The Hungarian Explorers of Daqing, China’s Largest Oil Field

Dr Péter Vámos
(Hungarian Academy of Sciences / Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Budapest)

Abstract
Advanced geophysical techniques developed in Hungary contributed immensely to the success of geological surveys carried out in the PRC between 1956 and 1959. A group of Hungarian geophysicists played a pivotal role in exploring and discovering oil deposits in the Songliao Basin, which later became known as Daqing, the largest oil field in the PRC. Taking the Hungarian geophysicists’ expedition as an
example, the aim of this talk is to explore the historical setting of early exchanges as well as the daily practice of scientific and technological interactions between the PRC and Hungary, one of the closest East European allies of the Soviet Union during the second half of the 1950s. Ironically, as the Sino-Soviet split escalated into an open conflict by the mid-1960s Daqing became a model industrial city in Mao Zedong’s economic development strategy but also an eminent example of self-reliance and the eschewal of foreign knowledge systems.

Speaker Péter Vámos is a senior research fellow at the Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences and associate professor at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Budapest. His research focuses on the modern history and international relations of China, especially the relations between China and the Soviet bloc. He is author of Magyar jezsuita misszió Kínában [Hungarian Jesuit Mission in China] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003); Kína mellettünk? Kinai külügyi iratok Magyarországról, 1956 [Is China with us? Chinese diplomatic records on Hungary, 1956] (Budapest: Historia Alapítvány – MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 2008); and coeditor (with Huang Lifu and Li Rui) of Xin shiliao xin faxian: Zhongguo yu Sulian Dong’ou guojia guanxi [New archives, new findings: The relationships between China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe] (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014).