

BODO WIETHOFF: Luftverkehr in China 1928-1949. Materialien zu einem untauglichen Modernisierungsversuch. (Schriften des Instituts für Asienkunde, Bd. 39). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975. 380 pages, DM 94. -

On the one hand, this book is about the introduction of the civil air transport system in the Republic of China between 1928 and 1949 as a modernization policy of the Kuomintang government. On the other hand, it is the documentation of a country allowed by its own national government to be colonized by a form of very advanced western technology.

Wiethoff gives a very detailed analysis of the political situation in republican China in which aviation should play its part as an important factor in the modernization of the whole society in accordance with the ideas of Sun Yat Sen. Civil aviation as a leading sector of advanced technological innovation all over the world and as such a sector of expanding economic power in Europe and the United States of America also played its part in the integration of young republican China in the world market. Therefore, the American, German, and, later, Soviet interests in the development of civil air transport in China were almost economic, while the interests of their Chinese contractors were mainly political; i. e. to provide a means of monopolized power to facilitate more efficient control of inland China by the central bureaucracy.

Using very many facts and details collected in the archives of the contractors concerned Wiethoff shows that the introduction of civil aviation in China was neither linked to the demands of the overwhelming part of the Chinese people nor had the slightest modernizing effect, but led to financial disadvantages for the Chinese contractors and the partial destruction of these means of transport already existing in China. A similar disaster was the integration of the Republic of China in the world civil aviation system as a part of the world market which brought advantages only to those countries whose - international - civil aviation system had already been largely developed. Thus, Chinese politicians had to sign one 'unequal treaty' more, as it had happened when the Chinese Imperial Government, confronted to a new technology introduced by foreigners, was forced to open the country to foreign trade in the early 19th century.

Although Wiethoff had done extraordinarily good work in collecting data to show the national and international impact of a certain technology and its innovation in a certain political context, especially in consolidating the power of a national bourgeoisie and entrenching its aloofness from the demands of the Chinese people, this book has far greater value as the documentation of a certain pattern of modernization that is still very relevant.

Technology transfer implies a twofold supremacy: firstly, the supremacy of the interests of a national bourgeoisie interested only in consolidating of its own rule; and, secondly, an awareness of the real demands of the country and

the people, i. e. in this case the improvement of already existing means of transport. This is the reason why the Kuomintang failed in this case, and the history of civil air transport in China is a history of a failure. What failed in principal, though, was an idea of modernization still very much alive in the Third World today.

Klaus Seeland

ERIC BASCHET (Hrsg.): China 1890-1938. Eine historische Foto-Reportage. Introduction by Han Suyin. (Historische Foto-Reportagen, Band 3). Kehl am Rhein: Swan Verlag, 1979, 264 pages, DM 69. -

The book has a map of China which is partially inaccurate. Throughout the volume the transcription of Chinese names is an odd *mixtum compositum*, and is quite often wrong. In five pages Han Suyin rushes through forty years of turbulent history. Her text is extremely condensed, is full of problematic generalizations, sometimes gets delicately close to manipulation, has the breath of deep commitment, but does not avoid errors. (Han Suyin tells us for example that Mao Tse-tung for two years was director of the Peasant Movement Training Institute (p. 10). He was not. This is not to discount his leading role in the peasant movement, but he was director only from May 3rd. to October 5th. 1926, a fact well proved by Snow, Schram, Rue, Kuo and others. See also Thomas Scharping (ed.), *Mao Chronik*, München: Hanser Verlag, 1976, p. 27.) The words accompanying the illustrations are often misleading and awkward. All this is not necessarily China, but China as seen by Han Suyin. However, this is all minor because: What a gripping book! What marvellous photographs!

We see China in all her fascinating historical, cultural, intimate, brutal aspects. The selection of these black and white photos is excellent. They are arranged in eight chapters: everlasting China; the decline of the empire; Europeans in China; the Republic of 1911; the warlords; international concessions and the struggle against colonial powers; the government of Chiang Kai-shek; the beginning of the Second World War. A timetable at the end of the book is helpful for orientation.

The photos touch on almost every aspect of Chinese life. They show arrogance, bigotry, and brutality of the established as well as plight, suffering, and humiliation of the masses. On these photos the mighty appear ridiculous when posing for the camera. To the Chinese they represented a system. The