

balance, as well as in creating an awareness of the danger these hold for the real basis of existence". In respect to Malaysia the author has achieved his purpose admirably. In doing so he has created a modern and apposite approach to regional geography: one that is aware of the problems and prepared to tackle them directly in a fair and balanced manner.

Werner Rutz

BRUNHILD STAIGER (Hrsg.): China. Natur - Geschichte - Gesellschaft - Politik - Staat - Wirtschaft - Kultur. (Ländermonographien, Band 12, hrsg. vom Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart), Tübingen: Erdmann, 1980. XI + 519 pp.

Thirteen authors contributed to the volume, almost the entire academic staff of Hamburg's Institut für Asienkunde. The subject is dealt with in seven blocs. Besides a historical introduction and relevant general information the main emphasis was laid on the People's Republic. The contents include:

- geography, climate, soil, vegetation, natural resources;
- history from the Shang Dynasty to the Republic of China;
- society, religion, national minorities, social security;
- political development since 1949, foreign policy;
- the state, Maoism, constitution and state organs, legal affairs, military affairs;
- economics, problems of development, agriculture, energy, transport and communications, industry, political line and participation, domestic and foreign trade.
- culture, media, language, education, science and technology, literature, contemporary painting, cultural heritage.

The book has an appendix, a bibliography arranged by subjects, a chronology, a table with provinces and their capitals in pinyin and the traditional, more familiar transcription, data on the Chinese economy for the years 1977 and 1978 and an index of persons and subjects. Some chapters include tables (e.g. on national minorities and the economy) and maps (on geographical setting). The book contains 64 illustrations and photos (of mixed quality), and has a map of the People's Republic (Inner Mongolia is shown with the boundaries set during the Cultural Revolution; however, this autonomous region was restored to its former size on July 1st, 1979).

The concept is clear and the well-structured articles rich in information. Essential factors are correctly stressed, and interesting details not neglected.

Besides a factual account of events we are also furnished with thought-provoking and stimulating analyses (as one example, Kùchler's contribution on the organization of Chinese society). The interested layman will appreciate the simple wording, though some pages (e.g. p. 243) annoy the reader with peculiar, even odd language.

In compiling such a handbook one is confronted with several problems. Events and trends must be described and put into perspective. Connections, continuity and change must be revealed. In this respect the contributions have been well selected, edited, and co-ordinated. The introductory chapters of such volumes bear a special burden. They have to cover the groundwork in the limited space at the writer's disposal. The condensation necessitated thereby may possibly harbour misleading formulations, of which we can give three examples:

Decisive for the revolution was the increasingly grave conflict between the Government and the provinces over the Government's railway policy (p. 86). Other reasons were also decisive, as mentioned on the previous pages.

Only his death prevented Yuan Shikai's plan to make himself Emperor of China from materializing (p. 87). Perhaps there was also widespread opposition and resentment at such an endeavour.

Such engineering only failed because Wang died the same year from the effects of an assassination attempt. (p. 98) "The same year" here means 1944, and the reader might conclude that the assault took place "the same year". But Wang Jingwei was shot at in November 1935; not all the bullets were removed and he died in November 1944, still suffering from these old wounds.

All in all, this book, edited by Brunhild Staiger, would be well-placed in the hands of interested laymen and on the shelves of libraries within easy reach of motivated non-specialists.

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