

waltungs- und später auch als Umgangssprache der inzwischen arabisierten und islamisierten Bevölkerung.

Dem arabischen Nationalismus, seinen Ursprüngen und seiner geistesgeschichtlichen Entwicklung widmet der Verfasser das 3. Kapitel seines Buches, um dann eine Prognose über die Zukunftschancen einer einigen arabischen Welt in Form eines supranationalen, alle Muslims vereinigenden Dár al-Islám zu stellen. Die Realisierung eines solchen einheitlichen arabisch-islamischen Staatsgebildes hat Politiker wie Philosophen seit jeher bewegt, der schöne Traum ist jedoch bisher über schwache Anfänge in der Verwirklichung nicht herausgekommen. Der Verfasser zeigt unter Abwägung der kulturellen und wirtschaftlichen Gegebenheiten der heutigen Zeit die realistischen Möglichkeiten auf, einer weiteren Zersplitterung der arabischen Welt entgegenzuwirken. Seine Schrift kann auf Grund ihres summarischen Charakters das Thema nicht erschöpfend behandeln, deutet jedoch Widerstände und Lösungsmöglichkeiten für eine Einigung an. Dem interessierten Leser bieten Quellenangaben und zahlreiche Fußnoten Gelegenheit zur Vertiefung und weiteren Erforschung der oftmals nur angedeuteten Probleme.

Dagmar Hohberger

D. B. Miller (ed.)

Peasants and Politics – Grass Roots Reactions to Change in Asia

St. Martin's Press, New York 1978, 218 S.

Six authors have contributed to an important issue, viz. how the masses of Asian »peasants« have acted and reacted to external oppression and exploitation at different instances of their history. Reactions differ, and so the papers dealing partly with older, partly with more recent events differ in approach and content.

Already the two contributions about communist countries are widely apart. The difficult and changing relationship between the Vietnamese peasantry and the communist party are lucidly analyzed by Christine Pelzer White. Revolutionary marxist leaders of non-peasant origin are the only ones able to organize the poor peasants and lead them to victory; but later on, in land distribution, collectivization, taxation of the beneficiaries several problems arise, that ask for new sensitive decisions, where many political mistakes are possible and are made. Also, marxist social analysis, though generally very valuable and valid, does not easily fit intricate rural reality and match peasant social class consciousness. – Neville Maxwell deals with one particular aspect of China's rural transformation, the Learn – from-Tachai-movement. The paper seems outdated after the revelations about this »movement«, initiated from above, highly subsidized by the government, with doubtful achievements, never to be reached by normal working units. It had its parallels in Russian »movements« of the 30's to 50's, now largely forgotten. Such development demagoguery should have been viewed and reviewed more coolly, particularly by

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people, who see themselves as marxists. Chinese officials have grinned at it already in 1978; their reply in 1980 was open and loud laughter – and heavy criticism of a white elephant. Reading such a paper in 1981 makes one wonder about research and researchers. The reality of a hungry and poor peasant, who needs economic betterment, becomes very clouded and nebulous, heroized: »Rather than distributing the total increase of brigade income, the villagers held down their income increases so that accumulation could be more rapid« (p. 58). With such textbook-peasants, Stalin might have fared much better! In part two, two papers deal with agrarian history. Burmese peasants response to British rule 1852–1885 (by J. A. Mills) and Filipino peasants specific response to Spanish and later other oppressors, leading from José Rizal's attempt of enlightenment to a religious sect (by Dennis Shoesmith). Robin Jeffrey writes about more recent events, the role of peasantry in Kerala, but almost exclusively before the democratic victory of the CP in 1957. From an analysis of agrarian movements since 1937 up to 1960 certain generalizations about such movements are derived (middle peasants as most active elements, local limitation, role of nationalism). But he opposes the view, that landless labourers always vote with their employers. And he feels, that the communists joining the democratic process of elections have broadened their base beyond those willing to fight in insurgency and other militant political forms.

The editor, D. B. Miller, in his introduction and in his conclusion tries to generalize and integrate the specific conclusions of the six papers into a framework of theory on peasantry. From his understandable opposition to exploitation of Asian cultivators by European colonizers and colonists he goes on to put all European (Western) ideologies in one pot, »be they capitalist or communist«. Lumping all of them together (p. 12), he then glosses over the social gaps and objective class contradiction between »landowning farmers and labourers« (p. 13). It becomes difficult to find out, whether he refers to the thinking of simplifying Asian politicians or whether it is his own conviction, when he speaks about »our global, imperialistic consciousness« (p. 15). Similarly, it seems doubtful to the reviewer, that land conversion to export crops adversely affects labour productivity (p. 189), whether aid programmes feed into human disaster (p. 190), whether womens' lib is really class struggle (p. 197) etc.

The subject of the book – political behaviour of the peasantry – should be at the heart and brain of research workers in political science, sociology, development economy and related disciplines; it is a basic issue of our time. But besides many printing errors the general theoretical framework seems more confusing than convincing.

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