

China at the midpoint of the decade. As such, it is a useful reference work to have on one's shelves.

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China Since Tiananmen: Political, Economic and Social Conflicts. Edited by LAWRENCE R. SULLIVAN. [Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995. xx + 352 pp. Hard cover \$60.00, ISBN 1-56324-538-8; paperback \$19.95, ISBN 1-56324-539-6.]

This volume is the first in what the publishers claim will be a series of East Gate Readers aimed at giving non-language students access to primary materials. It is a collection of over 100 documents from the FBIS primarily from the 1990–93 period, although there are the odd one or two from 1989 and 1994. Whilst there are some external comments from Hong Kong and Taiwanese sources, most of the documents have their origins in the official PRC “information” establishment – in other words, exactly what you’d expect from reading the FBIS or the BBC SWB.

The texts are divided into four main sections: politics, economics, society and culture, and science and technology. The last of these seems to have been something of an afterthought – its four documents occupy six pages as opposed to the 43 documents and some 130 pages on politics. Indeed, as more books are planned in the series, it is not clear why all four sections have been lumped together here rather than each having a separate volume of its own.

Each section contains a very brief introduction by Sullivan to the main topics of interest and a short bibliography of suggested further reading. There is also a useful appendix containing diagrammatic explanations of the structure of the Chinese party-state, a chronology of major events and a bibliographical glossary. The context, comment and analysis, however, are deliberately kept to the minimum, and this is very much a text to be read alongside other interpretations of contemporary China.

This volume doesn’t claim to be anything other than a reader for undergraduates, and perhaps the only real judgment of its success will be how many teachers adopt it for their classes. Using documentary examples certainly aids the teaching (and learning) process. The benefit of this volume compared to, for example, Hinton’s collections on the pre-reform era, is that most of the documents are “bite-sized” and relatively accessible to the non-specialist. No two people would ever choose exactly the same collection of documents, and everybody will have their own list of “favourites” that aren’t here. Nevertheless, Sullivan has found a sensible balance between official statements by leaders, longer theoretical pieces from the likes of *qiushi* and shorter journalistic pieces. Whilst I can’t imagine that anybody will restructure their courses to follow the book’s framework, it will probably be used for the occasional example; to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover.

Perhaps the main problem with this volume is the dynamic nature of

contemporary China. While all books on current issues run the risk of being dated as soon as they are published, I think it is a particular danger here. There is a lot of detail on a wide range of affairs from a relatively short time. As a result, the book perhaps works best as a snapshot of China at a specific stage of its history, rather than either an insight into the current scene or an introduction to the wider issues of reform in post-Mao China – it is almost up-to-date, but not quite. If teachers really want to use contemporary documentary examples they can pick their own selection from the latest FBIS or SWB (or from the growing host of computer sources).

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The Origins of the Great Leap Forward: The Case of One Chinese Province. By JEAN-LUC DOMENACH, translated by A. M. BERRETT. [Boulder: Westview, 1995. xvii + 212 pp. \$54.95. ISBN 0-8133-1710-X.].

This long overdue translation of a work first published in French in 1982 is an important addition to the scholarly literature in English on the early years of the PRC. It presents a vivid account of political, social and economic developments in Henan province from 1949 to the launching of the Great Leap Forward in the winter of 1957–58. Informed by carefully formulated political science and empirically grounded in primary data culled from the provincial Party press, it is a case study in the best tradition of continental European China studies. The author refused the intellectual short-cut of the pre-translated, pre-figured databases so tempting to scholars whose first language is English (such as the *SCMP* and *JPRS* serials), and has done his work from the source up. The reader is rewarded accordingly.

The book begins with the conflict over rural collectivization between provincial strong-men Pan Fusheng and Wu Zhipu which resulted in Pan's temporary "retreat" in 1954. It goes on to analyse, in great detail, the economic and social crisis in Henan that saw Pan return to pre-eminence in the summer of 1957. It ends by charting Wu's come-back (about which Domenach argues convincingly that "the relative *weakness* of his position...predisposed him to excesses" (p. 127)), Pan's ultimate demise, the launching of the Great Leap and the prelude to the greatest man-made disaster in Henan's history.

Domenach's narrative is structured around the central question of why, in the autumn of 1957, did the CCP leadership "rush into one of the most original and irrational economic policies this century has seen?" (p. 1). His answer, carefully hedged, is that the Great Leap Forward was an attempt – at best rational only in the abstract while utterly unreasonable in reality – to cope with a profound crisis in popular legitimacy that had begun soon after 1949 and had reached crisis proportions by 1956–57 (p. 167). In other words, it did not merely start because of high-level