

Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl / Marco Wyss / Valeria Zanier (eds.): Europe and China in the Cold War. Exchanges Beyond the Bloc Logic and the Sino-Soviet Split, Leiden: Brill Publisher, 2019, 242 pp.

Reviewed by
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Both Western and Eastern Europe found numerous ways to contest the authority of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, one of which was the cultivation of a relationship to China. The contributors to this well-organized volume address Western European efforts to conduct trade with China, with a focus on Austria, Switzerland, and Greece; Chinese overtures to Western European civil society through “friendship” associations and transnational networks, with a focus on France, Switzerland, Italy, and Great Britain; and forms of Eastern European trade and exchange with China, which in some cases outlasted the Sino-Soviet split, with a focus on Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany. Superpower conflict, both between the United States and the Soviet Union and between the Soviet Union and China, influenced but did not determine how “Europe and China viewed and interacted with each other during the Cold War”, write the editors (p. 15). This book contributes to the growing literature on the autonomy and initiative of small powers in the Cold War and provides an

important background for understanding contemporary Sino-European relations.

President Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong get a good deal of attention in the history of international relations and the Cold War, but Western European and Chinese overtures well before 1971/72 made the Sino-American rapprochement possible. Austria declined to recognize the People’s Republic of China (PRC) so as not to antagonize the Americans, explain Maximilian Graf and Wolfgang Mueller, but pushed ahead with bilateral trade and exchange before recognition in 1971. Switzerland followed Great Britain and recognized the PRC in 1950, writes Ariane Knüsel, eager to “establish itself as a neutral mediator between East and West and to boost the reputation of Swiss neutrality in an international setting” (p. 45). Switzerland became an important base for Chinese economic overtures to Western Europe, including Chinese propaganda and even espionage, although the details remain unclear regarding the last issue. Greece jumped at the opportunity to establish relations with China in 1972, argues Dionysios Chourchoulis, and further developed shipping and other interests with China that they had surreptitiously been conducting from the 1960s.

Part two describes Chinese propaganda efforts in Western Europe and Hong Kong, again an example of direct Sino-European relations during the Cold War and, for some of these scholars, an example of the Cold War in everyday life. Cyril Cordoba and Liu Kaixuan describe Chinese “friendship diplomacy” in Switzerland and France, Sofia Graziani explores the Communist Youth League’s efforts throughout Western Europe, Guido Samarani writes

about the exchange between the PRC and the large Italian Communist Party, and Chi-kwan Mark examines pro-Chinese groups in Hong Kong in the context of Sino-British relations. However, more attention could be paid to how the Chinese ideas and propaganda were received beyond the cases of well-known leftists, who had professional reasons to respond. Western European youth delegations frequently visited China, but quite possibly out of curiosity or of an interest in Chinese culture and language, or perhaps just because it was a free trip. Chinese radicalism in the Mao era limited the efforts to improve the global image of the PRC, presumably a lesson learned by contemporary Confucius Institutes.

Eastern Europe had a very different relationship to China during the Cold War. After the 1949 revolution, all states from the socialist bloc moved quickly to establish so-called friendship treaties, trading arrangements, and agreements on “scientific-technical collaboration.” Jan Adamec, Margaret Gnoinska, and Chen Tao contribute chapters about Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany respectively. China was an alternative source of authority within the socialist world, potentially giving Eastern European states more room to maneuver against a Soviet Union routinely associated with “hegemony” and “great power chauvinism” after 1956. Tao describes the efforts of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) National People’s Army to reduce bureaucracy and privilege by emulating China’s efforts to “send down” officers to construction sites and the countryside. The programme was not appreciated by East German party members and military officers, who even

objected before the worsening Sino-Soviet split ended the discussion. Missing from Tao’s chapter could be further consideration of the impact of news from China itself as GDR officials and advisers were in China and were acquiring extensive knowledge about the disastrous campaigns associated with the Great Leap Forward. Even after the Sino-Soviet split and the withdrawal of most of the advisers in the summer of 1960, the Chinese continued to attempt to maintain relationships with Eastern European states independently of the Soviet Union. Eastern European states predictably joined in the Soviet-led denunciation of Chairman Mao’s “chauvinism” and “dogmatism” even as certain forms of exchange somehow continued. The Sino-Polish Joint Shipping Venture (Chipolbrot), analysed by Gnoinska, survived the violence of the Cultural Revolution and still remains in operation today. Poland’s communist rulers “viewed China as indispensable both to Poland’s limited autonomy and to a global competition with the capitalist West” (p. 193).

While providing interesting case studies, the editors could complement their helpful introduction with a brief conclusion that ties together the three sections of the volume and reminds readers of the consequences of this history for contemporary Sino-European relations. Through their relationships, both Europeans and the Chinese circumvented some of the restrictions that were part of the “bloc logic” imposed by the Soviet Union and the United States. Yet Western and Eastern Europe did this differently, resulting presumably in consequences for the present day. Does the state-directed export-oriented version of contemporary Chinese development

mean a different approach to different parts of the European Union, in part because of these contrasting histories? This is a thoughtful and well-researched book that will encourage further work on small powers and the Cold War, transnational exchange, and Sino-European relations.

Samuel Krug: Die „Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient“ im Kontext globaler Verflechtungen (1914–1921): Strukturen – Akteure – Diskurse, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2020, 380 S.

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Nach Maren Bragullas Studie 2007¹ ist diese Dissertation die jüngste Arbeit, die sich nur der Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient widmet. Samuel Krug stellt ihr drei Thesen voran: Akteure benutzten diese Stelle des Auswärtigen Amts im Weltkrieg auch als Plattform für ihre Interessen, ihrem Auftrag zuwiderlaufend, der lautete, in britischen, französischen und russischen Kolonien Islamismus für antikoloniale Revolten zu schüren. In der vorliegenden Arbeit geht es Wirksamkeit und Diskurs der Nachrichtenstelle.

Dabei ist These eins wenig überraschend: da Personen keine Roboter sind, hegen sie stets eigene Interessen. Interaktionen waren unharmonisch, dienten übergeordneten deutschen Zielen, so These zwei: Kooperation war trotz momentaner In-

teresseneinheit von Spannung, Streit und Misstrauen geprägt – wie im Krieg meist üblich. Die dritte These: edierte Texte dienten nicht nur der deutschen Propaganda, sondern privaten Ambitionen, oft nach Kontakten der Vorzeit. Das hat bereits Gerhard Höpp aufgezeigt.² Krug ergänzt dies durch detailreiche Quellenarbeit in verschiedenen Überlieferungen, auch, weil das Archiv der Stelle als verloren gilt.

Drei Kapitel behandeln die Nachrichtenstelle als Verein, die verschiedenen Akteure und Diskurse, letztere werden gelungen ausgelotet. Nach Kriegsausbruch Mitte 1914 prüfte man zuerst unter dem Diplomaten Max von Oppenheim ein Übersetzungsbüro, um Feindpropaganda zu schwächen oder vorauszuweilen: eine Kollegialbehörde mit horizontaler Entscheidungsebene. Neben der Arabischen gab es die Türkische, Persische, Indische und Russische Abteilung samt Redaktion. Das Konsensgebot fiel bald, heraus kam eine klassische Linienorganisation unter nur deutschen Leitern.

Sie führten zwei Dutzend Nichtdeutsche, davon sechs bis neun in der Arabischen Abteilung. Alle hatten studiert und richteten sich meist auf Arabisch, Französisch und Englisch an Muslime der Kolonien und Räume Frankreichs, Großbritanniens und des Osmanischen Reiches; der russischen Macht, etwa im Kaukasus; im Lager um Berlin mit islamischen Kriegsgefangenen. Wichtig waren neutrale Länder wie Amerika oder die Schweiz als Propagandaziele und Refugium von Islamisten. Durch das Anzetteln islamistischer Revolten sollten im kolonialen Hinterland der Entente Truppen gebunden werden, die daher in Europa fehlten. Die Ziele der