



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Die Sowjetunion und das kommunistische China 1945-1950. Der beschwerliche Weg zum Bündnis by Dieter Heinzig

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during this time, when he foreswore his allegiances to any *ism*, that he wrote the articles and letters to his friends and colleagues on which this book is based. He died in 1942 and was buried on the estate of a friend's home in Sichuan.

The translations reveal a man obsessed with the future of democracy not only in China but in the world. The Hitler–Stalin Pact had united the two most aggressive fascist states in a powerful military juggernaut that might solidify a fascist world order for centuries to come. In his attacks on any ideological dogma, Chen found little comfort in political parties and their doctrinaire policies regarding military and revolutionary strategies that opposed democracy and that refused to recognize the need to fight fascism. Chen stressed that he was an iconoclast and a voice against unreasonable authority. He preferred to be thought of as “an oppositionist for life.”

The appendices include powerful tributes to Chen by his Trotskyist associates, Zheng Chaolin and Wang Fanxi. Rare correspondence between Chen and Leon Trotsky is included. Chen's panegyric on the death of Cai Jiemin (Cai Yuanpei), President of Beijing University during the May Fourth Movement, provides great historical documentation to the lives of both men. Finally, Gao Yu-han's Oration at Chen's funeral creates a rare sense of the personality and the meaning of Chen's life. Benton's hagiographic study stirs our imagination to utopias wished, friendships unfulfilled and the determined will of one man to change the Chinese Revolution.

The book has substantial value to those scholars and political followers who wish to re-evaluate the life of a revolutionary. Benton has compiled a work that suggests, not totally convincingly, that Chen, had he lived longer, “would have returned ... to the positions of Lenin and Trotsky” (p. x). Throughout Benton's introductions to each translation there is a subtle, recurrent intimation that Chen remained a Trotskyist to the end. One might seek other historical answers. Was Chen's political ideology a “third way” for Marxist theory and practice in China? Would it have matured into an international socialist system which combined the best of bourgeois and proletarian democracy? Was his iconoclasm deeply dependent on the political oppositionist policies that Trotskyism provided?

The translations and their annotations, and the inclusion of rare photographs are a model of excellent scholarship.

RICHARD C. KAGAN

Die Sowjetunion und das kommunistische China 1945–1950. Der beschwerliche Weg zum Bündnis. By DIETER HEINZIG. [Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998. xviii + 710 pp. DM 148. ISBN 3-7890-5370-8.]

“Long Live Comrade Stalin, the teacher of the world revolution, the best friend of the Chinese people!” said Mao Zedong in Moscow in February 1950. In a perhaps more candid moment, fifteen years later, he told Soviet

premier Kosygin: "I myself will write a book about Stalin's mistakes and crimes. But it will be so terrible that it won't be allowed to be published for 10,000 years."

These two quotes, which begin Dieter Heinzig's remarkable study, capture the poles of the ambivalent but inescapable brotherhood of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). No foreign relationship has done more to shape the course of 20th-century China. The Soviet Union founded the CCP, which would not have existed without it. Through the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, the CCP internalized the discipline of international communism and followed the Soviet road much more than it diverged from it. When CCP leaders flirted with Washington in 1944–46, they knew they were still betrothed to Moscow. Yet the union formally made in 1950, in the form of the Sino-Soviet alliance, was not a love match. In the tortured history of Chinese–Soviet relations in 1945–50 are found the roots of the later divorce.

The history of China's relations with the Soviet Union was the focus of intense study in the 1950s (the days of "Sino-Soviet studies" in the West) and has been the subject of renewed attention as the archives of first Republican China and then of the Soviet Union itself became at least partly open to scholars. The work of John W. Garver, Odd Arne Westad, Niu Jun and Michael M. Sheng has reopened inquiry into the Soviet role in China during and after the Second World War. Yang Kuisong has taken this work further, in time and theme, in his new survey of the relationship. Now Heinzig, who authored the definitive study of Soviet military advisers to the Kuomintang in the 1920s, has written *the* history of Sino-Soviet relations for the post-war years.

This is a work of prodigious scholarship. Heinzig has read everything possible of Chinese, Western and Russian sources. He has gone deeper into the Soviet archives than anyone else and makes extensive use of Russian memoir and eyewitness accounts. He tells his story at length and with great clarity, interrogating the sources where they seem problematic, but never losing the thread of his narrative. Attached to the book is an appendix of 14 draft and final documents of the 1950 negotiations.

While in introduction and conclusion the work ranges over the entire history of Sino-Soviet relations, it bores in on the period bounded by the Sino-Soviet treaties of 1945 and 1950. The re-emergence of Russian/Soviet imperialism in Manchuria and elsewhere, reluctantly ratified by Chiang Kai-shek in the treaty of 1945 and ultimately resented too by his Communist adversaries, is the central fact of *Machtpolitik* with which both Nationalist and Communist leaders had to grapple, even as they each sought to use the Soviet Union in their own deadly struggle. Every political actor employed multiple strategies while being gradually constricted in choice by trends in the Chinese civil war and the international cold war. The "painful path" (the book's subtitle) to the Soviet alliance with Mao Zedong's new People's Republic is retraced in compelling detail.

Many of Heinzig's findings will not surprise scholars of this period. The 1945 treaty was not a pure victory for Stalin: he wanted more. Soviet

duplicity in dealing with both Nationalist and Communist forces in the north-east is again clear. There was no “lost chance” of a CCP alignment or friendship with the United States; the CCP simply sought (as did Moscow) to neutralize American influence in China. Yet this did not mean – and here Heinzig’s narrative continually breaks new ground – that a Soviet alliance with a Communist China was a foregone conclusion. It was, rather, an alliance reached with difficulty despite increasing disputes and mistrust. The alliance was ultimately possible above all because of the change in Soviet foreign policy that limited Moscow’s imperial appetite in Asia.

This is, then, an analysis driven by a belief, at least in this case, of the primacy of foreign policy. Ideology was no hindrance to the alliance; but the alliance itself was much more the result of “classical national interest politics” (p. 634).

That is the simple synopsis. But this does no justice to a work that is a multi-source, multi-archival, international history at its finest, distinguished by its appreciation for the telling detail, the nuance of a negotiation, the interaction between economic and advisory relations with power politics, and above all by its complete mastery of the facts, where we know them, and its intriguing speculation where we do not. Scholars who know this period well will still learn much from this book. The description of Chiang Ching-kuo’s hapless interviews with Stalin is superb; the *two hundred page* account of Mao’s comparative triumph in his Moscow negotiations is a book to itself. In between there is much that is new in the chapter on the “*Wendejahr*” 1949, particularly on Mikoyan’s secret visit to China and Liu Shaoqi’s equally clandestine sojourn in Moscow. All along the way there are surprises: Stalin never invited Chiang Kai-shek to Moscow, as has often been claimed; nor is there credible evidence – Mao’s utterances to the contrary – that Stalin sought to have the CCP military conquest of China “stop at the Yangzi.”

This is an important work. It is a rare book in our field also because it reads so well – if you read German. I hope that it will be translated into the several languages in which it might make an even larger impact: English, Russian, and of course, Chinese.

WILLIAM C. KIRBY

Captive Spirits: Prisoners of the Cultural Revolution. By YANG XIGUANG and SUSAN MCFADDEN. [Oxford, Hong Kong and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 302 pp. £21.50. ISBN 0-19-586845-5.]

This book is the prison memoir of the “ultra-left” Red Guard Yang Xiguang, originally published in Chinese and now appearing in a lucid translation by Susan McFadden. In early 1967 Yang aligned himself with the Cultural Revolution’s rebel forces despite being a child of the political elite, and a year later authored “Whither China,” a systematic critique of the Maoist system that apparently the Chairman himself denounced as “reactionary.”