of freedom of speech, freedom to engage in commerce, freedom to use and enjoy one’s property, and more. He first disabuses his reader of the notion that the Constitution protects people against such infringements, noting that most judges—and crucially, the justices of the Supreme Court—don’t take seriously the idea of individual rights. They choose only a few rights they like (for example, free speech, some of the time) and defend them against legislative or regulatory incursion, but adopt a posture of “deference” to the supposed expertise of politicians and their appointed agents on most other questions.

Consider the case of Garland Allen. Allen, a rather elderly black barber, had been practicing his trade for many years in a small town in rural Tennessee. In 1996 he was arrested in his barber shop for the crime of “impersonating a professional.” No customer had complained about Allen’s competence, but a competing barber had notified the august Tennessee Board of Barbering Examiners that Allen didn’t have a license to work as a barber. When he was young, no barbering schools in Tennessee admitted blacks, and now Allen couldn’t afford the nine months and \$5,000 it would cost for him to go to school to be taught what he already knew. He was in danger of being put out of business and into poverty because of a completely needless regulation, the sole purpose of which was to restrict competition.

Fortunately for Allen, the Institute for Justice, for which Bolick works, threatened to sue to block the Board of Barbering Examiners from taking away his livelihood. The threat of action succeeded. Unfortunately, thousands of others are caught up in such occupational licensing snares each year. Freedom to engage in simple commerce is blocked by innumerable laws and regulations put in place by friendly state and local politicians—friendly, that is, to interest groups that want barriers to entry into their fields.

Bolick also details the vicious abuse of eminent domain, which under the Supreme Court’s current reading of the Fifth Amendment (hostile both to the document’s intent and to the rights of property owners) allows government to seize land from people whenever politicians decide that transferring it to someone else serves “the public interest.” Again, he shows that the government that’s supposedly the closest to the people can be the most callous.

Perhaps even more disturbing are the many civil asset-forfeiture laws enforced by state and local officials. Those laws permit officials to seize property without any compensation if they can convince a judge—and there are plenty of judges who don’t give a hoot about private property except their own—that it was used in connection with a crime. In one case Bolick relates, a woman whose teenage son had been driving her car when caught selling drugs had to suffer the loss of the vehicle. Never mind that she had no knowledge of her

son's activities. She was eventually able to show that local officials were living high on the proceeds of confiscated property. That particular statute was struck down by an appellate court on due-process grounds, but many others like it remain.

Bolick concludes with a helpful and hopeful chapter, "Fighting Big Government at the Local Level," which shows that people don't have to meekly tolerate these assaults on their rights.

If the most useful books are those that make people justifiably angry, Clint Bolick has written an extremely useful one.



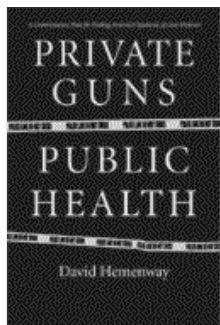
George Leaf ([georgeleaf@aol.com](mailto:georgeleaf@aol.com)) is the book review editor of The Freeman.

### Private Guns, Public Health

by David Hemenway

University of Michigan Press • 2004 • 304 pages • \$27.95

Reviewed by Timothy Wheeler



David Hemenway, a professor of health policy at Harvard University, harbors a deep aversion to guns. His book embodies the institutional prejudices of a cohort of academics notable for their abiding predisposition for state control over individuals for "the public good."

So ingrained is the bias that it almost dashes one's hopes that firearms can ever be treated fairly in the academic literature.

The political movement to ban gun ownership began in earnest in the 1970s. Its partisans relied mostly on emotional appeals rather than on any scientific evidence of the efficacy of banning guns. When the faction's allies in organized medicine and public health began in the 1980s to publish advocacy research supportive of gun control, gun banners smelled victory.

But two parallel currents in the academy changed everything. First, as constitutional scholars began seriously to study the origins of the Second Amendment, they concluded with near unanimity that the founders meant to affirm an individual right to own and use firearms. Second, a mounting body of criminology

research refuted the medical advocacy researchers' claims that gun owners are unstable, dangerous, and generally responsible for what the advocates called the "disease" of gun violence. The two most prominent criminology scholars disputing the public-health advocacy researchers are John Lott and Gary Kleck. Hemenway directs considerable firepower toward these two, since their work seriously impeaches his own.

One section (Self-Defense Gun Use) reprises a 1997 tussle between Hemenway and Kleck in the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* over how to determine the frequency of defensive gun uses. This episode, which Hemenway now revisits with apparent gusto, was made possible by the inherent difficulties in studying complex phenomena such as gun ownership and use. Both sides marshal seemingly credible arguments, and one would need graduate-level competency in statistics and econometric modeling to sort out their conflicting claims. Unfortunately, the necessary imprecision of the social scientists' methods invite the influence of bias. And it is Hemenway's manifest bias that most characterizes his book.

A disturbing feature is his sprinkling of bigotry between bits of science. In the first chapter he pays brief tribute to typical gun owners being over 40 and in the higher income groups—not exactly a crime-prone demographic. But then quickly come withering deconstructions of the American frontier cowboy ("a hired hand with a borrowed horse, a mean streak, and syphilis"), owners of semiautomatic guns ("more likely than other gun owners to report that they binge drink"), and combat veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder ("likely to kill animals in fits of rage").


Hemenway is faithful to the public-health creed of guns as pathogens, and his description of this model reveals much about the psychology of public-health activists. Foremost is a nonjudgmental view of human behavior. In the public-health world there are no criminals and no victims. This tenet of progressivism guides the whole public-health anti-gun movement. To acknowledge, for example, a natural right of self-defense would require validating gun ownership and use.

So it's not surprising that Hemenway gives the public-health treatment to the seventeenth-century classical-liberal philosopher John Locke. Hemenway asserts

that Locke's natural-rights tradition provides little evidence for an individual rather than a collective interpretation of the Second Amendment. He maintains that Locke meant that "rights should be determined and disputes resolved not through private judgment of each individual backed by private force but rather by the public judgment of the community." Thus does Hemenway in one sentence dispose of the notion that self-defense is a natural right.

Locke's second treatise, however, is unambiguous on the matter of self-defense. True, Locke's concept of political society requires resolution of disputes (for example, a highwayman taking a traveler's money by guile) through the judgment of the community. But in a separate example, the highwayman tries to take the traveler's

money by drawing his sword. In this case, Locke writes, the traveler may use deadly force to defend himself against the highwayman, who has put himself into a state of war with the traveler.

Hemenway's clear misreading of Locke is proof enough of the author's blinding bias. It colors his science, his reading of history, and ultimately his credibility as a scientist. One need not be a scientist to observe human nature and to discern how it directs human events. Perhaps social science will someday be free of emotional warp and political prejudice. Until it is, common sense and our political tradition of freedom will serve to guide firearm policy. 

*Timothy Wheeler, M.D., (DRGO@adelphia.net) is director of Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership, a project of the Claremont Institute.*

### ***"The Taxing Power, My Dear"***

The legal committee soon broke into a row because the legal problems were so terrible. The constitutional problem was the greatest one. How could you get around this business of the State-Federal relationships? It seemed that couldn't be done.

We continued to wrangle about it for days. But one day I went out to tea, although not because I wanted to. In Washington you don't go to parties just because you want to go, you know; you go because you have to go. I had to call upon Mrs. Harlan F. Stone, the wife of the Supreme Court Justice. She was at home on Wednesday afternoons and so about 5:45, which is nearly the end of the day, I went to her house and presented myself. There were a lot of other people there. We went up to the dining room to get a cup of tea, and there I met Mr. Justice Stone who had just come home from the Court and was getting his cup of tea. We greeted each other and sat down and had a little chat.

He said, "How are you getting on?" I said, "All right." And then I said, "Well, you know, we are having big troubles, Mr. Justice, because we don't know in this draft of the Economic Security Act, which we are working on—we are not quite sure, you know, what will be a wise method of establishing this law. It is a very difficult constitutional problem, you know. We are guided by this, that, and the other case." He looked around to see if anyone was listening. Then he put his hand up like this, confidentially, and he said, "The taxing power, my dear, the taxing power. You can do anything under the taxing power."

I didn't question him any further. I went back to my committee and I never told them how I got my great information. As far as they knew, I went out into the wilderness and had a vision.

But, at any rate, I came back and said I was firmly for the taxing power. We weren't going to rig up any curious constitutional relationships. "The taxing power of the United States—you can do anything under it," said I. And so it proved, did it not?

—FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary of Labor, 1933–1945  
 "The Roots of Social Security" (1962)  
[www.ssa.gov/history/perkins5.html](http://www.ssa.gov/history/perkins5.html)