The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History. Austin Jersild. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014. ISBN: 9781469629834

In *The Sino-Soviet Alliance,* Austin Jersild provides a nuanced history of the strategic partnership between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party from 1947 to 1964. Jersild examines the reporting of mid-level advisors, technocrats and diplomatic personnel from China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and the Soviet Union, engaged in the daily transactions of proletarian internationalism in China. Ultimately, Jersild finds parallels between the colonial structures of Tsarist Russia's imperial administration and Soviet Russia's international advising program. He argues it was perceptions of these continuities by the Chinese that led to the deterioration of the alliance between the Soviet Union and China.

The book is organized in two parts, marked by Mao's first visit to Moscow in December of 1949 and second visit in November of 1957. Jersild primarily analyzes the administrative reporting of mid-level officials sent on international exchanges as part of the *komandirovka* or international advising system. This system involved the deployment of political, economic, military, industrial, and technological advisors from the Soviet Union to a recipient communist country. The host nation incurred the costs of paying both the donor nation and advisors for these services. In the first part of the book, which corresponds with the early years of the alliance, receptive Chinese officials sought to learn from Soviet advisors the lessons of modernization and industrialization in order to accelerate their own national socialist development. Friction over the burden of cost for the entire program, the decidedly colonial and at times wildly undisciplined behavior of many Russian advisors in China, and the debatable efficacy of these advising projects all recurred as themes of the program in China. In contrast, Eastern European advisors were generally better valued by the Chinese. Their technical expertise and access to Western

technologies yielded better results in industrial construction and technological development, in exchange for the programmatic costs incurred by the Chinese. This enhanced relationship between the Chinese and Eastern Europeans advisors resulted in durable official communication channels that outlasted Soviet channels well after 1960. Administrative reporting from the Chinese Communist Party reveals a gradual Chinese perception that *komandirovka* was a reincarnate form of great power chauvinism, largely benefiting the center of a Soviet empire at great cost to the developing Chinese economy. Jersild offers that in addition to these contemporary Chinese observations, the bureaucratic structure of the *komandirovka* system bore similarities to nineteenth-century Russian imperial administration.

Jersild finds that the gradual Chinese disaffection for the Soviet advising system extended into matters of cultural influence as well. Any exchange in scientific and technological expertise with Soviet advisors provoked a deliberate and codified Chinese reaction to avoid cultural transfer or the diminishment of Chinese high and peasant cultures. This was the case in the Chinese reaction to the Soviet authorship and production of the play *The Red Poppy,* when the Chinese interpreted the play's paternalistic discourse and thematic content as blatant examples of European chauvinism towards Asian partners. Jersild interprets this as an early sense of Chinese nativism and resistance to European high culture by the mid-1950s. Ultimately, he argues that perceptions of the similarities between the *komandirovka* program and European colonial administrations, as well as perceptions of cultural dominance, contributed to shifting Chinese attitudes against the Soviets by mid-decade.

The second part of the book describes a more aggressive Chinese Communist Party, seeking to gain stature and influence within the international community of communist nations in exchange for Chinese ideological and material contributions. Mao's visit to Moscow for the

November 1957 conference occurred after he published in *Pravda* a well-received defense of Stalinism in response to Khruschev's Secret Speech in February 1956. Additionally, Jersild describes the significant sway the Chinese held in the Soviet Central Committee decision to suppress the uprisings in Poland and Hungary. Criticizing Soviet engagement with the West and ideological revisionism became the centerpiece of the Chinese argument for increased Chinese influence and leadership of the communist world. Following the formal split in 1960, China adopted not only an ideological claim to leadership of the Third World, but sent material aid and support to these nations as a direct alternative to socialist leadership in both Moscow and East Germany. This trajectory suggests not just an aspirational, but indeed influential Chinese position within the community of Communist nations which legitimately challenges narratives of Moscow's singular leadership amongst Communist nations.

After 1960, the Chinese hoped for a continued presence of Eastern European advisors despite the departure of Soviet advisors. While Jersild describes the principal defense considerations that Warsaw Pact member states weighed in siding with the Soviet Union over China after the split, he indicates particularly that technocrats from these nations found the ideological radicalism of the Great Leap Forward not only counterproductive but off-putting. This era of oppositional Chinese posture to Moscow's leadership of the bloc and increasing isolation from European partners filtered down and appeared in the observations of mid-level officials, particularly those involved in the Friendship Societies. Though these societies were designed to teach and share knowledge of Soviet culture with the Chinese, by 1963 it became clear to the European participants that their efforts occurred in unfriendly and downright hostile terrain. Jersild uses this point as a marker of the effective end of the Sino-Soviet Alliance.

Jersild carefully draws a thread from the early Soviet international advising program to perceptions of European chauvinism that resonated within a Chinese population sensitive to any indications of European imperialism, and the path of the Chinese Communist Party towards a position as a legitimate alternative to Moscow's leadership of the communist world. In this regard, this work is as much about the Sino-Soviet split as it is about the alliance. The international variety of Jersild's sourcing enables his analysis of the hierarchy and jockeying between communist nations from multiple viewpoints, as well as the intricate international context to domestic issues within each country. His analysis suggests a multiplicity of forces outside of Moscow and Washington that held real sway in the cooperation of communist nations. As such, this work fits well within the New Cold War History series as it contributes to the body of scholarship that challenges traditional narratives of Cold War History fixated on ideologues and power-brokers at the senior most levels of government in either Washington or Moscow.

This book would work best in a graduate seminar, as Jersild's key argument assumes the reader has a basic familiarity with the longer arc of Russian history and especially the organization and administration of the Tsar's empire. Without such a background, unfamiliar readers might struggle with his central point regarding continuities of imperialism between the two systems. His analysis largely concerns Chinese and Soviet perceptions of continuity between the systems, rather than his own comparison of the structures of both world systems. While this work covers a Cold War period, scholars of many subfields in addition to Cold War historians will find applicability of this multivalent work to their classrooms. World history specialists will appreciate Jersild's consistent international contextualization. He suggests early on that a historian cannot consider any domestic issue in a socialist bloc country or China without understanding its international context within both the communist and non-communist worlds.

Jersild particularly proves this argument in part two with his detailed connection between the Hungarian and Polish Uprisings of 1956, as well as the maturation and spread of Tito's Non-Aligned movement, to the international reaction to the path of the Chinese towards "Asian Titoism." Jersild's ability to cohere so many sources in so many languages provides an excellent methodological example for graduate students to examine. Historians of twentieth century Europe will certainly appreciate Jersild's exhaustive research in multiple European archives. When read against the grain, Jersild's Central and Eastern European sources often tell the reader as much about socialism in these European nations as they do conditions in China. In particular, these sources convey a proclivity for technocracy over party ideology, which might be of exceptional interest to historians of technology. Specialists of this last field might find Jersild's analysis of the *komandirovka* system and his attention to the differences in technical expertise according to nationality particularly interesting. This work is sure to enjoy a broad readership.

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