



East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976

Tom Buchanan

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East Wind offers the first complete, archive-based account of the relationship between China and the British Left, from the rise of modern Chinese nationalism to the death of Mao Tse tung. Beginning with the "Hands Off China" movement of the mid-1920s, Tom Buchanan charts the mobilisation of British opinion in defence of China against Japanese aggression, 1931-1945, and the role of the British left in relations with the People's Republic of China after 1949.

He shows how this relationship was placed under stress by the growing unpredictability of Communist China, above all by the Sino-Soviet dispute and the Cultural Revolution, which meant that by the 1960s China was actively supported only by a dwindling group of enthusiasts. The impact of the suppression of the student protests in Tiananmen Square (June 1989) is addressed as an epilogue.

East Wind argues that the significance of the left's relationship with China has been unjustly overlooked. There were many occasions, such as the mid-1920s, the late 1930s and the early 1950s, when China demanded the full attention of the British left. It also argues that there is nothing new in the current fascination with China's emergence as an economic power. Throughout these decades the British left was aware of the immense, unrealised potential of the Chinese economy, and of how China's economic growth could transform the world.

In addition to analysing the role of the political parties and pressure groups of the left, Buchanan sheds new light on the activities of many well-known figures in support of China, including intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell, R H Tawney and Joseph Needham. Many other interesting stories emerge, concerning less well-known figures, which show the complexity of personal links between Britain and China during the twentieth century.

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