The Man on Mao's Right: From Harvard Yard to Tiananmen Square, My Life inside China's Foreign Ministry. Ji Chaozhu. New York: Random House, 2008. xix + 354 pp. \$28.00. ISBN 978-1-4000-6584-4

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The Man on Mao's Right: From Harvard Yard to Tiananmen Square, My Life inside China's Foreign Ministry
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Memoirs from officials in China's diplomatic corps are rare, and even more so when coming from someone of Ji Chaozhu's unique perspective. Ji had career-long proximity to the most important leaders and decision makers in Chinese foreign policy (including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Hua Guofeng, Jiang Zemin, Zhao Ziyang and Qiao Guanhua). No Chinese diplomat had closer proximity to the inner sanctum than Ji, and as such was also witness to many of the political machinations of the Mao and post-Mao eras. No other Chinese diplomat interacted with as many world leaders over a longer period of time as Ji, and thus took part in many of the most sensitive conversations and tough negotiations in PRC diplomatic history. As Ji notes in an uncharacteristically immodest observation in the memoir's preface: "I was eyewitness to an astonishing number of historic events, rubbing shoulders and sometimes becoming casual with a long list of world leaders, including six presidents of the United States."

The reason for Ji's extraordinary proximity to history was relatively simple: his bilingualism and selection by Mao, Zhou, Hua, Deng, etc., as their primary English interpreter. Ji was not a policy maker, just an interpreter. Hence the apt title of Ji's memoir, "The Man on Mao's Right," as he stood behind the Chairman and other leaders whispering translations into their ears (given the deafness of Mao and Deng one assumes these whispers were quite audible). After Mao's death, he transitioned from this role to being an official and emissary in his own right – serving in the Chinese embassy in Washington, as ambassador to United Kingdom (or the Court of St. James as he prefers to describe it), and capped his career as Under-Secretary General of the United Nations. Ji retired from active diplomatic service in 1996.

Given this unique proximity and perspective, China scholars (at least this one) have been waiting for Ji's memoir to appear for many years – a more abbreviated version, *Ji Chaozhu: cong yang wawa daochang waiguan* (*Ji Chaozhu: From Puppet to Diplomat*) appeared in 2000 from Peking University Press. Unfortunately, the volume is very disappointing in terms of offering new details and insights into the many events Ji witnessed over more than four decades of diplomatic service. To specialists in this field there are, unfortunately, no significant new data of note – concerning either foreign policy or domestic politics. This is not accidental, as Ji intentionally shied away from detailing key meetings in which he participated. His account does include some new contextual background on the Panmunjom armistice negotiations and the Sino-American rapprochement.

This is more a personal memoir than a political one. Ji does not settle old scores, although his distaste for Nancy Tang and dislike for Han Xu are barely concealed (both caused Ji many professional difficulties). His scorn for the Gang of Four and esteem for Zhou Enlai are both predictable. His treatment of Mao is generally quite respectful – Ji observes, "Unlike some biographers of Mao, I decline to pass judgment. Let the facts speak for themselves."

But through the chronicling of Ji's own life, considerable detail emerges on how different political campaigns impacted someone of his background. Because he had spent much of his youth in New York City (where his family fled following the

Japanese invasion), and attended Harvard, Ji was politically suspect during all of Mao's political campaigns. He was banished to do physical labour in the countryside on numerous occasions, enduring repeated separation from his beloved wife Xiangtong and children. He was the target of political persecution within the Foreign Ministry as well (thus the book offers some insights into machinations in the ministry during these years). While Ji interacted with the high and mighty in and out of China, he also suffered repeated indignities and lived a very modest private life.

Ji Chaozhu's memoir is indeed an engaging read and contributes some important historical insights, but given his unique perspective, China specialists would have hoped for, and expected, more.

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Factions and Finance in China: Elite Conflict and Inflation
VICTOR C. SHIH
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xiii + 251 pp. £45.00; $85.00
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Victor Shih has produced a deep and rich analysis that links the complexity of Chinese elite politics to the monetary policies that have defined China's economic reforms. Written in the tradition of the field of scholarship analysing Chinese elite politics – a field which includes names like Roderick MacFarquhar, Andrew Nathan, Harry Harding and Ken Lieberthal – *Factions and Finance in China* is an excellent addition to this literature, representing deep and careful research about Chinese politics and economics. It will be essential reading for students of Chinese politics as well as those interested in the complex relationship between political and economic reform in the world's largest nation.

Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative work, Shih takes us deep inside the factional politics that have shaped China's reform process over the last 30 years. The empirical starting point of Shih's study is the massive amount of non-performing loans on China's books, which threaten to cripple the banking sector. He introduces us to this problem through a richly described field account of the workings of the banking system from a local official's point of view. However, though we begin with the banking sector, the real focus of Shih's analysis – the underlying reality that has brought about this potential and looming financial crisis – is the structure of China's political system and the ways in which factional politics have shaped the current system (and potential crisis) in fundamental ways. Shih's argument begins with the tension between fiscal decentralization and central control, with the generalists advocating the former and the technocratic elite advocating the latter. Decentralization has been viewed by many scholars as being one of the key features of China's reform process. It has allowed for flexibility in the implementation of policy; it has allowed for local initiative and local competition among provinces and local-level officials; it has allowed for market-like incentive structures despite the continuation of state ownership. Shih sees a much darker side of decentralization, however: local officials want to maximize investment in their localities and they rely on their political ties within the generalist faction to do so. They see local investment as the key source of growth and have little incentive to adhere to borrowing limits, a problem that could ultimately lead to hyperinflation. On the other hand, the