



Project
MUSE[®]
Scholarly journals online

He provides no evidence for this assertion. The “assistance” to which he refers is black-market dealings, which one can hardly conclude were intended to aid the Jews. Although Chodakiewicz admits that anti-Semitism was widespread among the Polish population, he insists that except in a few instances it was not the cause of hostile actions against the Jews. Instead, he attributes Polish violence against Jews to greed and impunity or to self-defense (against Jewish fugitives who robbed peasants in order to survive). He is reluctant to admit that Polish anti-Semitism actually made a difference, insisting that Nazi terror determined Polish attitudes and actions toward the Jews. In reality, both factors were at play. Certainly the Poles were reacting to brutal Nazi policies, but such policies accentuated and hardened underlying Polish hostility toward the Jews.

Despite these and other shortcomings (e.g., the 65 appendices would have been much more helpful if they had been linked to the relevant analysis in the text), the book provides a wealth of information regarding the status and activities of the population of Janów County under Nazi and Soviet rule. Chodakiewicz shows how increasing terror under the Nazis gradually made accommodation difficult and how Nazi depredations increased the sense of nationalism among the peasant population. Discussing the years 1944–1947, he demonstrates that the Communists held little authority in the countryside. Because the Communists initially stayed out of non-political aspects of life, Polish elites and peasants found it easy to accommodate the Soviet forces and their Polish proxies (Jews, he rightly notes, were not as prominent in the administration or security forces as sometimes asserted). As Communist intervention and terror increased, the price of resistance became too high, and the “independentists,” as Chodakiewicz calls them, lost support. Janów County cannot be taken to represent all of Poland, whose various regions differed in ethnic makeup and economic development. Moreover, the regions of Poland suffered diverse fates in 1939. Some were annexed to the Third Reich, others were occupied by the Nazis, and still others were incorporated into the USSR. Still, Chodakiewicz’s study offers a much-needed piece of local history over an extended period and provides data and insights that can help us reach a deeper understanding of wartime Poland.



Hua-yu Li, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China, 1948–1953*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 251 pp. \$75.00.

Reviewed by Steven I. Levine, University of Montana

In September 1953 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) chairman, Mao Zedong, announced his “general line for socialist transition” that set the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on a disastrous course of revolutionary economic and social transformation, ending only with Mao’s death 23 years later. This course was a radical departure from the relatively moderate and socially inclusive policies of the New Democracy, the approach espoused by the CCP to rally non-Communist forces to its banner during

the Chinese civil war (1946–1949) and the first four years of the PRC. Hua-yu Li's tightly focused monograph, a revised Columbia University political science dissertation, addresses the question of why and how this fateful shift in CCP policy occurred. Her answer (a three-character answer in Chinese) is Mao Zedong.

Li's thesis is that Mao reproduced in China the Soviet development trajectory of the late 1920s and 1930s charted by the Soviet dictator Josif Stalin, who defined the economic system of socialism as consisting of the forced collectivization of agriculture, state-run industrialization focused on heavy industry, and the total elimination of capitalism and the capitalist class. This course was spelled out in perhaps the most notorious book ever to appear in the USSR, the *Short Course of the History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*, published in Moscow in 1937 and eventually translated into 67 languages. A Chinese edition of the book, which Stalinists revered as a holy text, was rushed into print in 1938 and served as a major reference work for Mao Zedong.

Over the past fifteen years, documentary evidence from Soviet archives and a variety of Chinese sources has destroyed the long prevalent notion—a notion consistent with the CCP's own version of its history—that Mao Zedong was an independent-minded and innovative Marxist thinker who creatively adapted the Stalinist version of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese circumstances. Li correctly insists that Mao was a devoted Stalinist whose ascendance to the leadership of the CCP was promoted and endorsed by the Soviet-dominated Communist International and who regularly sought and usually followed Stalin's political advice during the civil war and the early years of the PRC until Stalin's death in March 1953. In instituting the general line for socialist transition in China, Mao was merely following a trail pioneered by the great Stalin, a man whom he simultaneously worshipped and resented.

This political-psychological perspective is at the heart of a paradox about which Li can only speculate because the available evidence permits no definitive answer. Stalin himself, in his advice to Mao and other CCP leaders after 1949, consistently urged a moderate course of development. He specifically warned the Chinese against replicating the radical policies of the first Soviet Five Year plan, particularly his unrelenting use of ruthless violence against the so-called kulaks (wealthier peasants), a policy from which Soviet agriculture never fully recovered. Yet Mao ignored the advice of the living Stalin and instead followed the example of the radical Stalin as distilled in the pages of the *Short Course*. Li argues that Mao, who was ambivalent toward Stalin and possessed at best a rudimentary understanding of Marxism-Leninism, chose the version of Stalin that accorded with his own desire to accelerate China's transition to socialism. Mao waited until after Stalin died to embark on the economic Stalinization of China—a course that Stalin himself had thought premature and ill-considered.

Although Li is given to understatement and cautious judgment, the Mao that emerges from the pages of her book is a thoroughly unattractive political operator. The moderate program of the New Democracy that he himself devised was simply an attractive form of bait to lure the unwary into the Venus flytrap embrace of the CCP from which no escape was possible. Mao kept his own counsel and often concealed his innermost thoughts and plans even from his closest political confederates. He

crammed his policy of the general line of socialist transition down the mostly reluctant throats of the party leadership, to say nothing of the Chinese population as a whole. He had no compunctions about threatening, bullying, humiliating, and destroying anyone who stood in his way. Another once-prevalent notion that has dissolved in the acid bath of reality is that the early years of the PRC—the period until the Great Leap Forward—were a time of collective leadership, collegial policymaking, and a Mao who was no more than *primus inter pares*. To the contrary, from the beginning Mao demonstrated the impetuous, irrational, and domineering character that led to much worse disasters than those occasioned by the general line of socialist transition in 1953. What Li does not adequately explore is the shallowness and narrowness of Mao's socialism, a concept that for him meant only the abolition of capitalism and was devoid of such notions as social justice, equity, democracy, and humaneness.

Yet another theorem that Li's work disproves is the idea that the abandonment of New Democracy and the radicalization of CCP policy was a response to the political isolation and economic trauma occasioned by the Korean War, which China entered in October 1950. The general line of socialist transition was a policy of choice, not necessity, and the major consequence, as Li reminds us, was "the postponement of China's economic development for a quarter of a century" (p. 186).

Li's analysis is rather abstract and often takes the form of textual exegesis. One gets little if any feeling of the actual historical circumstances of China in the period covered, apart from the closed circle of Mao and his lieutenants. Yet, in providing a lucid and persuasive explanation for a key historical turning point, Li makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of the PRC.



Jean Ancel, *Preludiu la asasinat: Pogromul de la Iași, 29 iunie 1941*. Iași, Romania: Polirom, 2005. 489 pp.

Reviewed by Dennis Deletant, University College, London

Jean Ancel is the foremost scholar of the Holocaust in Romania, and it is therefore no surprise that this study of the pogrom in the Romanian city of Iași at the end of June 1941 should cast fresh light on some of the most appalling acts perpetrated against the Jews by the Romanian authorities during the Second World War. By convention, the term "pogrom" has come to refer to the full succession of events—including deportations of Jews by train—that took place in Iași from 29 June to 6 July 1941, even though, strictly speaking, the actual pogrom spanned only the days 29 and 30 June. Ancel follows convention and examines the broader period.

Reconstructing these events is no simple matter. Scholars have given estimates ranging from 1,000 to 14,000 for the number of Jews massacred in Iași and a further 2,713 who died during deportation by train southward. The numbers of those shot in the city are the subject of particular dispute. The self-serving nature of official reports—which sometimes contradict one another in essential details—and the absence