

R E V I E W S

The Reviews in Internationales Asienforum try to give a brief evaluation of recent German publications.

Heider Dawar, Die Bedeutung der Zollpolitik für die industrielle Entwicklung wirtschaftlich zurückgebliebener Räume - dargestellt am Beispiel Afghanistans. (Schriftenreihe zur Industrie- und Entwicklungspolitik, Band 15) Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1975, 199 S., DM 56.-

The above mentioned book is a "Habilitationsschrift" (habilitation thesis). It is based on the experience the author gained as the President of the customs administration and as the Minister of Finance in Afghanistan. Dawar analyses the customs policy of his country and develops the concept of a new policy directed towards the promotion of economic development, especially the industrialization of Afghanistan.

In industrialized countries customs duties play a minor role as a source of public revenue. In Afghanistan, however, customs duties made up 40 p.c. (in 1966/67) of the ordinary public revenue - according to official statistics. The author emphasizes "that customs duties in reality constitute 70 p.c. of the whole current revenue of the Afghan government" (p.15). It is therefore the customs policy which is the cardinal point of the Afghan fiscal policy. Dawar criticizes the Afghan customs policy because of its mere fiscal orientation. i.e. the Afghan government is far from understanding customs and fiscal policy as a part of the public economic and development policy. Customs duties are seen exclusively as a source of public revenue. Consequently the tariff rates are so high that public revenue from customs duties is maximized.

If we believe the author, it is the "naive customs policy guided exclusively by fiscal considerations" which had such devastating consequences for Afghanistan's industrialization. The Afghan manufacturing industry was hardly able to develop in face of strong international competitors. Dawar therefore drafts a system of tariff protection modelled on the suggestions of Friedrich List. The core element is a new tariff catalogue with four major tariff stages (0-10 p.c.; 10-50 p.c.; 50-100 p.c.; more than 100 p.c.). The rate of duty would depend in particular on whether the imports are investment or luxury goods or whether the goods could be produced domestically. Dawar believes that under the protection of limited "educational customs duties" the Afghan industry could receive a fresh impetus.

Unfortunately we cannot learn from the book whether this new concept has been realized or not. After all it is a shortcoming of the book that the manuscript was already finished in 1970.

Hans-Gert Braun