

Some chapters cannot be called easy reading, which is partially due to a very particularized economic-scientific vocabulary, but also to the fact that their reasoning sometimes lacks a systematic method. Unfortunately, the confusion within the reform process is sometimes reflected in the authors' narrative.

Despite this, the book is an outstanding achievement and the most comprehensive and profound analysis of Vietnam's economic development during the past ten years. Fforde and de Vylder do not merely repeat age-old arguments; instead they impart new and important insights into the dynamics of this complicated process. One of which is – last not least – the finding that Vietnam's reforms have reached a crucial turning point in the mid-90s. Whereas a weak state, a lack of central authority, and even corruption were favorable to the reform process in the past, since all these factors paved the way for the destruction of old, growth-retarding structures, Vietnam now calls for an efficient and competent state able to open free markets (and keep them open), as well as to establish a macro-economic and legal framework which is vital to the further growth of a market economy.

Fforde and de Vylder who completed their research in early 1995 are optimistic about the Vietnamese leadership, stating that it has learned from the experiences of the past and predicting its ability to master the tasks ahead. The widening of the foreign trade deficit in 1996, the decline of foreign investment and the elusive statements made during the recent Vietnamese Communist Party Congress might put a slight damper on this optimism. On the other hand, there is no reason to be ultra-pessimistic. In the Vietnamese leadership there are enough personalities aware of the problems which have to be faced, and of the solutions they demand. So far, these forces have not gained the upper hand. But the next crisis – following the logic of Adam Fforde's and Stefan de Vylder's analysis – may indeed strengthen the position of these forces and lead to a future phase of economic success.

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WERNER MENSKI (ed.), with contributions by Derek Göbel and Jean François Destexhe: *Coping with 1997: The Reaction of the Hong Kong People to the Transfer of Power*. (GEMS No. 2). Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1995. X, 220 pages, £ 11.95. ISBN 0-948080-99-X

During a flight from Osaka to Hong Kong in September 1994 I happened to sit next to a Chinese businessman from Hong Kong who referred to the

United Kingdom as "this poor country", in which not many Hong Kong people would like to live "even if a passport is given to them as a gift."

The authors of the book under review explore the immigration implications for Britain of the transfer this summer of Hong Kong to Chinese rule. After careful scrutiny of the social, legal and economic situation, based largely on field research, they end up by confirming the view of the gentleman in the airplane: Not many citizens of Hong Kong will leave and settle in the UK, British apprehensions about a potentially large stream of migrants to their allegedly crowded island – as a self-flattering image of Britain likes to suggest – being thus groundless, and – even worse – economically damaging and morally self-degrading.

In the first chapter Werner Menski summarizes the questions and arguments of the book which focuses on how the people of Hong Kong view their situation and on the implications of their strategies for coping with the transfer for Britain itself. The central argument of the study is that apprehensions about large-scale refugee movements from Hong Kong to Britain are misplaced and that these fears "are more indicative of general xenophobia and a guilt conscience about the colony than of socio-economic realities in Hong Kong itself" (p. 122).

After a background chapter by Jean-François Destexhe with a brief and instructive summary of the historical, legal, demographical and economic events leading up to "Hong Kong and 1997", there follows a detailed legal analysis by Prakash Shah (he strangely does not appear as a "contributor" on the title page of the book) concentrating on the effects of British nationality and immigration laws and policies on the people of Hong Kong. The main concern of the author is to show the systematic exclusion of the British subjects of Hong Kong from the right of abode in the UK since the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 and the British Nationality Act of 1981 with its multi-class status system. Very instructive for the reader (and disturbing for residents of Hong Kong) is the comparison made by the author with the attitude of the Portuguese government towards Macao: strong commitment towards its residents. In chapter 4 Jean-François Destexhe and Derek Göbel present an empirical study on "The effects of the impending transfer of power on the economy and people of Hong Kong." The authors show that the overwhelming majority of Hong Kong residents wish to stay in the territory after July 1997, and that of those preferring (at least temporarily) to move abroad, only very few would wish to settle in Britain. What the British policy-makers have overlooked is, as the authors point out, that the economic prosperity of Hong Kong has inspired a measure of confidence in the future which many individuals are

balancing against concerns about fear of possible hardship under Chinese rule. In the fifth chapter Menski and Göbel deal with the situation of the South Asian minority communities of Hong Kong after the transfer. Many of those residents will become stateless, albeit with a right of residence in Hong Kong.

In the concluding chapter the editor identifies "British fixation on the perceived threat of non-white mass immigration as the central damaging element in the chains of arguments which have irrevocably marginalized Britain in the eyes of the people of Hong Kong" (p. 188). His attempts to explain British attitudes culminate in the following statement which should be quoted in full: "What Britain appears to be acting out is a notorious form of Western, eurocentric hubris, an entirely misplaced claim that Western laws, the modern Western way of life, in short, the Western system and standards as a whole, are so superior to anything a country like China might be able to offer, that a responsible government must stick up for such values and forms to the bitter end" (p. 188). In fact, however, Hong Kong has already, as Menski further points out, "learnt to live with its (Chinese) future and shows all the signs of making an immense success of it".

Shortly before landing at Hong Kong airport this gentleman next to me pointed to the book on my knees on "Zhongguo xingzhengfa jiben lilun" (Basic Theory of Chinese Administrative Law), asking why I was interested in this. I told him that I was going to teach comparative administrative law in Beijing. "This", he replied very seriously "is the best way to ensure that Hong Kong's people's confidence in their future won't be frustrated."

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MICHAEL YAHUDA, *Hong Kong: China's Challenge*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. XII, 171 pp, £ 11.99 (pb.), ISBN 0-415-14071-4, £ 37.50 (hb.), ISBN 0-415-14070-6

The return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule will be achieved more or less without a hitch, judging by the recent statements made by London and Beijing. Both sides intend to execute the handover as smoothly as possible given that the eyes of international public opinion will be fixed on the tiny colony. The only sad thing, if one can call it sad, was the death of the last paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping. Deng, who died in February, had made