

1920s, where they continued to engage in activist politics. While some ECCO members, such as Cai Hesen and Zhao Shiyan, were executed by the Guomindang shortly after their return to China, others went on to play major roles in the communist revolution both before and after 1949. Regarding the critical question of what long-term impact, if any, the European experience imparted upon the individuals concerned or the Chinese communist movement in general, Levine offers several interesting conjectures. She suggests, for example, that ECCO members' greater exposure to European communist parties led them to place greater emphasis upon the role of propaganda and Party discipline and organization in the revolutionary project. She also speculates that overseas experience may have lent ECCO members "a less parochial, broader view of the Chinese scene" (205) than communists — like Mao — who came to power without ever having left China. This reviewer was left with only one regret: since the book ends with the return of ECCO members to China in the late 1920s, it is unable to provide an answer to one of the most intriguing questions to arise from the study, which concerns the role of ECCO personal networks and the possible existence of an "ECCO cohort" in subsequent CCP politics. Levine is aware of this problem, and one hopes that she may take up the question in a future study.

The book contains a full bibliography, complete index, and two valuable appendices, one of biographies of leading Chinese communists, the other a description of major student and political organizations in France and China. In summary, Levine has written a well-researched, cogent study of an important yet neglected aspect of the history of

Chinese communism. China specialists and students of comparative communism alike will benefit from reading this book.

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Susan Herbst, *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling has Shaped American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993).

Few can deny the ubiquity of opinion polling in contemporary politics. Political parties conduct polls to "position" themselves on issues, plan electoral strategies, and select leaders. Governments consult pollsters to "test the waters" when adopting new policies. Lobbyists, trade unions, and the media, to list only a few examples, maintain close ties to the polling profession. The technologies of random sampling, survey research, and tele-communications are now indelibly etched onto the fabric of public life, and, consequently, polling and pollsters wield significant influence in civic affairs. For all its modern-day pervasiveness, however, polling has received only haphazard treatment by historians, who typically turn to past polls only to cull opinion figures on topics of inquiry. Similarly, survey researchers when analyzing prior polling generally do so to acquire time-series attitudinal data on contemporary issues, such as defence spending. Compounding this undeveloped historical perspective is the paucity of theoretical work on polling's social and political functions in North American society.

Susan Herbst's book endeavours to advance such a historical and theoretical

understanding of the polling project in the United States. How did the highly quantitative practice of opinion polling, begun in the 1930s, ultimately become the most authoritative means of assessing public opinion? How has this form of quantification affected the type and quality of public discourse and democratic practices? Herbst's theoretical framework, outlined in the first chapter, draws on the work of Max Weber and Michel Foucault. Weber's sociological theory underscoring the relationship between instrumental rationality and quantitative methods elucidates the rise of such nineteenth and twentieth century phenomena as census taking, social surveys, and Taylorism. Opinion polling, with its intrinsic design to quantify and standardize the disparate beliefs and opinions of a diverse populace, is an inheritor of this rational tradition. Foucault's writings on the co-penetration of knowledge and power and the technological innovations permitting enhanced methods of surveillance provide the theoretical underpinning for an analysis of polling as a potential technique of social control. Linking together these social theorists, questions are posed: what were the social and political implications of opinion polling's heightened rationalization of the public sphere; and how did the polls affect the surveillance possibilities and knowledge/power capacities of public and private institutions?

After establishing this theoretical construct and providing a useful discussion on the symbolic and rhetorical uses of quantification in public speech, Herbst's subsequent chapters comprise empirical studies in the history of public opinion measurement. Chapter Three recounts the variety of forms of opinion expression common throughout the ages, from the oratorical/rhetorical styles of

the Ancient Greeks, through the Parisian salons of the eighteenth-century, and culminating in the representative sample survey. She notes that such forms of opinion expression and measurement became progressively more routinized and were increasingly likely to elicit "private" or anonymous opinions from individuals. Chapter Four looks at American straw polls — unscientific pre-election counts of voters usually conducted by journalists for newspapers — in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter Five reports on Herbst's survey of surviving congressmen and journalists from the 1930s and 1940s and their uses of quantitative and qualitative methods to take the democratic pulse. The next chapter discusses the advanced state of polling in contemporary American politics. Chapter Seven explores the contested terrain of crowd estimation, noting the symbolic and conflicting uses of rally counts by supporters and opponents of an issue, for example, abortion. The final chapter is a general discussion on how the triumph of opinion tabulation, "numbered voices," has transformed a prior belief in public opinion as "the product of group interaction, or encoded in public action of one sort or another" to one defined as the results of "a confidential, scientifically conducted survey of unconnected individuals." (172) The outcome has been a significant curtailment of the range and depth of public discourse.

Though this is a thoughtful and clearly written study, I have a couple points of criticism. In describing polling's historical antecedents, Herbst all but neglects its most important technological and ideological progenitor, market research. All the early pollsters — George Gallup, Elmo Roper, Archibald Crossley — were established

consumer researchers long before and well after they started measuring public opinion in the mid-1930s. Indeed, the magazine editorial accompanying the first scientific opinion poll in 1935 noted approvingly that the “technique for selling toothpaste” could now be applied to “plumbing the public mind.” It is in probing the business practices and resultant contradictions brought on by their dual capacities as consumer researchers and opinion pollsters that historians can gain a broader contextual understanding of polling’s origins and early years. Herbst also pays scant attention to the rhetorical strategies used by the early pollsters to promote their fledgling practice. More than a mere technological innovation facilitating the taking of a national sample survey, Gallup *et al.*

proffered an ideological defence of polling as a means to promote democratic expression from across the social and economic spectrum and thus diminish the influence of organized lobbies. Since Herbst suggests that contemporary polling at times may be used by elites to manipulate the general public, more attention to this earlier rationale would have further developed this historical irony. These criticisms aside, Herbst’s book is a commendable one, and is an important work in the public opinion field.

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