

When François Mitterrand visited China in 1961, Mao Zedong mocked reports of famine in the country. There was no famine, he said, only "a period of scarcity", an assertion that Mitterrand - who described Mao as "a great scholar known in the entire world for the diversity of his genius" - was happy to accept. Returning to France after his three-week tour, Mitterrand had no doubts about his account of events: "I repeat in order to be clearly understood - there is no famine in China." Western politicians of the right shared the French Socialist leader's view. After touring China in late 1960, the Conservative MP for Chester, John Temple, reported that communism was working and that the country was making "great progress".

At the time these western dignitaries were making their escorted tours through China, it was in the grip of the largest famine in history, a man-made catastrophe in which at least 45 million people were starved, beaten, tortured or worked to death. (...)

The article:

<http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2010/09/mao-china-famine-western>

The book:

<http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/6296363/systematic-genocide-.thtml>

Basic information:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Chinese\\_Famine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Chinese_Famine)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Leap\\_Forward](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Leap_Forward)