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1956: Mao's China and the Hungarian Crisis. ZHU DANDAN. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013. vi + 310 pp. \ \$39.00. ISBN 978-1-933947-70-9

Péter Vámos

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obtain urban factory jobs or secure preferred destinations, for instance in suburban villages. The book sheds light on the corruption that accompanied major phases of the programme. For many, the whole movement was suffused with deep injustices, about which many stories were written in later years.

In the 1970s, after a 1973 Mao initiative but mainly towards the end of the decade, substantial efforts were made to improve the conditions of the *zhiqing*. These efforts did not restrain the urge to return home because, as Bonnin suggests, the vast majority did not support the programme, including those who had at first been enthusiastic. Instead, many took to various forms of evasive, passive resistance. On army and state farms, in contrast, substantial collective actions erupted as the political climate began slowly to change from 1977. There were strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins and petitions to the authorities in Beijing. Some took part in the 1978–79 democracy movement. The author traces these developments in fine detail.

Policy makers were divided on how to handle the discontent of the sent-down youth. While ideology was no longer much of an issue, the fear of urban instability if masses of the *zhiqing* returned but could not find jobs prompted continued support for the programme but in rationalized form and without the morale-destroying “for life” stipulation. After considerable uncertainty, by 1978, “most leaders” understood that the programme would have to be abandoned: it consumed too many state resources, it was inefficient, it was productive of social unrest and, perhaps most important, it was a major waste of talent. In the eyes of this “lost” generation, Mao’s reputation took a nosedive.

There is some terminological confusion in the text. On page 39, for instance, reference is made to “4 million secondary school graduates... in addition to 400,000 high school graduates.” Elsewhere, state and army farms are simply called “farms.” But these are minor defects. They do not detract from the value of this important book.

THOMAS P. BERNSTEIN
tpb1@columbia.edu

1956: Mao’s China and the Hungarian Crisis

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The year 1956 marks a turning point in the relations between the socialist world and China. In February, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev destroyed Stalin’s cult by condemning his crimes. De-Stalinization was initiated in the Soviet Union, but in a matter of months it shook the unity of the socialist camp. By autumn, discontent grew and Stalin’s empire was threatened with collapse. In China, Mao Zedong’s position also weakened, but by mid-1957 the Chinese leader was able to regain control and consolidate his power at home and increase China’s influence within the socialist camp.

In 1956, the Chinese leadership followed the events in Eastern Europe with great attention. The Hungarian revolution clearly demonstrated for Mao the importance and necessity of a strong grip on the people, which could bring about not only success or failure of socialist reconstruction, but could also influence the maintenance of the Party’s power. In September, the Communist Party of China’s Eighth Congress declared that it was time to turn “from revolution to reconstruction,” that the

revolutionary period was basically over, and that the country faced the new period of socialist reconstruction. Zhu Dandan argues that it was under the influence of the Hungarian Revolution and the fear of Hungarian-style revolts in China that Mao returned to the line of class struggle in 1957.

The present volume, which has grown out of the author's PhD dissertation, consists of four chapters. First, Zhu gives an overview of how the Chinese Communist leadership transplanted the Stalinist model to China and how Mao's radical programme of state reconstruction gained dominance within the Chinese Communists' policies between the establishment of the PRC in 1949 and 1956. In chapter two, she outlines Sino-Soviet bloc relations before and after the CPSU's 20th Congress, the domestic developments in Poland and Hungary, and China's reactions to the Polish events in the course of the year. For Mao, Zhu argues, developments in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe provided an opportunity to strengthen China's position within the international communist movement. Chapter three deals with China's political and diplomatic involvement on the Hungarian crisis, focusing on the Chinese delegation's activities in Moscow between 23 and 31 October 1956. She reinforces the conclusion of earlier studies that China played an important role in the Soviet decision to issue a declaration on 30 October in which Moscow assured its allies that it would respect the principles of full equality, their territorial integrity and state sovereignty, as well as non-interference in one another's domestic affairs. Zhu claims that although Mao still did not feel his country "was ready to displace Moscow as the strategic center of the world proletarian revolution by October 1956" (pp. 190–191), the declaration represented "a significant step forward in the Chinese quest for equality of standing with the Soviet party, a goal it had pursued since the establishment of the PRC" (p. 168). Nevertheless, she agrees with those, including this reviewer, who argue that the "Chinese side did not overall play a significant role" (p. 192) in changing the Soviet attitude on 31 October in favour of an armed intervention.

Chapter four describes Chinese domestic developments in the months following the Hungarian Revolution, including the re-launch of the Hundred Flowers campaign in the spring of 1957 followed by the Anti-Rightist campaign which resulted in the persecution of over half a million people, about one-tenth of the Chinese intelligentsia. The author argues that the 1956 Hungarian events had a profound impact on China's international policies, but more importantly, they led to dramatic changes in Chinese domestic politics orchestrated by Mao. As she puts it, "the most important lesson that the Chairman and his successors learned from Hungary was the risks of surrendering any measure of political and ideological control, however limited, over popular conceptions of the regimes legitimacy" (p. 273). She concludes that "after Budapest, the CCP's political centralization became impregnable" (p. 274).

The author makes extensive use of the existing literature in Chinese and English, as well as recently declassified Chinese archival documents primarily from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives in Beijing. Zhu also refers to Hungarian archival documents, but includes letters and numbers that are not part of the original archival references. This points to the fact that she gained access to Hungarian archival documents from a private collection – shared by this reviewer with the Center for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University in Shanghai. In general, the author makes extensive use of the Center's director Shen Zhihua's Chinese writings and sources, and relies heavily on his arguments and conclusions.

Although there is no note on transliteration, it seems that in the case of languages using Latin alphabet the author's original idea was to keep diacritical marks. However, apart from obvious typographical errors, the only system that shows itself is that she uses the forms used in her sources, be they correct or erroneous, without

paying attention to the original forms of names and words. In general, more attention to the orthography of foreign names and words would have been desirable. As in most of the problematic cases the author used publications and documents in their Chinese translation, the problems point to a methodological challenge faced by Chinese scholars when they use foreign sources translated into Chinese.

Editorial shortcomings notwithstanding, the present volume is a welcome contribution to our existing knowledge and the most comprehensive account written in English of the inner connection between China's political and diplomatic involvement in the Hungarian events and the influence of the crisis on Chinese domestic policy shifts in 1956–57.

PÉTER VÁMOS

pvamos@tti.hu

Social Suffering and Political Confession: Suku in Modern China

SUN FEIYU

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Social Suffering and Political Confession: Suku in Modern China is a welcome contribution to our knowledge of how the Chinese Communist Party established its controls in rural Chinese society during and after the Maoist rise to power.

Sun reminds us, with Chen Duxiu, that the Communist Party did not find a natural, supportive base among rooted tillers. Instead, Mao's strategy was to recruit Party activists from people who were no longer farmers pure and simple – the poorest, marginal elements in the countryside. Mao's Party appealed to the emotional suffering of this latter group in order to cultivate a cadre base willing to fight against the esteemed local elites who relied on kinship and lineage networks, and on Confucian rituals, to govern rural society historically.

The book is a treasure trove of new interesting information about the origins of Communist Party power and the land reform process in particular. Sun draws on the *Diary of Yang Hansheng* to portray the Party's routine methods of mobilizing rural people for land reform. He shows that the Party recruited the poorest members of village society to inquire about their sufferings and to "educate" these elements to understand the importance of class and evil exploiters – supposedly landlords. In reality, however, the main targets of struggle were not landlords but the heads of *bao-jia* who had press-ganged villagers for Kuomintang armies. The Party cadres frequently focused on these "landlords" in the struggle sessions of the land reform campaign. Sun shows how very complicated the process of classifying rural people into different class categories was, and he also underscores the tensions between outside Party work teams and the poor activists they relied on to penetrate and understand relationships in local society. One cannot but help wonder, in reading Sun's work, if the Mao-led Communist Party ever accurately understood rural society, since its ground-level brains were those of the most ignorant and stupid people in the countryside – Mao's so-called poor peasant-cum-lumpen base.

In the first chapter Sun shows that these marginal Party activists often twisted the confessions they elicited from ordinary villagers, and also engaged in the kind of false accusations and accusatory politics for which socialist regimes are notorious. He makes a convincing argument for understanding the land reform process as a state simplification