

RAINER HOFFMANN: Kampf zweier Linien. Zur politischen Geschichte der chinesischen Volksrepublik 1949-1977.

Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978, 141 pages.

SIGMAR GROENEVELD (ed.): Materialien zur China-Diskussion.

(Materialien zur Reihe Sozialökonomische Schriften zur Agrarentwicklung, Bd. 16)

Saarbrücken: Verlag breitenbach, 1979, 308 pages.

A reappraisal of China is necessary, in particular since the four spokesmen of the cultural revolution were arrested in Oct. 1976. The two books reviewed here answer some of the ensuing questions from two angles:

- 1) what were the dynamics of political struggle from the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 until 1977 (Hoffmann), and
- 2) how was the present modernization course affecting basic level activities in 1978 (Groeneveld et al.)?

In a fascinating and informative book, Rainer Hoffmann presents a political power analysis of the nine phases in the history of the People's Republic of China until 1977. As in his earlier account "Maos Rebellen" (1977)¹, great care is taken to unfold in detail the process of the Cultural Revolution (1965-69). The reader is introduced to some of the subtleties of intra-party struggle in China. When, for instance, the Anti-Confucius-Campaign was aimed at discrediting Zhou Enlai, the latter deflected its momentum into a movement to criticize Lin Biao. Hoffmann attempts to turn our view toward the interests behind the competing factions, and thus proceed from a mere history of persons and groups to a history of political forces. Through the detailed index, information on many of the actors as well as on important issues can be traced; thus testifying to the impressive level political science study of the People's Republic of China has reached.

Because of the brilliant style of the book, the reader never becomes bored - although he may sometimes protest against creations as "Massenlinismus". Many other accounts of China already lose their verve during the indispensable "Long March" through the source material, while Hoffmann is still able to energetically tie together the main strings of the argument.

The leading theme of the book, the "struggle between the two lines", is a prominent concept of China's political culture, and thus justified. But let us not forget its theoretical limitations and its authoritarian ring. In the People's Republic it was coined to denote the struggle inside the Party between "capitalism" - loosely defined and not tied to disposal over the

means of production! - and socialism. This is not a very precise tool for ordering competing groups in a Communist party. Yet, its sense has been understood as a "symbolic use of politics", compelling compliance in a struggle. It becomes dangerous as a cliché wielded by the powerful and stigmatizing the losing "line".

Hoffmann borrows the term from Chinese usage, but does not confine himself to its original meaning. Thus, on a rather abstract level, the "struggle between the two lines" is couched as follows (p. 131): "The Maoist model of the small structure has capitulated in favor of the industrial world model of the great structure". Would it not be more fruitful for the Western observer, we may ask, to criticize this concept of "two lines" as a stereotype instead of preserving it in a more diffuse meaning of a world-wide conflict in development strategy?

The conclusion of this challenging book raises an important issue: Have the principles of industrialism really won in China, as Hoffmann maintains, or does the vast underdeveloped agriculture represent an important counter-weight?

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Conditions of work and of life under the modernization course in China, in particular in the agricultural regions, are documented in an excellent collection of essays edited by Sigmar Groeneveld. This anthology presents the results of a three-week visit to China in 1978 by 24 German specialists, mainly agricultural economists and political scientists. 41 reports summarize material collected through interviews and observation in five people's communes, in industrial, educational and commercial institutions as well as in living quarters and families. 13 brief analytical contributions introduce the reader to conclusions drawn by some of the participants. The appendix adds a detailed list of prices relating to housing, food, wages, etc. Some hints to useful literature supplement the book.

This is, in my view, the most profound report made by a German group visiting China until now. It can be placed alongside the stimulating report by the American delegation on early childhood development (U. Bronfenbrenner et al., edited by William Kessen, in German: *Kindheit in China*, 1976). It is particularly useful, as actual interviews are rendered in detail in many instances, thus enabling the reader to draw his own, possibly different conclusions.

To evaluate these data, we can assume, as Theodor Bergmann points out in his introduction, that the institutions the group was shown rank above -

average in China. The people's communes were situated in areas with rather good communications, not far from Guangzhou, Shanghai, Nanjing and Beijing. The reader is provided with detailed information on agricultural production, mechanization, social services, the relations of the communes to the state, the issue of income distribution, the size of privately owned plots and the peasants' daily routine. Barbara Hazard and Gerd Spittler discuss the basic unit, the production team. Georg Elwert's article deals with collective subsistence production and individual enrichment. Ulrich Menzel sketches interests supporting the actual modernization program.

Dieter Senghaas elaborates on the theme of modernization, reminding us of the issue raised in Hoffmann's conclusion. Senghaas states that in spite of the "technocratic mise-en-scène" of China's present modernization course, the option is kept open for the original "auto-centred" development strategy, with more institutional flexibility in China than in the Soviet Union (p.198).

A further conclusion by Senghaas is, I feel, not as convincing: according to him, modernization in the present Chinese context does "not necessarily lead" to marginality (p.192). Yet, this is disproved by the numerous vagrant youths in the cities who, devoid of residence permits and employment - particularly depressing in a country without unemployment benefits - subsist on delinquent acts or support by their relatives. Further marginal groups are the "mingong" (contracted labour) and many of the former landlords and rich peasants.

Turning to problems of political culture, Michael Vester found it impossible to discover as much participatory experience as published legends promise (p.214), thus partly supporting the scathing criticism by a reconverted Claudie Broyelle and her companions (*Zweite Rückkehr nach China*, 1977). Despite the efforts during and after the Cultural Revolution to remould people by practical work, Vester observed a widespread disdain of peasant labour in China (p.213). He sketches three generational orientations among the Chinese (p.215):

- "developmental" (generation of economic growth, 40 years and older),
- "reality-conscious" (generation of rebels, older than 25 years),
- "utopian enjoyment" (the youth called in China "sugar water generation" which Vester conceives as corresponding to the "new type of socialization" in Western Europe).

The deep psychological strain produced in the Cultural Revolution is documented in the life history of one of the women interpreters accompanying the group (p.168); in contrast, the famous ethnologist Fei Xiaotong, in his talks with the group, deemed it preferable to hush up his own tortuous experiences.

Being able to converse in Chinese helps to breach some barriers - as is impressively demonstrated by some of Barbara Hazard's observations (p. 158 ff.).

Finally, the unfulfilled claim of democracy in China (refer to pp. 181, 223) should, in my view, cast doubts on the long-term benefits of the authoritarian modernization course of present-day China. This is sharply demonstrated when a person such as human rights spokesman Wei Jing-sheng, who explicitly demands a more complete and more democratic modernization, is suppressed by a fifteen-year verdict.

The discussion on China - to which both books offer commendable approaches - should continue.

Klaus Mäding

Note:

- 1) Rainer Hoffmann, Maos Rebellen. Sozialgeschichte der chinesischen Kulturrevolution. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1977. Reviewed in Vol. 10 (1979), No. 3/4, p. 390-391 of this journal.

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