

Li's treatment of the PLA is very much a survey and not a comprehensive study. Readers looking for an extensive analysis of the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the PLA or a detailed discussion of military reform in the 1980s will be disappointed. Similarly, Li deals with the impact of urbanization and globalization in only a few pages. This is the chief weakness of the book, in order to cover several decades; the discussion inevitably treats some issues too cursorily.

That said, the book is a success in several ways. Firstly, it provides a very good overview of just how much the PLA has changed as an institution over the past 50 years, documenting changes in its military capabilities, educational levels of its officers and the social composition of its personnel. Second, Li does a superb job of using Chinese-language sources. There is a wealth of material in this book from central Party documents, provincial archives, memoirs and official PLA histories. Some of this material is not available in English elsewhere and Li has done a valuable service to the field by including it in this book. Third, unlike other books on the PLA, Li uses interviews with PLA veterans to bring out the personal experiences of ordinary service men and women. For example, the book brings out what it was like to serve in Tibet in the early 1960s, or be stationed in North Vietnam during the American bombing campaign. Fourth, Li, who served in the PLA, provides a Chinese perspective on the PLA's history which complements the existing English-language literature which is mostly written by Western scholars.

Overall, the book is an excellent addition to the literature. For non-specialists, it is a good general introduction to the military history of the PRC and the PLA as an institution. It provides access to information from memoirs and archival material that is not available in other English-language books on the PLA, and is more up to date than other general studies on the PLA. The book would be very suitable for college-level courses as a supplementary text. The book is very readable and the sections on the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts would be especially interesting for students in a general course on modern East Asian history. This is also a book for specialists who will greatly benefit from the rich bibliography and appreciate Professor Li's efforts to bring out the personal stories of PLA soldiers.

THOMAS BICKFORD

Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi, di san juan, sikao yu xuanze: Cong zhishifenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong (1956–1957) (The History of the People's Republic of China, Volume 3, Reflections and Choices: From the Conference on Intellectuals to the Anti-Rightist Movement [1956–1957])

SHEN ZHIHUA

Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue dangdai Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu zhongxin, 2008

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My decision to purchase Chinese-language books about PRC history depends on the footnotes. I usually do not buy books that lack citations entirely, or that only cite *People's Daily*. Quickly scanning the footnotes of Shen Zhihua's *Reflections and Choices* during a visit to Hong Kong, I noticed sources from the Jilin, Shaanxi and Yunnan provincial archives, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, and also archival material from the former Soviet Union. I saw many references to memoirs by former "rightists," copious citations from *Internal Reference (Neibu cankao)*,

and multiple notes citing an unpublished diary by Lin Ke, who was Mao Zedong's former secretary during the 1950s. I took the book straight to the cash register.

Shen Zhihua provides the best coverage of the Anti-Rightist Movement since Roderick MacFarquhar's *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 1: Contradictions among the People, 1956–1957*. In fact, it is fair to say that *Reflections and Choices* is the finest book on the topic in any language, because Shen uses a rich base of sources that MacFarquhar could have only dreamed of in 1974. Shen argues that from 1956 to 1957, China went from hope to disappointment. In 1956, the hope was genuine: after regime consolidation and attacks on counter-revolutionaries during the first half of the 1950s, Mao was ready to turn away from class struggle and to focus on industrialization. A more inclusive approach was worked out in early 1956 and approved at the Eighth Party Congress in September. It promised not only hundreds of flowers blooming and hundreds of schools of thought contending, but also an expanded role for the “democratic parties” (*minzhu dangpai*), which would “co-exist” and “mutually supervise” the Communist Party for a “long time” (*changqi gongcun, huxiang jiandu*, p. 213). Shen convincingly shows that Mao genuinely welcomed criticism from outside the party.

Shen does not accept the notion that Mao's calls for criticism were nothing but a cynical plot to “lure snakes out of their holes” (*yinshe chudong*) from the outset. Instead, Mao changed his mind in May 1957. Why the change? He was troubled by turbulence in Chinese society after the Hungarian Revolt and angered by critics who wanted to “abolish the Communist Party's leadership” (p. 554). In remarks to his secretary Lin Ke on 12 May, and during late-night meetings with other central leaders on 14 and 16 May, Mao decided to let rightist “snakes” expose their true nature. People throughout China were encouraged to criticize the party, and newspapers were ordered to report the critiques verbatim (except for complaints about the prices of goods, foreign policy and specific cases from the campaign to eliminate hidden counterrevolutionaries, which remained censored, pp. 555, 558). Mao let the criticism go unanswered until 7 June, when he decided to counterattack.

The profound sense of betrayal felt by critics who were targeted during the Anti-Rightist Movement is well known. But never before have the costs and absurdities of the campaign been documented in such great detail. Shen not only outlines the Party centre's guidelines for identifying and punishing different types of rightists (there was a separate category for “extreme rightists”), he also shows how work units ignored the rules and simply picked targets in order to meet quotas. Almost anyone was fair game, as Shen demonstrates through many examples drawn from memoirs. He writes, “[t]hose who had made speeches became rightists, but those who had not spoken could also become rightists. People who criticized leaders and also those who had vigorously followed their leaders could become rightists. And people who had either advocated for freedom and democracy or opposed freedom and democracy could become rightists – all roads led to Rome!” (pp. 669–70).

I only have one complaint: on the book's last page, Shen writes that he is done working on China's domestic history and is going back to his research on the history of the Soviet Union and the Cold War. For the sake of the field of PRC history, I hope that Shen changes his mind. I also hope to see in print soon the missing parts of the Chinese University of Hong Kong's ten-volume series on the history of the People's Republic, including those authored by Yang Kuisong (vol. 1, covering 1949–52), and Han Gang (vol. 9, covering 1976–78). Their contributions are likely to meet the high standard set by Shen Zhihua.

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