

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Mr. Schram in his review of my book, *The Comintern and the Chinese Communists, 1928–1931* (December 1973 issue), declares that I have “chosen to regard virtually all those who have written previously on this period in the history of the Chinese Communist movement as either incompetent or dishonest” (p. 822). I call attention only to three aspects of the review.

(1) Schram fails to mention *even one* of the four theses of the book, which are: that Moscow formulated the strategy of revolutionary warfare which has heretofore been attributed to Mao; that during the entire period under study the Comintern consistently called upon the CCP leadership to execute this strategy; that the Li Li-san line was a deviation from this strategy; and that Li’s line was essentially his endeavor to secure the party leadership and prevent power from passing into the hands of those who were carrying out Moscow’s strategy in the countryside, notably Mao Tse-tung (pp. 225–26).

(2) Schram errs in stating a matter of evidence and proceeds to use his own error against the author. He states that I chose to date the Comintern letter as July 23, 1930, “though it was in fact drafted in April and May 1930.” The suggestion is that the interpretation based on the letter is thereby invalidated. In fact, I declare in the book that the letter was *received* by the CCP leadership in Shanghai on July 23, which is the date of the Chinese source (p. 168), not when it was *drafted*.

(3) Schram accuses me of what can only be termed an intentional misrepresentation of the evidence without in any serious manner attempting to support his charge. He claims that I “leave out everything” in the July 23 letter which would indicate that “Moscow expected the decisive confrontation in China to occur ‘in the very near future,’” and “everything” in Li Li-san’s June 11 letter “displaying the least realism.” Not only does Schram fail to support this outrageous assertion, it is in fact false. Even a casual reading of my discussion of both directives reveals extensive quotation and comparison of the documents (pp. 154–57, 168–75, 220–21).

Do the above points indicate incompetence, dishonesty, or something else?

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PROFESSOR SCHRAM REPLIES:

Mr. Thornton’s first two points can be summarily dismissed. The main thrust of his argument was clearly indicated, and all of what he calls his “four theses” adumbrated, in the second and third paragraphs of my review. As for the dating of the Comintern’s resolution (not letter) of June 1930, the author does indeed say on page 168 that this document “arrived in China” on July 23, but on page 221 he reproduces the incorrect statement, contained in the Chinese text, that it was “passed” on that date. In any case, I did not “use” this fact against him; I merely pointed it out in passing as an example of sloppiness which might give rise to confusion.

Point 3 of Thornton’s reply is of quite a different order of gravity. He challenges me to document my statement that he presents the two key resolutions, setting