

Bogdan Góralczyk, *Wielki renesans. Chińska transformacja i jej konsekwencje*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie DIALOG, Warszawa 2018, pp. 586.

Interest in changes carried out in the Middle Kingdom is reflected in still increasing number of studies referring to a widely understood issue of China, gaining the form of both monographic publications and comprehensive analyses, reports, and forecasts. The vast majority of the authors of such works focus on the economic aspects of the Chinese transformation and its implications for the Western world, and rarely do they select the analysis of changes of the Chinese political system, or cultural and social changes as subjects of their studies, not to mention making attempts to adopt a holistic perspective. A characteristic feature of the majority of studies published in the West (obviously not all of them) is presenting the phenomena in question in one way; namely, they make an attempt to assess the Chinese political system or its economic model with regard to the models established in the so-called the “Western cultural field.” The authors of the analyses, which are performed frequently in a real Benedictine way, often lack appropriate methodological skills, language preparation, knowledge of the meanders of the Chinese history, and – what is also essential in the context of the most current changes – knowledge of the broadly understood cultural context. Without satisfying all of the above-mentioned criteria, one can only try to describe a situation found in one of the selected aspects – the one that a particular author feels competent in, leaving a wider view to a small group of experts who are prepared theoretically and have gained professional experience. Practical experience that enables using a time-consuming, yet concurrently difficult to overestimate, research method, which is participatory observation, combined with an appropriate workshop, allows identifying and understanding the genesis, specificity, and dynamics of Chinese transformations, and only then describing them. A work by Professor Bogdan Góralczyk, a Polish sinologist, political scientist and longtime ambassador accredited in the countries of Southeast Asia, appears to be a model example of a multifaceted analysis of Chinese changes and their consequences. The author of the book, currently the director of the European Center of the University of Warsaw, is one of the few researchers in Poland understanding the Chinese transformation, and his opinions are extremely appreciated by readers, researchers, as well as publicists. On the pages of the book entitled *Wielki renesans. Chińska transformacja i jej konsekwencje* (*The Great Renaissance. The Chinese transformation and its consequences*)¹, Góralczyk offers the reader a journey through the meanders of the recent history of the PRC, politics, economy and culture, to answer seemingly simple, yet fundamental questions – namely, how China has reached the place, where it is now; where it is heading; what it means for China and the world.

In the part called “Dlaczego Chiny?” (“Why China?”), which is an introduction to an extensive work, methodological assumptions are presented. As the subject of the study, the author has chosen the People’s Republic of China proclaimed on October 1, 1949, limiting temporal boundaries to the last four decades of the Chinese changes, that is years 1978–2018 (p. 8). The aim of Góralczyk’s work on the book was “an attempt to find the answer to a key question, namely how it could happen that within four decades, a state, or rather a continent, of an agrarian civilization character, outdated, with features typical of the Third World, and under a totalitarian communist regime, has turned into a functioning body, more and more openly and with great justification

¹ All titles of chapters and subsections, as well as all quotes from the book have been translated into English by the authors for the purpose of the present paper owing to the lack of an English version of Góralczyk’s work.

aspiring to become a global leader not only in the field of economy” (p. 9). The author has decided to formulate four extensive research hypotheses as well as several research questions, which can be summarised with the use of the following pattern: “How is it?”, “Why is it so?”, “What is the result?” (pp. 9–10). The aforementioned hypotheses should be treated as issues that the Author refers to on the pages of the subsequent chapters, and not as statements that will be subjected to partial or comprehensive verification (positive or negative) at the end of the analysis. In the introduction, Góralczyk rightly indicates that making an attempt to be objective while assessing the Chinese reality, which is often tough to understand, is meaningless (p. 8). Instead, the Author suggests resigning from strictly scientific analysis and frequent referring to examples from literature and film, personal reflections, or memories (p. 8).

The structure of the reviewed monograph is a reflection of the objectives and research questions formulated in the introductory part as well as the title that is concurrently catchy and adequate to the content. The book has been divided into two main parts, that is “Transformacja” (“Transformation”) (pp. 15–392) and “Konsekwencje” (“Consequences”) (pp. 393–525), and in each of them, several chapters (six and three respectively) have been distinguished. At the end of the book, the concluding chapter with an interesting title (“Świat chiński czy świat z Chinami” – “The Chinese World or The World with China”, pp. 527–543) can be found and it is followed by a glossary (pp. 545–548). An impressive, as numbering as many as 508 (!) items, index of names (pp. 579–586) is placed after a comprehensive bibliography (pp. 549–577), in which documents, diaries and source texts, as well as publications in Chinese, English, Polish, and also other languages, have been enlisted. Aside from it, the bibliography includes works and analyses prepared by the Author, literary works, documentary and feature films, as well as major websites.

In accordance with the chronological and problem system, the first chapter of the reviewed book is devoted to the sources of modernisation and reforms. The narrative begins with a reference to the proclamation of the PRC by Mao Zedong (p. 17), and not to Deng Xiaoping’s reforms, as the time limits indicated in the introductory part would suggest. Referring to the concept of “one hundred years of national humiliation” (*bainian guochi*), after which, on October 1, 1949, “China rose from its knees” (*Zhongguo zhanqilai le*), the period of Mao’s rule and his legacy (including influence on China’s geostrategy, the ideology of the CCP and the PRC, state policy and system, economy, the Chinese public and social life, or the mentality of the Chinese; pp. 19–42), is the Author’s deliberate attempt. It is difficult to argue with the words of Huang Ping from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, with whom the Author identifies, that “neither the ‘Chinese way’ nor the reforms after 1978 will be properly understood, unless the 30-year period between 1949–1979 and the previous 30 years, that is the era of 1919–1949” (p. 308), which Góralczyk also mentions several times (e.g. on pp. 17–19), are taken into account. Writing about Deng Xiaoping’s reforms has not only been limited to describing the ones related to China’s opening to the world, yet plenty of space has been devoted to their origins. In this context, the Author regards as essential Deng’s experience of the exile and stay in the Chinese countryside, his knowledge of the Chinese reality, innate pragmatism and recurrent comparison with the reality of Singapore and Hong Kong, which the leader visited (p. 61). An important place in the structure of the first chapter is occupied by the characteristics of concepts and terms crucial for the reform era. Among them, the formula “to walk across the river, feeling stones underfoot” deserves special mention (*mozhe shitou guo he*; p. 62). It was prompted by the then economic strategist, Chen Yun, and forced by the first Prime Minister of the transformation period, Zhao Ziyang. Other concepts worth noticing are as follows: *gaige* (reform) and *kaiifang* (opening to the world, trade and foreign capital; pp. 70–78).

Chapters two, three and four are devoted to the first, second, and third stages of the reforms respectively. Analysing the first stage, which was focused on issues related to agriculture and the market, the Author points out, among others, the bottom-up nature of the reforms regarding the transformation of people’s communes (pp. 89–91), the achievements of Zhao Ziyang in this matter (e.g. pp. 91–92), the establishment of the first special export zones (pp. 99–100), the begin-

nings of the so-called “one-child in the family” policy (*zhui sheng yige haizi*; pp. 96–99), dissemination of gaining education by PRC citizens abroad (pp. 104–107), and the so-called “Tiananmen trauma” (pp. 124–134). Moreover, this part of the work indicates adopting at the 12th Congress of the CCP in September 1982 the formula for building the “Chinese-specific socialism” (*Zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi*) and its implications (pp. 118–122) as well as still present in the strategies of the Chinese decision-makers, primarily Deng Xiaoping, fear of destabilisation, chaos, and social unrest (*luan*; p. 122).

One of the key figures of the second stage of reforms was Zhu Rongji, the Prime Minister in the PRC in the years 1998–2003, described by the Author as a “model of a competent and at the same time honest official, uncompromisingly fighting corruption, nepotism, or even guanxi [a system of interpersonal relations typical of China – a note by M.D.], although his personal relation and dependence on Deng helped him a lot in his career” (p. 172). According to Góralczyk, the most vital achievements of Zhu Rongji included, among others, implementing the concept of completing economic reforms (breaking the syndrome of successive periods of acceleration and deceleration – *fang* and *shou*; p. 172) and refining the first development model of the state (p. 191). The Author consciously does not remain uncritical of the character to whom he devotes so much space in his book. In addition to several successes, Góralczyk also describes the “legacy of Zhu Rongji” with regard to his failures to reform the health system and housing, or the emergence of “systemic corruption,” a phenomenon that he perceives as “far out of line with previously egalitarian communism” (pp. 184–185). Moreover, the third chapter presents Jiang Zemin’s theory of “three representations” (pp. 214) and an outline of the Chinese meritocratic rule (pp. 194–196), in the description of which the Author refers to controversial projects and decisions of the leaders of the so-called “the fifth generation” headed by Xi Jinping and undermining the vision of collective governance developed by Deng Xiaoping (p. 201).

Bogdan Góralczyk is right in acknowledging that the PRC’s participation in the globalization process (in the economic and market sphere) was not such a major problem for the authorities in Beijing – instead, it was the extent of this participation, which is well reflected in the phrase quoted by the Author, that is “*kaifang tai kuai, jiu luan; kaifang tai man, jiu si*” (“too far-reaching openness leads to a threat of turmoil, while the lack of reforms is our death”; p. 230). Furthermore, the fourth chapter points out the mass transition of peasants from agriculture to the service sector in the 1980s and the replacement of planning and regulation by market activity as a reason for the flourishing of the private sector in China on an unprecedented previously scale (p. 234). Other substantial issues raised in this part of the work are a rapid increase in the Chinese currency reserves (p. 235), the beginning of the Chinese formulation of superpower aspirations (*expressis verbis*; p. 240), or the need for creating a “moderate prosperity society” (*xiaokang shehui*; p. 256).

The analysis of the so-called of “the second reform” included in the fifth chapter begins with enumerating China’s economic successes on the global stage, all of which have been recorded after 2008 (pp. 281–283). As the pillars of the second development model, identifiable after 2012, the Author recognises sustainable growth/development, consumption and a strong internal market, the concept of “moderate prosperity society”, urbanization, the green economy, and innovative society (p. 339). The fifth chapter is complemented by the subsequent one that is devoted to the rule of Xi Jinping (with a notable adjective “asertywny” – “assertive” in the title). Apart from characterising the ruling of the PCR’s current leader, Góralczyk makes an attempt to describe great projects, the initiation of which has paved to certain extent China’s way to development in the upcoming years (if not decades). The analysed concepts and projects include “two goals for the century” (*liangge yibai nian*; pp. 362), that is creating “a society of moderate prosperity” by 2021 (p. 363) and “the great renaissance of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*; p. 364), which China is to achieve by 2049, as well as the concept of building New Silk Roads (*yidai yilu* – One Belt, One Road, p. 378).

The second part of the monograph, which is devoted to the consequences of the Chinese transformation, has been divided by the Author into parts concerning the internal and external stage. Aside from that, a chapter with an interesting title “Chiny a Zachód” (“China and the West”) has been distinguished. In addition to indicating the impressive effects of the Chinese transformation, illustrated with statistical data related, for instance, to infrastructure investments, an essential element of the seventh part of the work is the characteristics of problems arising from rapid and unprecedented, especially in terms of scale, transformation. Bogdan Góralczyk rightly highlights aspects, such as not fully transparent spending of public funds (especially in provinces; p. 397), shaping the world’s largest middle class (p. 398), potential divergence of the interests of the society and the Party (p. 399), plans to build “technological superpower” (pp. 402–403), and still unresolved “Taiwanese issue” (pp. 423–425) as examples of challenges that the Chinese decision makers are to face. With regard to the foreign policy, it is particularly noteworthy that it is characterised by consistency, frequently overlooked by Western politicians. The eighth chapter contains the sequence of changes in China’s foreign policy. As part of this sequence, the Author distinguishes Mao Zedong’s “three worlds theory”, Deng Xiaoping’s philosophy of slow power building (*taoguang yanghui*), Zheng Bijian’s concept of “peaceful growth” (*heping jueqi*), and Xi Jinping’s assertive strategy (p. 447). What seems to be justified is that the Author enlists Beijing’s potential adversaries on the international stage, while stressing concurrently the importance of both India and Russia as the so-called *swing states* (p. 462).

In contrast, China’s strengths on the road to becoming a superpower are presented by the Author in chapter nine. They include, among others, (subjective choice) Nominal GDP, foreign trade turnover, infrastructure, research and development expenditures, monopoly for rare earths, a growing position of an exporter and producer of alternative energy sources, innovative potential, OBOR/BRI project, and spending on arms (pp. 504–508). On the other hand, the Author underscores a number of problems that China is to encounter, including a high level of social exclusion, a high level of corruption, too slow growing income *per capita*, excessive energy intensity of the economy, too high share of traditional raw materials in energy mix, environmental devastation, and demographic changes (pp. 508–510).

Considerations about the Chinese transformation and its consequences are brought to a close in the above-mentioned chapter entitled “The Chinese World or the World with China”, which Góralczyk begins with a statement that “the phenomenon of the Chinese growth, or rather the return of the Chinese power, is one of the most vital events and processes on the globe at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries” (p. 527). Profound elements of the chapter are summarising remarks formulated by the Author and regarding consecutively messages from the Chinese transformation (pp. 528–55), possible scenarios of the future of China described by both Western (pp. 529–55) and Chinese (pp. 531) researchers, as well as the reasons for the violation of the rules of the new meritocracy by the current leaders (p. 533). “Can a world be arranged in the Chinese fashion or is *Pax Sinica* imminent?” (p. 539) – the Author asks rhetorically. It seems that not owing to the fact that – as he concludes – “China and its civilization cannot be copied or duplicated” (p. 539).

Apart from an involving subject matter, an undeniable advantage of the analysed study is providing the reader with a variety of sources to which the Author refers. Not only are these works of the world’s greatest researchers in the field, both Chinese (such as Chi Fulin and Hu Angang) and Western (e.g. Bruce Dickson and Barry Naughton), including Polish (e.g. Jacek Bartosiak and Michał Lubina), reports and analyses prepared by research centers, but also film productions, which is extremely rare in political science publications. Throughout the volume, the Author consistently presents vital terms and concepts derived from the Chinese cultural circle using the Hanyu pinyin transliteration system and supplements them with the Polish translation. Furthermore, what is useful is a glossary at the end of the book containing explanations of 40 terms (supplemented with the Chinese characters as well) that are crucial for understanding the presented content. An undisputed value of the monograph is that on several occasions, the Author refers to social

(e.g. pp. 397–398) and cultural (e.g. pp. 316) issues, literature (including p. 258), and sayings functioning in the Chinese colloquial speech (e.g. *yao chifan*, *zhao Ziyang* – “you want to eat, look for someone like (Zhao) Ziyang”; p. 91).

Another feature that distinguishes Góralczyk's book from the group of political science books concerning the problems of the Chinese transformation is the way of narrating. The monograph is undoubtedly a scientific book; however, it has been written in an accessible, and sometimes free, way (e.g. p. 504). Throughout most of the book, the Author uses a first-person, direct narrative, which can be explained by his willingness to share with readers quite a lot of opinions and experience that he can offer thanks to his regular travels to China since 1976 (p. 7) (including pp. 47, 144, 288, 403). Aside from that, the Author's erudition is reflected in his recurrent use of metaphors (e.g. p. 430) and comparisons, often very pictorial (e.g. “with regard to income and regional [...] exclusion, China still resembles a teapot with a bouncing lid”; p. 406). What undoubtedly deserves recognition as well is that the reassumption of the most substantial facts and arguments (p. 308) consciously used by Góralczyk and crucial for the argument carried out in subsequent fragments of the book (e.g. p. 122) seems to indicate that the target of the scholar's work are also people unfamiliar with the Chinese specificity or knowing it to a limited extent. The use of reassumption and placing synthetic summaries at the end of chapters and subsections allows reading particular parts of the book separately, which is another advantage. The added value of the reviewed book is also tackling by the Author issues practically absent from the Polish media discourse, such as China's loss of almost a trillion dollars in foreign currency reserves in 2015 (p. 375), or the construction of Xiong'an Special Zone hailed by the Chinese media as a “great strategy for a thousand years” (pp. 504–505). Importantly, in the course of the argument, the Author repeatedly expresses his opinions on the examined subjects (e.g. p. 353). Nevertheless, he always juxtaposes them with adversaries' statements (p. 355), leaving readers an opportunity to assess views they identify with.

An apparently questionable issue is resigning from placing footnotes at the bottom of pages in favor of presenting them collectively at the end of each chapter. The Author's intention seems to be obvious. Yet, browsing through the chapters of several dozen pages in search of additional information can be tiring for the reader. What is more, even though the selection of the presented statistical data raises no reservations (quite the opposite, in fact), one can doubt, whether in each case they are correctly interpreted by the Author. While comparing the US and Chinese spending on arms in 2016 (respectively 611 and 144 billion dollars) with forecasts indicating that these expenditures in 2018 will reach 175 billion dollars for China, the Author – without providing forecasts for the American expenditure – writes about “fast catching up with the leader” (p. 507). This is misleading, especially if the fact that the American spending on arms in 2018 amounted to less than 700 billion dollars (!) is taken into consideration.

Moreover, the reviewers are to pinpoint certain obvious shortcomings, from which Bogdan Góralczyk's book is not free either. These include minor spelling (e.g. pp. 157, 241, 316, 467), punctuation (e.g. pp. 400, 501), linguistic (p. 401), or stylistic (e.g. pp. 164, 339, 452, 533) mistakes, mistakes in the declination of Chinese surnames written in the Hanyu system (pp. 204, 206, 341), editorial mistakes (pp. 327, 360, 468), repetitions (pp. 92, 122, 460, 541), as well as the inconsistency in terms of spelling (e.g. “Gugong”, p. 17 and “Gu Gong”, p. 37; “procent” – “percentage” and “proc.” – “ptc”, p. 504). It appears that in certain chapters, it could be a good idea to distinguish parts smaller than subchapters, which is particularly transparent in chapter eight that includes the description of China's relations with several actors of the global political stage.

The objective of Bogdan Góralczyk's latest monograph is the most precisely formulated in the conclusion. As the Author states, “the objective of this book was clear – to make an attempt to understand, describe in detail, provide as many facts and as much data as possible, but rarely evaluate and pass judgments, and even less stigmatise, or preach and teach, which, unfortunately, in the Western literature regarding China is quite frequent, and sometimes dominant” (p. 535). Re-

ading the book allows arguing that not only has the Author fully achieved the assumed objectives, but also – thanks to the collection of unusually rich source material and its attractive presentation – he has managed to achieve something else: make readers interested in reforms taking place in the Middle Kingdom and force them to reflect on the consequences of these changes. All of this makes “Wielki renesans. Chińska transformacja i jej konsekwencje” serve as inspiration for academics publishing dissertations in the field of political science, whereas its interdisciplinary character and the holistic approach towards the content adopted by the Author may be a model for all researchers. As Góralczyk claims, “the more we know about China, the better – both for them and us” (p. 521). Fully supporting the Author’s statement, we recommend “Wielki Renesans” to all interested in this topic – not only to China enthusiasts, but also to all people who aim at getting to know and understand the world in which we live.

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