

Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, *Spillet om Kina* (The China Game). Mellem-folkeligt Samvirke, 1990. 231 pp.

Brødsgaard's book is an overview of the reform period in China since the end of the 1970s. Its objective is to throw light on factors that can explain the social, political and economic crisis facing the country at the end of the 1980s, culminating in the suppression of the People's Movement in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 and the resulting change in outside perceptions of China. The book has a popularized form, aiming at a broad audience.

After a brief historical introduction Brødsgaard starts with a presentation of the basic organizational unit in Chinese society, the *danwei* or the work unit. This part is interesting and informative, with repeated references to the author's own experiences from his stay in a Chinese *danwei*. At this point the book lacks a more critical discussion of the implications of this kind of stringent, tightly controlled ground-level organization on the development of policies of reform and on the import of market mechanisms into the

economy.

The chapter on leadership structures deals with the informal leadership hierarchy which dominates top politics in China. It also comments on the Chinese phenomenon of *guanxi*, the network of personal relations that is characteristic of all sections of Chinese social and political life. The author introduces the factional approach to the study of Chinese politics in this period, and identifies the major factions thought to be active in the leadership.

The chapter on economy and production takes as its starting point the centrally directed planning system that was introduced in the 1950s. However, the author does not in a convincing way explain what it was about this system which made revision and reform necessary. The part on the peoples communes is also thorough and informative, but the analysis of why it was necessary to abolish the communes and introduce a family contract system in agriculture is too brief and does not enable the reader to appreciate the importance of the contract system. The rest of the chapter is a concise discussion of the core of the economic reforms, its effects and consequences for the ordinary Chinese. The negative social and political effects in 1988 of an overheated economy ridden by inflation is also addressed. Highly illustrative of the changes brought about by the abolition of the people's commune system is Brødsgaard's account of his stay in a commune in 1979. This enables him to familiarize the reader with the main characteristics of the people's commune system by concrete references to a village in the Nanjing area. The changes that had occurred when Brødsgaard revisited the village ten years later illustrates vividly the rise in the standard of living that took place in the countryside during the first decade of reform. This is further documented by the use of extensive statistical material, taken mainly from Chinese sources. The discussion of the social security system throws light on the contradictions created by only implementing partial economic reforms. Brødsgaard shows how the new employment practices have created a *floating population* in the cities. This is a group of temporarily hired workers without full rights of unemployment benefits and with only limited access to subsidized housing and foodstuffs. The author also discusses the potential for political mobilization this and other groups had by the end of the 1980s.

Some of the strongest parts of the book are the chapters on system critique and the role of the intellectuals. Brødsgaard convincingly draws the line from the early dissident wall posters in Canton in 1974, the so called *Li Yi Zhe* poster, to the Tiananmen incident in 1976, and further to the Democracy movement in 1978. The part on the 1978 movement is particularly thorough in its analysis of the wall posters, the members of the movement, and the movement's underground journals. It underlines the interrelationship between the mass movement and the power struggle in the leadership, throwing light on how Deng Xiaoping used the movement for his own purposes, and how political reform remained an unsolved question by the end of the 1980s. By sketching the life stories of three wellknown intellectuals, he shows how these persons have acted in accordance with the traditional roles played by intellectuals of imperial times: the literati and the bureaucrats.

Brødsgaard's writing on the row of events starting early in the spring of 1989 and leading up to the suppression of the democracy movement on Tiananmen Square, is, together with the chronology in the appendix, the most illuminating account of the events I have seen. He shows the dynamics between mass mobilization of students and urban dwellers, elite power struggle, foreign policy and the weight of the events themselves. He then raises the question of leadership succession, imbalances in the economic system, the future role of the intellectuals in the modernization process, etc. These are all questions that remains unresolved at the beginning of the 1990s.

The book covers a broad spectrum of subjects related to the period of reform. Publications of this type often ends up touching too briefly on too many topics. With a possible exception for the part on international relations, such a criticism is not valid for this book. Its strength is exactly that it in a concise way manages to familiarize the reader with the main social and political themes of the period in question and to show how these issues contributed to the unstable situation which caused a shift in policies in 1989. Written in Danish, the book is also important in making an analysis of this period available to a Nordic audience.

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