

PETER J. OPITZ: Chinas Außenpolitik. Ideologische Prinzipien - strategische Konzepte. Zürich: Edition Interfrom, 1977, 107 pages, DM 8.-

This is a small but rich book. Opitz, professor of political science in Munich, takes Chinese leadership at their words. The importance of Chinese self-understanding is stressed while describing and analysing the subject. The author compares ideological pretensions with political reality in Chinese foreign policy. He points out the significance of two basic elements of this policy: Mao's theory of contradictions and the concept of the united front. After discussing these foundations the various stages and strategies of Chinese foreign policy are explained to the reader. Here the author emphasizes the following features: the Chinese perception of the outside world, the change of contradictions, the importance of the Third World and Mao's principle that struggle and alliance exist at the same time (to make use of the contradictions, to win over the majority, to defeat enemies one after another). We are also informed about interactions between domestic and foreign policy. Opitz holds that in both these fields China had a bad start after 1949. He then examines the radius of action Chinese leadership has at their disposal. In doing so Opitz discusses possible alternatives and mentions motives for the normalization of Sino-American relations. Military aspects and Chinese foreign aid are also discussed. Opitz states that on the domestic scene success presupposed a consolidation of the basis and a restoration of independence, which, according to him, applies also to foreign policy. He maintains Chinese foreign policy has characteristics such as flexibility, readiness to compromise and a high degree of realism.

The book presents a comprehensive and well structured review, shows trends, continuity and turns of Chinese foreign policy. Description is always enriched with evaluation and judgement. Opitz quotes important documents and uses relevant secondary literature; here the reader gets a very fine selection.

Perhaps one might object to the fact that in parts of the book Mao Tse-tung is placed too much in the centre of Chinese foreign policy. However, Opitz explains this approach. There is almost no fault to be found with this book (something is wrong with footnote no. 5), except perhaps with the style. Some expressions are odd and professorial. However, Opitz has written an excellent and highly recommendable book on Chinese foreign policy.

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