

Die drei letzten Beiträge führen wieder zurück nach Berlin. Dagmar YÜ-DEMBSKI gibt Impressionen vom Berlin der 20er Jahre, wo es im Chinesenviertel gelegentlich 'Krach' gab, wo chinesische Studenten mehr oder weniger eifrig ihren Studien nachgingen, wo in den Salons feiner Damen Mah-jong gespielt wurde, wo aber auch die Berliner Gruppe der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas mit Zhu De Probleme der Revolution diskutierte. Wie Chinesen heute Berlin erleben, wird aus zwei Interviews deutlich, die Ina DETTMANN im Berlin des Jahres 1987 geführt hat. Peter THIELE gibt anschließend einen Überblick über die beachtliche Reihe der China-spezifischen Ausstellungen in Berlin.

Wenn auch ein für die jüngste Vergangenheit nicht ganz unbedeutender Aspekt der "Gegenwunschwelt" - das Echo auf die Kulturrevolution (auf das in der Ausstellung hingewiesen wurde) - im Textband nicht erscheint, so gibt doch "Berlin und China" ein rundes Bild der Beziehungen zwischen der ehemaligen Reichshauptstadt und dem Reich der Mitte. Der gut illustrierte Katalog ist nur eines von vielen Geburtstagsgeschenken für die Jubiläumsstadt, er läßt die deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen in einem Kristallisationspunkt lebendig werden.

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Walter Fernandes (ed.): Social Activists and People's Movements. New Delhi 1986, 186 p. (Publ. by The Indian Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003)

India with its 800 million people, its tremendous social contrasts and widely disparate incomes and its estimated 100 million jobless or extremely under-employed people, has been defying all traditional solutions to its problems. The social and economic reform policies of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi recognize and realistically appraise these existential facts of Indian society. However, not even the government with its powerful and often paralyzing bureaucracy and the well-established institutions can put planned reforms fully into effect. The Indian Central Government is trying to win as allies the considerable number of "voluntary organisations" operating in the country and to use them constructively for the realization of development objectives.

For the first time, voluntary agencies are now being mentioned in the new 7th Five-Year Plan and are given concrete areas of activity. The considerable funds, directly allocated for this purpose by the Central Government in an unbureaucratic manner, are tempting. With the assistance of voluntary agencies, these funds, particularly in the informal urban sector and also in rural areas where still about 70% of the population live, should help to revive fossilized structures and to contribute through self-initiative to the improvement of living conditions particularly of those 300 million people who are existing below the poverty line.

The present book is published by Walter FERNANDES, Director of the Indian Social Institute, an organization well-known for its excellent studies. It contains articles by Indian opinion leaders engaged in the discussion on the importance of the socio-political role of voluntary organizations in India. There is, among others, a contribution by Bunker ROY, consultant to the powerful Planning Commission. Bunker Roy, well-known in Europe and the United States and moreover, a school friend of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, paved the way for the voluntary agencies through systematic preliminary work over many years and saw to it that they were given a prominent role in the current Five-Year Plan. They have become important factors in the complicated power network of the Indian political system, very much to the regret of established groups of interest even within the ruling Congress Party. This reasonably priced book is therefore of immediate interest.

It was in the 1960's and early 1970's, when a large number of young men and women went to work amongst the rural poor, and called themselves 'action groups'. The work of these action groups "has been surrounded by controversies". The book tries to discuss issues such as the relationship of these action groups with political parties or the breaking up of these groups because of ideological differences and personality conflicts. Has disillusionment set in or have they been able to achieve success in changing the future of the marginalized sections of society?

Each action group is different to the other and they cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group. However, each group did bring a new approach to development problems and an active personal involvement at the micro-level with groups of people who had till now been ignored.

How successful some of these groups have been can be seen from the interest their work is generating in government circles and political parties. On the one hand, the government would like to co-opt them in implementing development programmes and on the other hand, it views them with suspicion like the "Kudal Commission" or enforces financial restrictions on them to control and restrict them.

This book is meant to be a discussion on the role of social activists and hence the articles show the differences of opinion with regard to this role. The book began as a series of articles in the special issue of "Social Action", April-June 1984. The papers by Henry VOLKEN, Ross KIDD and Mamunur RASHID, Vijay KANHERE and Sujaty GOTHOSKAR, and Walter FERNANDES, Director of the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, are part of this issue. The papers by Ajit ROY, Bunker ROY (Director of the Social Work Research Centre, Tilonia and consultant to the Planning Commission), Harsh SETHI, Ginny SHRIVASTAVA and Philip VIEGAS are their reactions to those articles.

The question of alliances with political parties disturbs and divides a lot of these groups. Some activists feel that working at the micro-level is not enough and they must have a macro-perspective which is possible only after a link with some political party which will give support at the

national level. Whereas others feel that any political alliance will defeat the very purpose for setting up such groups.

The article "The Role of Women in Social Change and People's Movement" by Sujata GOTHOSKAR and Vijay KANHERE shows how patriarchy and ideas of male supremacy are usually the root cause for "the most grotesque atrocities committed on women. They are considered the easily expendable and disposable commodity." (p.46). According to the authors (S. Gothoskar and V. Kanhere) women's movements are aimed at changing the existing relationship between men, women and children and this can only be brought about by a change in the social order and in attitudes where women are treated as inferior.

One of the problems which women's movements in India face is the fact that their work being mainly confined within the four walls of their homes, they are unable to gather together and organize themselves to voice their grievances against wife-beating, rape, harassment from in-laws etc. For such atrocities to stop, women's movements, dalit (backward class) movement, and the labourer's movement have all to work together "complementing and supplementing each other" (p.37).

Ginny SHRIVASTAVA, however, in the article "Social Activists, People's Movements and Indian Women" rightly points out that it is not enough for women's movements to be concerned only with issues like wife-beating, rape etc., but that they must also be involved more actively in people's movements and must "grow in self-confidence, in decision making capacity, in organizing themselves for collective action and in gaining a mature political conception." (p. 146, VOLKEN). Women, especially rural women have to be helped in organizing themselves by educating them to think about alternatives and to learn how to think systematically and collectively.

Walter FERNANDES in his article "Some Dilemmas Facing Action Groups", after posing specific questions brings out the reaction of activists to issues such as the role of foreign aid, the role of political parties, the role of economic and technical inputs in building people's organisations, micro- and macro-perspectives, the role of women etc. The contributors are Nimai BHAI, Dinanath MANOHAR speaking on macro-options which activists must have, Nalini NAYAK discusses the role of political parties and foreign aid, Jagdish PRADHAN, Rajesh TANDON and Ganesh PANDEY speak on some of the dilemmas facing action groups.

Bunker ROY, calling himself a "non-aligned activist", discusses the above mentioned article by W. FERNANDES and says that the field should have been left open instead of putting leading questions and hence cramping the style and spontaneity of the contributors. He feels that the issues raised by W. FERNANDES are really non-issues. What worries the action groups is (i) funds - all types of financial aid is necessary - in making any agency economically strong, (ii) dependency - in the transition period the poor have to be dependent on action groups; independence and confidence to manage one's affairs comes later; (iii)

pulling out - after all the hard work put in, one cannot abandon the rural poor and leave them "exposed, vulnerable and at the mercy of the powerful dominant force." (p.139). An action group ceases to be one when it no longer responds to sensitive issues which are closer to home and becomes an institution with its formalized hierarchy, pay scales, hours of work etc..

A lot has been spoken and written about the role of social activists and about their successes and failures. Do they have a future? Can they really be a part of the development process and help the down-trodden? These questions are discussed in this book. Most of the articles are contributions from social activists themselves who have voiced their hopes and fears and tried to give information which would be of some value to other action groups.

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