

Reviews

Thomas Scharping, *Mao Chronik. Daten zu Leben und Werk.*
Zusammengestellt von Thomas Scharping. (Reihe Hanser Chroniken).
München: Carl Hanser, 1976, 235 pages,

This book is a portrayal of Mao Tse-tung's life from birth to death. Thomas Scharping has compiled all the available data with great diligence and skill, and has followed the late Chairman's career as closely as possible, sometimes even day by day.

The author uses his short introduction to explain the criteria he used for including or excluding any of the numerous events connected with Mao's life. In the main part of the book these events are illustrated by summaries of important texts and documents. This is superbly done, for despite the very limited space at his disposal the author has managed to present the significant aspects. All the quotations are accompanied by the corresponding notes.

After repeated detailed reading one might perhaps find some tiny gaps in the chronicle. For instance Mao's instruction (Chih-shih) from early February 1975 and his warning that the system of determining income at that time could be a breeding ground for a possible revival of capitalism in China (cf. *People's Daily*, Feb. 9 and 22). This warning was to be followed by fundamental articles by Yao Wen-yüan and Chang Ch'un-ch'iao in the March and Avril issues of *Red Flag Magazine*. The late Chairman's instruction was a significant landmark in the process of discussing the programme of the "Four Modernisations" and also has its relevance for the criticism of the so-called "Gang of Four". But the suspected gap is not a real one; on the contrary, the author has based his book on a very good system: he mentions the event when it happened, not when it was made public. Hence Mao's warning is to be found in the book under "Winter 1975". Here, this accurate system of location gives us a glimpse of intra-party disputes at the top.

One could object to some minor shortcomings for which the author, however, cannot be held responsible as he had to follow patterns laid down by the publishers. For example, the presentation of important events in Mao's life has not been integrated into the historical background. Everything has been concentrated on Mao Tse-tung and not enough light has been shed on the broader connections. This type of presentation cannot always clarify trends of development, correlations and reactions to other occurrences. However, the author helps the reader by mentioning various references which contain quite distinct interpretations.

The book has been provided with a useful bibliography. But here just one question: since the book was written mainly for the interested layman, why have sources in Chinese only been transcribed and not translated?

Thomas Scharping has compiled a chronicle of Mao's life with considerable craftsmanship. By painstaking work he has produced a substantial volume full of intriguing information. The result is a highly thought provoking book with great reference value: an excellent service for the reader. Although the author had to follow patterns already laid down, he has produced a handy and very readable book. This chronicle was planned as part of a much larger project. Readers will be grateful that Thomas Scharping decided to publish it separately.

Werner Pfennig