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The Middle East in Transition

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BOOKS

Brandt, Conrad. *Stalin's Failure in China.* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1958. 178 p.

Through extensive research and study of Chinese-Soviet writings, including Trotsky's Archives, and personal interviews with former Chinese Communist leaders, Conrad Brandt has come up with a very interesting and informative account of the first Soviet attempt to engulf China in the Communist system. The roles played by the leaders of the Comintern, the Kuomintang, and various oppositions in their struggle for power in China during the 1924-27 period are described in excellent detail. Conrad Brandt covers the historic period from Sun Yat-sen in the early 1920's to Chiang Kai-shek's coup, the Nangh'ang Rebellion and finally, in the mid 1930's, the Communist's Long March to the Northwest. The author repeatedly emphasizes the failure of Stalin in China (1924-27) as due to the Red leader's rigid adherence to Marxist assumptions, unrealistic policies, poor intelligence, miscalculations and party rivalries. It is significant to note, however, that although the Communists in China had their ups and downs during this very short and violent revolutionary period, in the long run Stalin gained his objective. Michael Borodin, Stalin's chief agent in China, envisaged in the mid-1920's that the Communists would withdraw to the Northwest — as they did in the mid-1930's — to await their chance to swoop down when the enemy seemed the weakest. The Communists' return under Mao fulfilled Borodin's prophesy. In reading Conrad Brandt's book, one cannot help but reflect on this, the Chinese lesson of the past, and see all too clearly the striking similarity of the same Communist tactics at work elsewhere throughout the free world today — ruthless, methodical, but, most important, patient and unmindful of the time and effort involved in gaining an objective.

Laqueur, Walter Z. *The Middle East in Transition.* New York, Praeger, 1958. 513 p.

The contributions of 34 authors of various nationalities from the West, Middle East and Soviet Union provide an interesting collection of essays representing a wide range of opinions and views on recent political and social trends in the Middle

East. The main theme of the topics throughout the book deals with social and economic developments in the Arab world, political history of the area, the elements of Arab unity and dissensions, the Israel issue, relations between the Arabs and the West, and the effects of Russia and Communism on the Middle East. Many of the articles represent a wide expanse of varying schools of thought as to the solution for the present turmoil in the Middle East. Although the contentions of one school tend to refute the arguments of an opposite school, the pros and cons developed provide a comprehensive analysis of the situation and its peculiar problems. Among the many considerations advanced in the text, the arguments for and against a cooperative scheme for economic development of the entire area, as well as controversial assertions regarding a lack of understanding and cooperation among the Western powers are of considerable interest. Basic misconceptions in Western thinking about the Middle East are advanced to point out the need for a reappraisal of unfamiliar factors in the situation which have misled Western attitudes and policy. Discussions of Nasserism, the Ba'ath party and Communism provide an interesting contrast in reactions, since some of the contributors are naturally sympathetic to their emergence, while others are highly critical of such radical movements. Although the reader will emphatically disagree with some of the views expressed in the text, they are illuminating in that they represent significant thoughts which should be taken into account by the student of Middle Eastern affairs.

Tang, Peter S. H. *Communist China Today*. New York, Praeger, 1957. 536 p.

Peter Sheng-hao Tang's background prepared him admirably for the truly large task of writing this book (536 pages). He served as a staff member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chungking and as an attaché at the Nationalist Chinese Embassy in Moscow before receiving his Ph.D. from Columbia. *Communist China Today* is a comprehensive, almost encyclopedic, study of the Red Giant of Asia. It is so objective as to be completely unemotional (and, accordingly, not the easiest reading in the world). However, this treatment by a painstaking author has produced a worthwhile analysis of Chinese Communism — its ideological and historical background — and an unbiased study of today's leadership, mechanics and operations.