

Reviews

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

Peter Baron, *Probleme der japanischen Regionalpolitik — unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entwicklung Hokkaidos.* (Schriften des Institutes für Asienkunde, Bd. 36). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973, 139 pages, DM 44,—.

For several years the Volkswagen Foundation has sponsored research on East Asia; this book is one of the few examples of the successful accomplishment of the aim of that programme.

As a central issue is his study the author puts forward the hypothesis that a regional policy with the maximization of GNP as its goal cannot solve the various problems of a regionally unbalanced distribution of economic activities within a national economy.

Reviewing economic growth in Japan since the Meiji restoration, the initial part of the book shows the emergence of a highly unbalanced regional structure with an excessive congestion of economic activities in Middle Japan and more especially the Pacific coast. On the other hand, other regions among them Hokkaido, remained in a comparative state of underdevelopment. Among the early factors responsible for this structure the author sees the heavy concentration of public investment in Middle Japan, the income and capacity effects of which induced and aggravated depletion of the hinterland.

In the third and fourth part of the book, the aims and means of Japanese official regional policy are examined, starting from the early regional programmes prior to World War II and developing through several stages up to 1970/71. In spite of the formulation of different regional development strategies during these distinct stages, the basic objective has never been questioned. As the result of the author's investigation the concept of maximizing GNP at the expense of social goals emerges as the crucial problem of regional policy in Japan.

One chapter of the book is a case study on regional policy for Hokkaido, and especially the industrial complex of Tomakomai, which serves to illustrate the inadequacies of Japanese regional policy in so far as the priority given to national growth has undermined the development of the economically backward regions.

Having thus criticized growth policy, the author comes to the general conclusion that the unbalanced structure of modern economies should be considered, in principle, as irreversible and that in consequence governmental policy goals for regional policy should be redefined (p. 128). I ask myself what purpose such "redefinitions" of government policy goals serve, when, in fact, the structures are irreversible.

A solution to this seemingly contradictory statement would perhaps have been found, had the author given more thought to the relationships between government and private policy goals, especially on the matter of general and particular limits to balanced regional development in a capitalist market economy. This weakness, i.e. the lack of political economy in regional development, is, however, much more pronounced in most regional studies previously undertaken and should therefore not prevent critical scholars from reading this book dealing with the manifold problems of the most rapid growth process in history. The more so since this book, to my knowledge, is the first Western one on regional policy in Japan.

Unfortunately, and due to the long gestation period in book production, the Prime Minister's 1972 plan for remodeling the Japanese archipelago¹ is not discussed in this volume. Could

¹ Cf. the English version: Kakuei Tanaka, *Building a New Japan. A Plan for Remodeling the Japanese Archipelago*, The Simul Press, Tokyo 1973.

It be held that the fact that this plan has been in the meantime more or less put in jeopardy adduces proof of the author's proposition that in a modern economy unbalanced structures are, in principle, irreversible?
Udo Ernst Simonis

Theodor Bergmann, *Die Genossenschaftsbewegung in Indien. Geschichte, Leistungen, Aufgaben.* (Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Genossenschaftskasse, Bd. 10). Frankfurt/Main: Fritz Knapp Verlag, 1971. 194 pages, DM 59,80.

Theodor Bergmann's study of the history, achievements and further perspectives of cooperative societies in India gives in chapter (1) a survey of the economic, social and historical conditions any cooperative society has to cope with in India. In the following three chapters the various forms of cooperative societies in the rural, urban and industrial sectors are analyzed. Chapter (5) then deals with the institutional framework, and chapter (6) attempts to evaluate the achievements and problems encountered within the cooperative sector in India so far. In this main analytical part of his book Theodor Bergmann carefully scrutinizes the numerous Indian Government Reports which come to the conclusion that Indian farmers are not cooperative-minded enough. Against this over-simple, individualistic interpretation of socio-economic facts, four factors mainly are taken into consideration to explain the failure of the cooperative movement: (a) most of India's tiny economic units are still in a pre-cooperative stage of production; (b) the traditional social structure is too rigid to allow an egalitarian cooperative system to function effectively; (c) social reforms as necessary collateral measures have been avoided or are not implemented properly; (d) Indian cooperative planning concentrated its efforts too much to preserve out-dated technologies and economic sectors without sufficient growth-potential and recruitment-power. The author argues therefore for a fresh approach in cooperative thinking which will have to free itself both from a misinterpretation of Gandhian principles and the models that have been highly successful in Western Europe during a certain period of its development. This message may not be very new to the younger generation of development specialists, yet it still carries some truth to the ranks of established experts.

Detlef Kantowsky

Wolf Donner, *Nepal. Raum, Mensch, Wirtschaft.* (Schriften des Instituts für Asienkunde, Bd. 32.) Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972. 506 pages, DM 128,—.

Wolf Donner, who gained his Ph. D. in geography, worked as an economic adviser to His Majesty's Government in Nepal from 1966 to 1969. During his appointment he trekked through almost every part of the country and thereby gained first-hand knowledge of the region. This is especially important because reliable statistics still figure among the rarities in the Kingdom of Nepal.

The main part of the book (pp. 45—411) deals, in eleven chapters, with (1) the physical geography and geographic structure of the country; (2) climate and vegetation; (3) social geography; i.e. population, settlement patterns, public education, health, and inner and outer migration of the labour force; (4) communication; (5) hydro-geography; (6) land utilization and erosion; (7) irrigation; (8) agricultural geography; (9) forestry; (10) industrial geography; i.e. industrial estates, energy, and mining; (11) trade and commerce. This descriptive-analytic section of the book is supplemented by five socio-geographic sketches in which the dominant features of the main geographical areas of Nepal are illustrated, i.e. the Valley of Kathmandu, the Terai, the Middle-Mountain-Chain, the High-Mountain-Chain, and the North-Himalayan Arid Zone.

What makes Donner's book so valuable, besides the vast amount of data he collected and tried, as much as possible, to confirm, are 32 charts and 122 maps which illustrate and locate the socio-geographical problems discussed. This discussion is always realistic and fact-oriented; Donner knows the region and its problems to well to be charmed by the scenic beauty of a country which, according to official statistics, has to be classified among the five least-developed countries of the world. I therefore have no doubt that his book will remain a cornerstone of information about Nepal for a long time to come.

Detlef Kantowsky