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Preface

This book began as an effort by some of Tang Tsou’s students to honor him. Tang Tsou received his doctorate in political science from the University of Chicago in 1951 (his dissertation concerned the development of American political science), and has been teaching there since 1959. As his seventieth birthday and retirement approached, Norman Nie, chair of the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago, suggested that his former students might organize a conference in his honor. Experienced academics reading this preface will know that, whether because of a deficit of filial piety among American academics or the lack of a thematic focus at such an occasion, such festschrift conferences and their written products often are diffuse and ephemeral. Former students and colleagues may want to participate out of nostalgia, but for outsiders they are like someone else’s family album.

This project was different. First, Tsou’s students’ bond to their mentor is more than a historical bond. Tang Tsou is the most challenging and wide-ranging China scholar of our acquaintance, and so a conference honoring Tsou found us grappling with a current leader in the field, rather than engaging in retrospective reminiscences.

Second, it was fortunate that a number of Tsou’s most active students are established experts in a quite comprehensive spread of important issue areas in Chinese politics. That diversity is due in part to Tsou’s respect and support for the intellectual interests of his students. Credit also should be given to the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago, which has stressed intense intellectual activity over a wide range of substantive areas. Given these authors’ range of expertise, every essay in this book has at least a monograph’s measure of research behind it.

Third, the project had a successful model. Because of the importance of the Cultural Revolution, the University of Chicago sponsored a conference in 1967, called “China in Crisis,” that attracted an exceptional