

ANDREAS SCHERF, *Technologische Eigenständigkeit und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung. Das Beispiel der indischen Elektronikindustrie*. (Bochumer Schriften zur Entwicklungsforschung und Entwicklungspolitik, Bd. 24). Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1989. 307 pages, DM 82.-

India's development since independence in 1947 has been the focus of many scholarly investigations by development politicians. Often they examined their subject from a more ideological standpoint, especially when comparing India with China. As the process of differentiation between developing countries became more and more evident, however, 'pure' theories were no longer the focal point of scientific interest, but rather the flexible, pragmatical use of economic instruments in politics.

At the beginning of the 1980s, i.e. before the partial erosion of the planned economies in Eastern Europe became obvious, the Indian government slowly started opening the country's markets, at that time still under the government of Indira Gandhi. India's politicians were still strongly oriented towards the Soviet model, though they never tried to expropriate their private companies in the Soviet fashion. Especially the instrument of import substitution, the priority of heavy industries as a key sector and the ambition of reaching self-reliance were in tune with the Soviet ideas. After an initial period of success, however, the economy began to stagnate, the technology gap widened and the inefficiency of a protected market became increasingly evident. This process took place in the late 1970s; the Indian development process has been well documented up till then. The author of the book under review has also integrated more recent phases of Indian economic development, devoting special attention to the electronic sector. The amount of material collected is remarkable. The study contains a large number of detailed tables and figures from all areas of Indian industry as well as statistical comparisons with the economies of other industrial and Third World countries.

The book is therefore a good source of accurate and up-to-date information. The author stresses the importance of microelectronics as a factor determining a country's competitive capacity in the coming decades. He underpins his study with the theory of development cycles which are stimulated by technological innovations. In a new political era in the 1980s, especially under the presidency of Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian government began to open the country's markets, to reduce the tax protection, to make it easier to obtain licences and to enable private corporations to enter industrial sectors hitherto reserved for the state.

The electronics sector led the liberalisation of the markets. Many private companies were founded and a dynamic industry developed. The author is

correct in stressing, however, that a developing country must do more than concentrate on its comparative advantages (low average incomes, etc.) when attempting to integrate itself into the electronics world market. It must establish a comprehensive infrastructure and build up technological capacities.

Developing countries may have the chance to obtain the newest technology from industrial countries and therefore "leap-frog" several stages of development, thus gaining a time advantage. Experience has shown, however, that industrial countries are not keen on delivering the newest technologies to developing countries. This has been especially true in the case of India because of its intimate relationship with the Soviet Union.

After having restricted the multinationals' activities in the country, the Indian government now realizes how important the domestic presence of these companies is in the process of technology transfer, so vital for reducing the technology gap and maintaining an international speed of innovation. The important question is no longer deregulation, but how far it should go. This leads inevitably to the problem of transforming regulation policy into practice in the light of the day-to-day behaviour of the bureaucracy. Foreigners familiar with the country know how wide the gulf can be between official policy and practice, and that many things can happen in practice which the politicians never intended. The fact that the author does not say much about the transfer of politicians' good will into reality is perhaps a deficit in an otherwise superb book.

Gitta Walchner

JACK D. IVES/BRUNO MESSERLI, *The Himalayan Dilemma. Reconciling Development and Conservation*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990 (2nd ed.). 295 pages, £ 35.00

In this book Jack Ives and Bruno Messerli give a thorough account of the environmental situation of the Himalayan region and of Nepal in particular. It is an assessment of current theories about the causes and consequences of environmental degradation in a geographical key area of the Asian continent.

Introducing and summing up the different views and aspects of the "Himalayan crisis" the authors give a very broad geographical survey of the Himalayan region. They focus mainly on the history of deforestation and the role of scarce natural resources. It is discussed from an overall perspective, including the extent to which environmental problems are a natural process or can be regarded as man-made. After reviewing most of the arguments as