

character and not as a "lesson". Why not seize every opportunity to tell German sceptics (obviously for fear of an "academic proletariat") that over 90 % of Japanese pupils finish the second cycle of secondary schools (FRG: under 30 %). One more example: all authors mention (but do not take as a "lesson") the fact of the very low rate of military expenditure in Japan (around 1 % of GNP) compared with more than 3 % in the FRG, thus leaving more opportunity for productive investment. Why not learn from Japan in this respect, too? There might be some reasons which need special elaboration.

Which leads to my final remark. As we now possess various good introductions to the Japanese economy - including these three books - we should concentrate our (anyway scarce) resources more on research and publications on special Japanese features. Shigeto Tsuru / Helmut Weidner: *Ein Modell für uns: Die Erfolge der japanischen Umweltpolitik* (A model for us: The success of Japanese environment policy), Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch 1985, might be quoted as an example.

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VIBEKE HEMMEL / PIA SINDBJERG: *Women in Rural China. Policy Towards Women Before and After the Cultural Revolution.* (Studies on Asian Topics, No.7). London: Curzon Press, 1984. 155 pages, £ 5.50

The authors of this book are graduates in Sinology from the University of Copenhagen. They submitted this work as a thesis in 1976, after which it was revised and translated into English. 1984, the date of publication means a space of eight years between the original time of writing and the final accessibility to a larger reading public. That is a regrettable delay.

This work concentrates on the official attitude towards the role of women in socialist China, the male-dominated Chinese Communist Party, and the All-China Women's Federation. The authors try to compare the policy towards women in two different periods, the one before the Cultural Revolution (1962-1965) and the other after the Cultural Revolution (1969-1976).

The topics are: production, living conditions, ideological propaganda, and women cadres. The main source is the official organ of the Women's Federation, *Zhongguo Funü*. Apart from this, the authors used a document concerning the training of women cadres in rural districts for their chapter on the sixties. In the study on the seventies much more comprehensive material had to be reviewed, because the women's magazine did not resume publishing until after 1976.

In view of the nature of the sources it is obvious that the picture we get is one of the ideals as they are propagated in the Chinese media rather than one

reflecting reality. The authors see this as a problem, but they assume that it is possible to decipher the sources by interpreting them rather than taking them at their face value.

The starting point of this study is the assumption that there were two different lines of policy towards women in the sixties and in the seventies. Analysing the documents given the authors come to the conclusion that women in rural China are not fully emancipated. A precondition for this is, in their opinion, full participation in production as well as relief from the burden of housework. During the two periods no genuine attempts have been made to remove the material cause of women's suppression. The differences to be noted between the two periods have more to do with the virtues emphasized than with practical reality. For example, in the seventies men were called upon to do their share of the housework more than they were in the sixties. But the basic distribution of labour did not change, and women still do the domestic work.

The Women's Federation accepts and even glorifies the double work of women, and does nothing to change the status quo. So how can women in China acquire the equal status promised to them since 1949? Certainly not by following necessities dictated by whatever economic theory is prevalent.

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