

(b) The author is extremely emotional. We have never read any scholarly book containing such a large number of exclamation marks. Most descriptions are presented in a value-laden manner. He frequently refers to "Asian" attitudes and traditions when describing Japan, without ever discussing common features of Asian culture, personality etc. at all. He criticises Japanese people for disregarding other people morally, but his way of commenting that the position of the individual in Japan is "low", is not at all appropriate for a cross-national dialogue.

Both the handling of theory and the emotional attitude lead the reader to mistrust the empirical part: would the author even notice any indications of autonomy and identity if there were such?

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- WILLY KRAUS: Die japanische Herausforderung. Fernöstliche Mentalität und Strategie. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1982. 137 pp., DM 36.-
- WOLFGANG LECHER/JOHANN WELSCH: Japan - Mythos und Wirklichkeit. Eine kritische Analyse von Ökonomie und Arbeit. (WSI-Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung, No.49). Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1983. 255 pp., DM 24.80
- GERD KREIBAUM: Warum sind die Japaner besser? Die Geheimnisse einer Wirtschaftsmacht. München: Wirtschaftsverlag Langen-Müller/Herbig, 1983. 231 pp., DM 32.-

These three books were chosen from the ever increasing stream of literature on the Japanese economy because they represent three main ideological types of West German writers dealing with Japan.

Willy Kraus, the first (and for a long time: the only) West German university professor of East Asian economy, takes a neutral scientific stand. Lecher/Welsch, research members of the Economic and Social Research Institute (WSI) of the German Trades Union Congress (DGB), are mainly interested - as the subtitle indicates - in labor economics. On the other hand, Kreibaum, who has management experience, addresses himself rather to members of economic management. Nevertheless, as all three books analyse the success and the shady side of the same Japanese economic performance, we should be able to expect either similar results and/or interesting differences in the evaluation of these results.

Before turning in more detail to these results, I would like to point out one deficit common to all three books. They all seem to be based on secondary sources, i.e. on material, articles and statistics published in "Western" languages. Thus we once again have to read that Japanese labor disputes and strikes "as a rule

take place at lunch break" (Kreibaum, p.141), although a look at the statistics would show that (in normal years) more days are lost by strikes in Japan (e.g. 1980: 1 mio.days) than in the FRG (0.1 mio.days). (Lecher/Welsch, p.197, show the development of labor disputes between 1970 and 1978, but their figures in the column "lost days" should be multiplied by 1000). The seeming reluctance to using primary sources surely has to do with the "language barrier" (Kraus, p.93). A problem that has to and could be overcome - at least by people doing research and publishing on Japan and last not least by people intending to do business with Japan.

What are the main findings of the three books? What, if anything, "can we learn from Japan"?

According to Kraus, first of all, more Westerners should learn the Japanese language, since the Japanese are much more able "to follow foreign progress in science and research". Second, the different growth-promoting factors like co-operation between government and private sector, cost-saving management methods, low military costs etc. should not be regarded in isolation but as being closely interrelated. Third, structural change, i.e. decline of low-tech. industries and development of energy-saving high-tech. sectors, is more accepted in Japan than in the Western hemisphere. Finally, Kraus does not share the view that the "Japanese challenge" is transitory although some traditional Japanese features (seniority, group loyalty; nutrition and other consumer behavior etc.) have changed and will continue to do so. On the other hand, Kraus often stresses the singularity of Japanese development and by putting much stress on higher working motivation in Japan he seems to support a former West German minister of economy who - after a visit to Japan in 1980 - requested German workers to work with more "diligence and discipline" (Kraus, p.100). Though Kraus does not confine this request to workers alone but seems to apply it to German managers too.

This request is also quoted in the introduction by Lecher/Welsch (p.1) and is a starting point of their work. No wonder that the conclusion is somehow different to that of Kraus: "For workers and trade unions in the Federal Republic of Germany there is no reason to conform to a presumptive 'model' Japan by changing their behavior and policies" (p.236). But instead of simply (and convincingly) arguing that German workers' "diligence and discipline" cannot be so much inferior to that of Japanese workers when the German (overall) trade balance is showing a continuously growing surplus, Lecher/Welsch seem to prefer the argument that one supposition about the legendary discipline and frugality of Japanese workers, i.e. low wages, is no longer valid for - since the sixties - "industrial wages in Japan have risen much quicker than e.g. in the Federal Republic and the USA" (p.236). That is correct, but it sounds strange as an argument of trade unionists against learning from Japan. But Lecher/Welsch also offer some lessons from Japan.

On the macro-economic level they stress the importance in Japan of indicative economic planning combined with active structural policies. If my own research of more than 20 years is correct, this lesson should be underlined and adopted, even if we have to recognize that the role and importance

of planning has somewhat declined since the inauguration of the first Nakasone government.

On the micro-economic level, Lecher/Welsch are rather critical of many Japanese peculiarities but, nevertheless, they tentatively present (p. 245) some "lessons", too:

- The strong interest of trade unions on firm level is permitting more rapid technological change.
 - "Soft" management techniques and group behaviour are helpful for identification with the company and the job.
 - Intense training of newly recruited staff in all departments of the company is providing for much better qualification and insight into the aims.
- But, of course, the disadvantages of these features are not concealed by Lecher/Welsch either.

"Lessons?" is the title of the last chapter of Kreibaum's book, too. Like the other authors, Kreibaum also points to the problem of picking out this or that "lesson" from a whole and interrelated system founded on a different national character. But, again like the other authors, he leaves this argument and puts forward two recommendations. Firstly, the "human factor" is taken more seriously in Japan. Working people are not reduced to a mere "production factor". Superiors' main duties are providing for "a climate in which people are not only just working, but working willingly, responsibly and creatively" (p. 228). Even if this is too favourable a description, the least we can say is that if the description is right - and all three books agree this to be more so in Japan than in the FRG - it is a good lesson to be learnt by our middle management.

The second lesson that Kreibaum wants to draw from the Japanese experience is criticism of our concept of the "welfare state" and support of the concept of "subsidiarity". This may not be very surprising but I doubt this to be a correct conclusion from the Japanese experience. Not only does Kreibaum himself elaborate the important and active role of economic and industrial policies (esp. of MITI, pp. 77 ff.). But I also think that taking the (relatively) low social budget in Japan for granted is overlooking the fact that this largely corresponds to the still low percentage of old people and that it is rising together with the much discussed ageing of society ("kōreika shakai").

By quoting only what "lessons from Japan" the three books offer to the German reader, it should not be forgotten that they also contain a lot of interesting material. Much can be learnt on the mechanisms of the Japanese economy. Unfortunately, none of them contains an index and only Lecher/Welsch offer a "list of references".

All three books stress the problem of selecting eclectically some lessons when they are all part of a different "national character" that doubtless cannot be copied as a whole. Although this is correct, it seems too scrupulous to me. Fortunately the authors themselves have partially put aside their scruples. They could and should have gone further; e.g., the high motivation for school (and university) education in Japan is only mentioned as part of the national

character and not as a "lesson". Why not seize every opportunity to tell German sceptics (obviously for fear of an "academic proletariat") that over 90 % of Japanese pupils finish the second cycle of secondary schools (FRG: under 30 %). One more example: all authors mention (but do not take as a "lesson") the fact of the very low rate of military expenditure in Japan (around 1 % of GNP) compared with more than 3 % in the FRG, thus leaving more opportunity for productive investment. Why not learn from Japan in this respect, too? There might be some reasons which need special elaboration.

Which leads to my final remark. As we now possess various good introductions to the Japanese economy - including these three books - we should concentrate our (anyway scarce) resources more on research and publications on special Japanese features. Shigeto Tsuru / Helmut Weidner: *Ein Modell für uns: Die Erfolge der japanischen Umweltpolitik* (A model for us: The success of Japanese environment policy), Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch 1985, might be quoted as an example.

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VIBEKE HEMMEL / PIA SINDBJERG: *Women in Rural China. Policy Towards Women Before and After the Cultural Revolution.* (Studies on Asian Topics, No.7). London: Curzon Press, 1984. 155 pages, £ 5.50

The authors of this book are graduates in Sinology from the University of Copenhagen. They submitted this work as a thesis in 1976, after which it was revised and translated into English. 1984, the date of publication means a space of eight years between the original time of writing and the final accessibility to a larger reading public. That is a regrettable delay.

This work concentrates on the official attitude towards the role of women in socialist China, the male-dominated Chinese Communist Party, and the All-China Women's Federation. The authors try to compare the policy towards women in two different periods, the one before the Cultural Revolution (1962-1965) and the other after the Cultural Revolution (1969-1976).

The topics are: production, living conditions, ideological propaganda, and women cadres. The main source is the official organ of the Women's Federation, *Zhongguo Funü*. Apart from this, the authors used a document concerning the training of women cadres in rural districts for their chapter on the sixties. In the study on the seventies much more comprehensive material had to be reviewed, because the women's magazine did not resume publishing until after 1976.

In view of the nature of the sources it is obvious that the picture we get is one of the ideals as they are propagated in the Chinese media rather than one