

REINHART KÖSSLER: Dritte Internationale und Bauernrevolution. Die Herausbildung des sowjetischen Marxismus in der Debatte um die Asiatische Produktionsweise. (Quellen und Studien zur Sozialgeschichte. Vol. 3). Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1982. 395 pages, DM 98.-

Why did the first socialist revolution succeed in a "backward" country and not in the most developed capitalist ones? Why did a revolutionary upsurge sweep over "the East", especially China, and not over Europe, as one might have expected? These questions urgently demanded an answer by the theoreticians and politicians of the Soviet Union: not only did events run counter to some basic assumptions and expectations of contemporary Marxist thinking, moreover, they confronted the new and still unstable revolutionary government with considerable practical problems. These therefore constituted a twofold vexation to "socialism in power", and had to be treated accordingly both in their theoretical and practical respects.

It is thus small wonder that these problems stimulated some important debates about the correct analysis of precapitalist or "colonial capitalist" societies. Although meant overtly to promote a better understanding of and efficient support for anti-colonial movements, these discussions had in fact a much more ambitious aim; they attempted to "distill" from the "classical" Marxist writings a coherent universal theory of social development. To be accepted as correct this theoretical-conceptual framework had also to be "suitable" for an explanation of the political practice of the USSR and of Comintern.

Of course these debates did not pursue this aim so straightforwardly as it may appear from this rough sketch. But it is the great merit of the book under review here that it shows how the "inner logic" of these discussions tended towards these results. To achieve this the author had to confront the theoretical debates with the real social developments which were to be explained by the discussants. The book therefore consists of two parts. The first deals with the situation of the "young" Soviet Union and of the policies of both the USSR and of Comintern towards anti-colonial struggles, especially in China.

But, mainly, this first part deals in an exemplary way with the basic structures of Chinese rural society, confronting them with the respective assumptions underlying the policies named. It is shown that China had a tradition of agrarian resistance and revolt quite different from European ones. The Chinese revolution therefore had quite an independent "autochthonous" character: Comintern politics thus necessarily led to disastrous results because this autonomy was ignored, even denied, whereas Mao Zedong succeeded because he did give heed to these specific conditions. The obvious difficulties with Comintern politics gave much fuel to the theoretical debates because they had put to the test some important assumptions on the nature of precapitalist class societies.

The second part of the book scrutinizes these assumptions and the theoretical debates about them. It shows that they took place in a peculiar political context: whereas "classical" Marxism was concentrating on economic crises in developed capitalism, because these were thought to trigger off the proletarian revolution in the most advanced countries, revolution had taken place, quite contrary to expectation, in a country which lacked most of the preconditions thought necessary for its success. After the failure of the revolution in the West the USSR was forced, instead of being the "spearhead" of revolution, to subordinate all other revolutionary movements to its strategy of survival and stabilization. It had, moreover, to subject all theoretical debates to the criterion of utility of this strategy: "Correct" were only those theories which confirmed the policy of the USSR. Nonconformist critical voices were denounced as voices of dissent, of traitors.

Under these auspices a tendency became manifest, which was latently inherent in the debates from the start: As Kößler shows, all participants in the respective debates start from the assumption that the categories developed by Marx, especially in "Capital", form a paradigm for every Marxist analysis of every society. One has therefore only to interpret Marx's categories "correctly", and then to "apply" them to any object of analysis. There was thus a tendency to ignore historical reality in favour of aprioric categories. Also, it is obvious that such a procedure is wide open to eclecticism concerning selection and combination (and of course interpretation!) into a "suitable system". It goes without saying that such an eclecticism also lends itself to support of opportunism and political demands for consent.

The opponents in the debates, namely the propagators of the "Asiatic Mode of Production" on the one hand, and the representatives of the "Feudalism" thesis on the other, were not as different as one might imagine; they cannot be characterized as "progressive" versus "dogmatic" Marxists, or as "deviant" versus "orthodox". "Orthodox" they all were in their similar approach towards the "classical" writings and their "proper treatment". They differed mainly in their selection and evaluation of certain parts of these writings. As is shown in Kößler's book the association of adherents of one or the other side with certain political "lines" was of a polemical nature or secondary, but not backed by the respective theoretical views. As also shown the last debate in Leningrad was not simply ended by decree of Stalin; its end was also the result of its own "inner logic": there was consent that science had to subordinate to political rationale, and the latter "demanded" acceptance of the foreign as well as domestic policies of the leadership of the USSR as "correct".

The debates had started because a theoretical deficiency was felt. This was viewed as a problem, because the "correct theory" was held to be an obligatory condition for "correct" politics. When the debates were ended the tide had turned: theory had at last got the function of legitimizing political strategy. Soviet reality became by decree "socialism as it really exists", and a critique of this reality therefore a critique of, an offense against, socialism itself. Theoretical debates with an "open" character, i.e. with the possibility of

revealing differences between Marx's theory and Stalin's practice, thus came to be viewed as treason. The function of the "classical" writings for political leaders and scientists alike acquired a strange similarity to the function of a street-lamp for a drunkard: not as a source of enlightenment but as a stabilising prop.

Was, then, the result of these discussions nothing but a lot of hot air and ideological opportunism? As Kößler also shows, this is far too simple a conclusion: the participants did not only produce categorical systems of doubtful quality. A considerable number of them succeeded in producing genuine, deeper insights into real historical developments. It is not the least merit of this book that it gives information about the substantial contents of the debates which were formerly accessible only to a small circle of "insiders". It shows that despite all distortive influences certain information concerning the historical reality of the respective countries is still of considerable interest for scientists interested in "Asiatic" societies and their peculiarities as compared to European feudal societies.

I hope that the importance of R. Kößler's book has become clear enough by now: it deserves to become mandatory reading for all interested in the formation of Soviet ideology and dogmatic "Marxism-Leninism". It is also a must for scientists interested in colonialism and anticolonial movements. Last not least: by its critical assessment of the "application" of Marxist theory to non-capitalist societies this book also gives helpful hints as to how historical materialism could really be used for an analysis of those societies.

Tilman Schiel

WOLFGANG-PETER ZINGEL / STEPHANIE ZINGEL-AVE LALLEMANT (eds.):
Pakistan in Its Fourth Decade. Current Political, Social, and
Economic Situation and Prospects for the 1980s. (Mitteilungen
des Deutschen Orient-Instituts, Vol. 23). Hamburg: Deutsches
Orient-Institut, 1983. VIII + 374 pages.

With the present volume the editors have published most of the proceedings of an international conference on "Pakistan in Its Fourth Decade: Test Ahead for the Islamic State", held from May 27-30, 1980 in Hamburg and organized by the "German Orient Institute". As the subtitle shows the articles are characterized by a wide range of subjects. In the foreword the editors draw attention to the fact that the authors as scholars from various fields of study represent contradicting points of view, but nevertheless their explanations often supplement each other. The contributions are arranged in four "blocks" - namely 1. "constitution and law", 2. "ideology and regionalism", 3. "economy", and 4. "foreign policy" - there are four papers on each topic. Of course