

Obituary

Alexander Eckstein (1915–76)

On 4 December 1976 Alexander Eckstein, professor of economics at the University of Michigan, passed away in Ann Arbor, Michigan, after a severe heart attack. The breadth and depth of his professional and personal contribution to Chinese studies and to Sino-American relations cannot be encompassed in this short tribute. He was truly a man for all seasons: scholar, public servant and humanitarian.

Born in Novisad, Yugoslavia on 9 December 1915, Alexander Eckstein studied at the University of California where he earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees (B.S., 1939; M.S., 1941; Ph.D., 1952). He was a senior economist in the U.S. Department of State, 1951–53, before going to Harvard University as a research associate of the Russian Research Center and lecturer in economics, 1953–59. Alex was Xerox Professor of International Economics at the University of Rochester, 1959–61. In 1961 he was appointed professor of economics at the University of Michigan where he also served as director of the Center for Chinese Studies during 1967–69. In 1974–75, he was Rockefeller Visiting Research Professor at The Brookings Institution. Among many other professional activities, Alex was a member of the SSRC-ACLS Joint Committee on Contemporary China, 1959–66; a member of the SSRC Committee on the Economy of China, 1961–69; chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Committee on United States-China Relations, 1970–72, and a member of its Board from 1966; and a member of the NAS-SSRC-ACLS Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China.

He was the author of *The National Income of Communist China* (1962); *Communist China's Economic Development and Foreign Trade* (1966); *China's Economic Development: The Interplay of Scarcity and Ideology* (1975); and *China's Economic Revolution* (1977). Alex co-authored or edited five other books, including *Comparison of Economic Systems: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches* (1971), and published numerous scholarly articles on the economy of China.

Alex's leadership and scholarship in the analysis of China's economic development leaves a rich legacy of publications and students. He acquired the empathy and insight so necessary in bridging the gap between statistical data and the complexities of the world's largest

experiment in politically guided social change. He was not limited by his discipline, however. No aspect of China failed to interest him, as evidenced by the Center of Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan, which is a multi-disciplinary testimonial to his successful efforts at personal recruitment and intellectual development.

Alex fought for principle without fear of the consequences. He pioneered in objective study of the Chinese economy when the climate of American political and public opinion remained poisoned by McCarthyism. He laboured long and lobbied hard for an opening of communication between China and the United States years before the Nixon initiatives. His commitment to this goal was a driving force in the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the Chinese People's Republic. Once relations improved, he worked equally hard to keep public opinion and policy in proper perspective on the problems that remained in Sino-American affairs.

Alex's compassionate involvement with the human condition and his deep concern for truth, knowledge, human rights and peace, influenced all who knew him. He worked prodigiously up to his final day to advance these ends. Yet he never lost the magnanimity and effervescent sense of humour which preserved his sense of balance and which endeared him to persons of many lands and of different walks of life.

No political figure was too high and no matter of detail too low to escape Alex Eckstein's attention when the cause required it. His ability to work at all levels seemed to spring from an inexhaustible supply of energy, insight and dedication. There is scarcely any aspect of Chinese studies in America and Sino-American relations over the past decade that does not owe some part of its development to his effort. He will be sorely missed by his friends and students but his contribution endures in fond memory and tangible achievement.

ALBERT FEUERWERKER