In this last chapter I return to issues of communism and new attempts by authors, especially since Gouldner’s death, to argue for the continuing resilience of communism even in the face of its world collapse beginning in 1989. I will make the argument that radical intellectuals who sympathized with Mao even as the Cultural Revolution turned unimaginably violent all have blood on their hands, including Gouldner. Gouldner (1977) did indeed refer to Stalinism as a regime of terror, yet acquiesced in the face of the equally bloody and horrific slaughter that took place under Mao in China. In comparing Mao to Stalin, Gouldner (1977: 38) stated “In place of the Stalinist axe, the Maoist carefully slit the vein, letting it bleed for a guarded interval,” and that “…Maoism never really succumbed to the extremes of Stalinism.” And even with all their vaunted rationality and their culture of critical discourse, Gouldner (1975b: 34) did admit that “…intellectuals can kill; indeed, no little part of modern ‘terrorism’ is done by middle class intellectuals.” By the time of his launching of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, Mao’s hunger for domination had grown to gargantuan proportions. Not satisfied merely with the control of China, Mao told his provincial chiefs at a meeting, “In the future we will set up the Earth Control Committee, and make a uniform plan for the Earth” (quoted in Chang and Halliday 2006: 418).

Mao went far beyond merely vein letting during the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution. State terror under Mao expanded into some of the most brutal and cruel forms imaginable. Mao’s need for dominance and command presence meant that anyone showing the slightest hint of disloyalty to the program was to be executed. But mere execution was often not good enough. In 1968 those identified as “class enemies” in Binyang County and Wuxuan were savaged, with some of Mao’s officials even resorting to cannibalism. These started as public “denunciation rallies,” and after being slaughtered choice body parts—hearts, livers, and genitals—were cut off and eaten before the victims died. Actually the functionaries took time to first cook the body parts in what were known as “human flesh banquets.” The justifications for such human slaughter were typified by one person who had carried out a particularly brutal attack against a young peasant boy, explaining that “Didn’t Chairman Mao say: It’s either we kill them, or they kill us?”
You die and I live, this is class struggle!” (quoted in Chang and Halliday 2006: 534). Mao, in fact, is the greatest serial murderer in the history of the world. It has been estimated that 45,000,000 human beings were killed at the hands of Mao, more than the combined mass murders of Hitler and Stalin (Dikötter 2010).

Why did Mao engage in such atrocities, and why do many on the political left sit idly by while rarely denouncing, much less acknowledging, the brutality? It may be the case that Mao was seeking to avoid the death of the revolution through the avoidance of his own death by way of exterminating all those who may have harbored ill will against him or his communist revolution. In other words, the death of the revolution was a kind of millenarianism which, if it were to happen, would signal the death of the world not only the end of Mao’s scheme (Lifton 1970). What was being sought was permanent revolution, and one ongoing project folded into Maoism was the overcoming of natural limitations including those of the cycle of life and death. There was an attempt at rebirth, and the agents of that rebirth were the Red Guard, some of whom were as young as thirteen or fourteen years of age (Gouldner and Horowitz 1966). Its launch in 1966 was something akin to the *Triumph of the Will*, the film depicting Hitler at Nuremberg (Lifton 1970: 147). Choosing young students to man the Red Guard is consistent with the idea that death could be defied—or at least staved off—through the use of vibrant youth who could see the revolution through to the end (Gouldner and Horowitz 1966). There is a purification of sorts in experiencing death on behalf of a perceived just cause (Lifton 1970: 152).

Mao’s attempt at transcending worldly impediments threatening to derail the revolution meant that, in his most lustful moments near the end, the world’s flesh became his flesh, thus marking the transition from “great leader” to despot. It is a type of misguided romantic millenarianism in which Mao the ruler confronts the powers of heaven and earth seeking to defeat all who stand in his way for purposes of rewriting history. Lifton (1970) goes on to suggest that the increasingly enfeebled Mao, beset by sickness and old age, is attempting to stave off the natural loss of potency by transmitting power and force across the generations through the work of all those who understand the goodness and necessity of the revolution. Even so, Lifton continues to romanticize Mao as a “tragic” figure who was indeed a great leader but who gave in to “survival paranoia” and who, dissatisfied with his accomplishments and recognizing his own impending death, sought to transcend worldly limitations to his power and potency by lapsing—ironically enough—into horrific displays of terror and human carnage.