

ASIEN 94 (Januar 2005)

Abstract

Der Weg in die Hungersnot: Erinnerungen chinesischer Intellektueller an den ländlichen "Großen Sprung nach vorne" (1958-1961)

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In the autumn of 1958 the Chinese government declared that communism is "not a thing of the far future". With the organisation of the peasants in people's communes, mass movements, and the militarization of the rural workforce, it was believed that China could overtake Great Britain and the USA within a few years. After four months the strategy seemed to be a total defeat. The dream of a direct transformation to communism produced the most serious economic catastrophe in the history of New China. In China and in the West the most research about the process to the famine focuses on the government or Mao Zedong. The Chinese Party History never researched the village or the normal people. To focus on the village and the masses the author held Oral History-Interviews with retired intellectuals in Beijing in summer 2002 who had been sent to villages in 1958 to support the Great Leap Forward. With the beginning of the famine in the winter of 1958 this intellectuals lost their believes in a direct transformation to communism. The political pressure from above and below thwarted the cadres, intellectuals, and the peasants from standing up against the destructive policies.