

schlechtssphäre wieder, aber: bewußt, als liebgewordene Schöpfermacht, bejaht.“

Nicht mit der „Gefährtin“ Marianne, sondern seiner intimen Vertrauten Else Jaffé bespricht Max Weber am 7. Juni auf dem Kranken- bzw. Totenbett die Widmungen seiner Hauptwerke: „Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft“ sollte, so bestimmte er, die Widmung tragen: „Dem Andenken meiner Mutter Helene Weber, geb. Fallenstein, 1844-1910“. Von den „Gesammelten Aufsätzen zur Religionssoziologie“ sollte der erste Band „Marianne Weber“ gewidmet sein mit dem Zusatz: „1893 ‘bis ins Pianissimo des höchsten Alters’“ (ein Zitat aus dem 1893 geschriebenen Brief Max Webers an Marianne, in dem er um ihre Hand anhielt). Der zweite Band sollte die Inschrift tragen „Mina Tobler zugeeignet“ und der dritte war „Else Jaffé-Richthofen zugeeignet“. Damit waren die vier Frauen in den Hauptschriften genannt (und signifikant plazierte!), die Webers Leben in je unterschiedlicher Art geprägt und (mit-) bestimmt haben.

Diese ergänzenden Hinweise mögen für ein werkimmanentes Verständnis von „Hinduismus und Buddhismus“ nicht wesentlich sein, doch würde sich Max Weber gewiß dagegen verwandt haben, daß seine Widmung für Mina Tobler auf dem ersten Deckblatt von Bd. 2 der *GAzRS* in dem so sorgfältig editierten Bd. 20 der *MWG* nicht mehr aufgeführt, sondern in einem editorischen Hinweis über die „Textbefunde und Überlieferungslage“ (S. 43) quasi versteckt wurde. So jedenfalls versteht ihn der Rezensent noch immer.

Catastrophes: Natural and Man-Made

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Though the title sounds somewhat popular, it was with great expectations that I started to read this book.* I read it in one day, but put it down disappointed. Another case of a missed chance. In a time when anthropogenic catastrophes are increasing in numbers and scope I thought a book on Bangladesh could be both theoretically interesting and empirically relevant. Un-

* Dieter Reinhardt (ed.): *Die Katastrophe, die Not und das Geschäft. Das Beispiel Bangladesch*, München: C.H.Beck, 1997. 194 pages, DM 19,80, ISBN: 3-406-39291-1

fortunately, this book misses the first criterion totally, and the second one largely.

What defines a catastrophe as compared with other economic, social and political disruptions? What exactly is the difference between a natural catastrophe and a man-made catastrophe? Can catastrophes be predicted and prevented - or is there only a chance of mitigation and adjustment; and if so, what is good adjustment? But if there is a real possibility of preventing catastrophes, what are the prerequisites for doing so? Furthermore, what about the economics of prevention and adjustment, who loses, who gains? And, finally, the political and institutional issue: who is responsible for, who should be in charge of natural or man-made catastrophes? Is it the local, the regional and national level, or is a catastrophe *per se* an international or supra-national category? Assuming that experiences with predicting, preventing or mitigating catastrophes are different from case to case, one might also have expected some kind of typology: what does Bangladesh stand for in the international context?

The major problem with this book is that it doesn't contain any stringent theory, so that all these questions remain largely unanswered. The editor himself starts with a chapter on "Visions of global disasters and global management" which is full of conceptual generalizations and contradictions. Instead of referring to authors who have seriously worked on the theory of catastrophes (like Clausen or Dombrowsky) and on real catastrophes (like Kaspersen and Myers) he refers at length to prophets of doom (like Ditfurth or Gruhl) who have no experience whatsoever with the Aral Sea, with Somalia, Burundi, Ruanda or: Bangladesh. While the Club of Rome is viewed in a favourable light, the Worldwatch Institute (the leading institute with permanent environmental monitoring activities) is blamed for being "politically blind", and Günter Altner, a well known evolutionary biologist and founder of the German Öko-Institut is slandered as promoting totalitarian concepts.

The title of the third chapter is misleading ("Nature as Catastrophe") but much closer to the point: it gives a short though somewhat floppy overview of natural disasters and potential environmental threats in Bangladesh, particularly on the "Storm tide of 1991", in which between 132,000 and 290,000 people died. While in 1900 only 25 million people lived in the Ganges delta, in 1994 it was 117 million, and the United Nations predict 211 million by the year 2025. There can be doubt, therefore, that the "population factor" is relevant in Bangladesh, both as a factor with impacts on the resource base of the nation, and as a factor in a region at risk. And that risk not only relates to global climate change and the resulting rise in the level of the sea, but also to bad environmental management at the national level. If Bangladesh were to be classed as a unique type of real and

potential catastrophe, it would be one of a mix of natural *and* man-made catastrophes, with national *and* international causes and effects.

In none of the following chapters, except in the epilogue by Franz Nuscheler, has this analysis been taken up. On the contrary. While Brigitte Jessen in a chapter on "The Decline and Misery of Agriculture" describes agricultural production and land use changes, the "green revolution" and water pollution, there is no reference to nor is any conclusion drawn regarding the title of the book, whether this will all lead to the next catastrophe. In a chapter on "Population in the Ganges delta" Farida Akter even denies, despite all empirical evidence, that there is a population factor to be reckoned with.

The following chapter by Reinhardt on "Development aid and export of weapons" bears no relation to the book; no information is given here on Bangladesh's capacity to fight a war or a natural catastrophe.

Bernhard Hertlein's chapter on "Democracy and violence in Bangladesh" is interesting and could have been of relevance if the editor had asked him to focus the paper on causes and consequences of historical and future catastrophes, which, unfortunately, is not the case.

Wolfgang Mey's chapter on the "Chittagong Hill Tracts" comes closest to a case study of a man-made catastrophe: both population growth and forced migration due to internal war against indigenous people lead to serious environmental destruction in the Chittagong region. This, however, is not the type of catastrophe the editor was addressing in the introduction to the book.

Sigmar Groeneveld's chapter on "World ethos and self-restraint" is, no doubt, a brilliant paper from the point of view of a Western nihilist. It is dangerous, however, in that the author declares global ethics, as formulated by Hans Küng, by the Worldwatch Institute or the Club of Rome as "... a catastrophe threat" (p. 124-134), and the demand for global responsibility as "bottomless". Groeneveld clearly ignores the power of the ecological imperative: "Think globally, act locally". His own position is rather cynical. In referring to Ivan Illich he claims to make a plea for self-restraint. One sentence, however, makes clear and clearer than all other words, what this kind of Western nihilism leads to: "Those who live from hand to mouth need no international trade and no costly transport infrastructure." ("Wer von der Hand in den Mund lebt, braucht keine internationalen Handelsströme und keine kostenintensiven Verkehrsinfrastrukturen.", p.138)

Reinhardt, the author and editor, in the last chapter, entitled "From disaster relief to a political strategy to reduce vulnerability" partly makes good what was missing throughout. With reference to studies by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank he outlines the performance of the Bang-

ladesh economy, particularly the quite satisfactory increase in agricultural productivity, which is above the rate of annual population growth. For the time being, Bangladesh can feed its growing population, although relative poverty between the various social strata has not been reduced. And he finally addresses the concept of vulnerability which should have been basic from the very beginning: How can vulnerability of society with regard to preventing hunger and the catastrophic consequences of natural disasters, like typhoons and floods, be reduced? This question, however, is first asked on p. 149 of the book. And the six following pages of the chapter do not suffice to give a convincing answer.

The best chapter of the book, to my mind, is the epilogue by Franz Nuscheler. On only ten pages (p. 156-165) he presents an eloquent plea "Against a sentimental clamour of powerlessness (*Ohnmachtslarmoyanz*) and for an ethics of responsibility". First, he defines what a catastrophe is: "It is an event, in time and space, in which a society is under heavy threat and in which it suffers such losses in lives and physical artefacts that the social structure collapses and all or major societal functions can no longer be fulfilled." This definition comes close to the working premise of UNDRO, the former UN-Disaster Relief Organization. If, in the real world, as Hans Jonas observed, environmental awareness increases while environmentally sound behavior decreases, so that people and governments learn only by catastrophes or catastrophic developments, what then does Bangladesh teach us?

According to Nuscheler, "the case of Bangladesh illustrates that all historical and recent catastrophes have enlarged the learning capacity of national and international technocracies only marginally. This slow learning may, in turn, feed silent feelings of powerlessness which will accept the inevitability of catastrophes with a shrug of the shoulders. The ensuing public larmoyance then reduces any serious effort to carefully study the causes of catastrophes, the knowledge of which would promote national as well as international responsibility." (S. 157)

This judgement is more than a theoretical hypothesis. It contains the essence of a realistic strategy. (It may, incidentally, also be understood as a major critique of the rest of the book.) To summarize: it is necessary to be as clear as possible with concepts, even though the line between natural catastrophes, extreme natural events and man-made catastrophes cannot be clearly drawn. Disaster relief, mitigation and prevention of catastrophes should be differentiated. And so should local, national and international responsibilities and capabilities. Existing disaster relief structures need to be permanently evaluated because otherwise "professional grumblers" take the lead. But these operational components of catastrophes may be quite different from the real causes of catastrophes. Nuscheler therefore supports the

idea of taking Bangladesh as an illustrative example for two major efforts in the future: First, to carefully study the relief and adaptation measures undertaken in the wake of historic catastrophes and, second, to invest more in new knowledge and in re-activating historical expertise of how to prevent catastrophes or at least mitigate catastrophic effects in time.

In the resolution No. 44/346 of 22. December 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations demanded that all countries should be empowered to mitigate quickly and effectively the effects of natural catastrophes, particularly through a "preventive development of catastrophe-resisting structures". Nuscheler believes that in most cases, including Bangladesh, the opposite was done: fighting symptoms by means of disaster relief which does not reach the victims but is caught in the webs of corruption. The Bangladesh "Flood Action Plan" an international project thought to prevent floods, so far does not really represent an improvement in this respect. Growing vulnerability towards catastrophes is indicative of an ecological and social liability, caused or enhanced by population pressure, depletion of natural resources, decrease of secure niches and a deterioration of social structures and traditions.

To denounce global awareness of these problems and global ethics as new catastrophic threats is therefore more than cynical. As climate change, the resulting rise in the level of the sea and weather extremes are threatening Bangladesh and many other regions of the world, a global strategy is needed which must classify the common but differentiated responsibilities of North and South, of rich and poor, of Bangladesh and other nation states.

P.S.

Sometimes it is not only the main part of a book that needs to be criticized. The references made in this book also contain plenty of errors. Names of authors are misspelled, first names changed, important literature sources forgotten. And while one book, compared to its poor quality, is quoted too often, it is quoted with two different places and three different years of publication. How to prevent big catastrophes if such small ones can not be prevented!