

tainly is very successful in this. This book provides the reader not only with a well written biography of Rizal but also with a good and informative introduction to the Philippines and its history.

Reinhard Wendt

WERNER MEISSNER, *Philosophie und Politik in China. Die Kontroverse über den dialektischen Materialismus in den dreißiger Jahren*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1986. 260 pp., DM 32,-

A spectre has been haunting the West for several decades: the "sinization of Marxism". Profound speculations about, for instance, the heritage of "dialectical" yin-yang philosophy within the Holy scriptures of Chinese Marxism, fill entire libraries. Such theories were superficially justified by a speech made by Mao Zedong at the 6th plenum of the 6th Central Committee (what a remarkable magic of numbers!) in 1938, and were openly proclaimed by the Chinese communists from 1943 onwards.

Werner Meißner has done away with this spectre. The thorough analysis of essential writings of Chinese Marxism gives access to the true sources of what was believed to be unique in Chinese dialectical materialism. Meißner's book reveals them as merely political issues. According to him the examination of several basic writings has neither been satisfactory from the point of formal logic nor has it revealed any noticeable innovation in any field of contemporary philosophy. In spite of their alleged purely "philosophical" content, the publications of the period in question (the 1930s) prove to be but a hidden reflection of political issues with which the Chinese Communist Party was concerned at that time.

Meißner concentrates his study on a crucial event of the history of modern China: the debate on the "united front" with the Kuomintang during the years 1934-1939, with a climax between 1936 and 1937. Although, in all the writings analysed by Meißner, no direct mention is made of this problem which seems to be the most urgent of the period, the question of whether there should be a united front with the Kuomintang or not, pervades all "philosophical" literature in a way which, at first glance, is invisible to the naked eye of the professional China watcher who is used to taking all utterances of Communist Party leaders seriously.

In order to decode statements about "the law of identity in formal logic" or the "unification of sensorial and theoretical cognition" and "mechanistic epistemology" with regard to their actual (i.e. political) meaning, Meißner

unfolds a theory of political semiotics ("signs and symbols") according to which each "philosophical" item represents a concrete reference to one of the various political options and opinions about the future strategy of the Communist Party. Before coming to the evidence, the author first presents us with the necessary ideological and political background. Therefore, his book is divided into three major parts: 1. The evolution of Soviet philosophy until the eve of the 1930s (pp. 33-50). The author makes clear that the gradual decline of a formerly rather vivid philosophical discussion in Soviet Marxism under Stalin and his ilk (e.g. Mark B. Mitin) had already taken place *before* the arrival and later acceptance of dialectical materialism in China. 2. The debate on the second united front in China (pp. 51-72). In this chapter Meißner sheds some light on the historical events (e.g. the Hsi-An incident) as well as on the material published concerning the outward dimension of the Communist Party's attitude towards a united front; the political situation and the all-pervading censorship of the KMT government did not allow the party leaders (and Party intellectuals) to give any open declaration of their intentions. As a consequence, their statements, like a kind of tightrope walk, were articulated in a mostly associative way almost imperceptible to an outsider (p. 72). The analysis of these preliminary, albeit indispensable, ingredients leads to the main part of the study, 3. controversial ideas on dialectical materialism (pp. 73-189), followed by a scrutiny of Mao's writings *On Contradiction* and *On Practice* (pp. 204-224) in the light of the foregoing analysis. The analysis of the various textual changes that *On Contradiction* had to undergo between 1937 and 1952 is of particular interest (pp. 215ff).

An examination of the contributions Ai Siqi, Chen Boda, Ye Qing and others made to the seemingly philosophical debates on "Philosophy and Science" (pp. 73-117), "sensorial and theoretical cognition" (pp. 118-137), "formal and dialectical logic" (pp. 138-174) and other equally serious issues (pp. 175-203) uncovers the details of a whole system of abstract references: matter/mind, materialism/idealism, philosophy/science, formal/dialectical logic are merely symbols which, according to the respective political intentions of the writers, can be assigned to political parties, groups and factions, and positions of the time. On pp. 225-232 Meißner gives a detailed "dictionary" of the terms used in the debate and their relative political "meaning": no wonder that the "area of formal logic" corresponds to the territory of the KMT, the "law of contradiction and of the identity of opposites" corresponds to the continuation of the Communist Party's struggle within the united front, and the like. Most depressing is the fact that even the whole of "foreign philosophy" becomes only a tool in the hands of the participants of that abstract

reference system. Meißner even succeeds in showing how the use of these dummies changed in keeping with the political situation.

This is a long-overdue and convincing study. It is, at the same time, a valid contribution to the more than 2000 years-old "memorandum style" of Chinese intellectuals, which, as a formal category, should finally replace any pondering over a sinization of whatsoever content. (An English translation of Meißner's book has just been published in London as *Philosophy and Politics in China. The Controversy over Dialectical Materialism in the 1930s*. Translated from the German by Richard Mann. London: Hurst & Company, 1990. 230 pp., £ 27.50)

Michael Lackner

MONIKA SCHÄDLER, *Neue Wege für Chinas Bauern – Produktion, Beschäftigung und Einkommen im nichtlandwirtschaftlichen Sektor*. (Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, 174). Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1989. XVI + 200 pp. DM 28,-

It seems very difficult to give even a modest description of the rich content of this small book, which presents a wealth of facts and data on recent developments in the rural economy of the world's most populous nation, mainly in its non-agricultural sector.

Parts 1 and 2 give the frequently changing definitions of Chinese statistics about the countryside and the data themselves, including the wide regional (or provincial) variations. Two-digit growth rates of net production in the years 1983-87 seem "irrefutable" (p. 11), as does the growing social differentiation between the less and the more advanced regions of the country.

Industrial and service activities in the rural areas have a long tradition and are clearly interdependent on agricultural production (Asian mode of production). They promote each other, but have their own problems, even contradictions and competition with the urban industrial sector. These contradictions are seen in changing government directives and support. Rural industries have some macro-economic advantages (employment of surplus labour, utilization of local capital and raw material, no rural-urban migration), but at the same time disadvantages (competition for scarce resources, low economies of scale, i.e. lower output per unit of input, poor finish, low security standards in local mines). Official documents stress the need and will to give active support, reasonable guidance and strengthened directions for the improvement of quality.