

The last part of the collection is entitled “New evidence on North Korea in 1956” (edited by Nobuo Shimotomai, with introduction by James Person). It details the impact of de-Stalinization on North Korean politics and reveals that the events at the August 1956 Plenum of the Korean Workers’ Party presented no simple power struggle between competing factions but should rather be interpreted as the desperate attempt of various individuals critical of Kim Il Sung to allow for discussions on economic policy and to place limits upon the pervasive personality cult. The letters and memoranda by the North Korean ambassador to the Soviet Union, Li Sangjo, against Kim’s cult range among the most substantial and moving documents that have been written on this subject in any language (especially Document 21). And his credo that “one cannot distort history” (p. 505) is probably one that has motivated all scholarly contributors in editing this volume.

The collection is a very helpful resource for courses on CCP politics, Cold War studies and international relations, and will hopefully be continued in future issues.

DANIEL LEESE

Creating the “New Man”: From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities

YINGHONG CHENG

Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009

x + 265 pp. \$60.00

ISBN 978-0-8248-3074-8 doi:10.1017/S0305741009990427

Certain path-breaking history books draw upon hitherto unavailable sources to reveal previously unknown truths about a particular time and place. Other good books come to original conclusions by putting together old sources in interesting ways. Yinghong Cheng’s *Creating the “New Man”: From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*, belongs in the latter category. Cheng’s book is a comparative history of social engineering in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, Mao-era China and Castro’s Cuba.

Creating the “New Man” pitches itself as “World History,” a catchphrase that is featured prominently on the book’s back cover and in its introduction and conclusion. In recent years, renewed interest in global history has been good news for China scholars. Because China is geographically and demographically a huge part of the world, some academics who in the past might have gotten away with ignoring the non-Western world are now forced to engage with it. However, most of the recent scholarship placing China within the context of global history has focused on the early modern period and on economic issues. In a welcome contrast, Cheng’s book is a smart comparative intellectual history centred on the 20th century.

The book’s title nicely sums up its main point: the concept of the “new man” began with lofty ideals, but when socialist states attempted to forcibly change human nature, the experiment ended in failure. Cheng details this process in three substantive chapters. The first charts how Lenin and Stalin’s vision of a perfectly engineered Soviet citizen willing to sacrifice everything for the revolution gradually gave way in the 1960s to a system of material incentives, rather than moral ones. Chapters two and three focus on China and Cuba, respectively, and examine how Mao and Castro responded to what they saw as the Soviet Union’s betrayal of socialist ideals. A shorter fourth chapter, “The Global Impact of the Communist New Man,” explains how Third World leaders and starry-eyed American intellectuals alike were inspired by efforts to create selfless labourers.

Cheng identifies striking similarities between ideological remolding efforts in the three socialist states, particularly China and Cuba. Adulation and emulation of labour models, educational reform prioritizing practical learning over book knowledge, and military-style production brigades characterized both China's Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and Cuba's Revolutionary Offensive (1968–70). These Sino-Cuban connections are especially interesting given Cuba's 1966 decision to ally with the Soviet Union once it became impossible for Castro to remain neutral in the Sino-Soviet split. According to Cheng, Cuba sided with the Soviet Union because it depended on the superpower for economic aid, but Castro and Che Guevara continued to admire Maoist ideology.

Cheng's retelling of the tense Chinese–Cuban–Soviet diplomatic triangle during the 1960s is the strongest part of the book and contains its richest source material, mostly memoirs by Chinese emissaries. According to Cheng, China's domestic oil refining industry got off the ground thanks more to “Cuban-imported American technology” (p. 151) than to heroic Chinese model workers who purportedly proved the superiority of self-reliance. In a novel twist that only recently came to light, Che Guevara provided the Chinese ambassador to Cuba with blueprints and other technical information from American refineries that were nationalized after the Cuban revolution.

Cheng's footnotes include English- and Chinese-language sources, but nothing in Russian or Spanish. His chapters on the Soviet Union and Cuba rely entirely on translated and secondary sources, include numerous quotations from other scholars' work, and are more general and survey-like than the chapter about China. This may be a necessary compromise when writing a broadly comparative book about global trends, but historians of Cuba and the Soviet Union may take issue with analysis that is not based on original primary source material. Since Cheng made the difficult choice of sacrificing depth for breadth, I wish that he had broadened his scope even further. Aside from one page mentioning Vietnam and a few tantalizing references to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia that left me wanting much more, Cheng neglects other important sites of state-mandated social engineering. The case of North Korea, where efforts to create a socialist “new man” officially continue, would have provided rich opportunities for comparison with China, but the DPRK is entirely omitted from this study.

These limitations aside, Cheng is to be commended for putting 20th-century socialism back on the agenda of global historians. This book belongs on the reading lists of courses on comparative socialism, comparative revolution, and modern world history.

JEREMY BROWN

Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937–38

SUPING LU

Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008

xxx + 261 pp. £27.00

ISBN 978-0-252-03332-2 doi:10.1017/S0305741009990439

In what was undoubtedly a labour of love, Suping Lu has provided a moving account of Wilhelmina “Minnie” Vautrin, an American missionary and educator trapped in Nanjing during the Japanese occupation. In his introduction, Lu identifies the importance of the text as a part of a testimonial literature by witnesses of the Nanjing Massacre and, perhaps most importantly, by individuals who were also citizens of