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BOOK REVIEWS

A Century of Economic Development of Russia and Japan, Amlan Datta, The World Press Private Limited, Calcutta, 1963. Pp. ix+187. Rs. 10.00.

Amlan Datta has attempted a short but neat exposition of the broad outlines of economic history of Russia and Japan, primarily over the last fifty years. The book gains and suffers quite a bit by being obviously written out as a text book for a definite course. A completeness of the coverage, particularly the coverage in respect of the post-second world war reconstructions, coupled with the conciseness of the exposition and the sharpness with which the major issues are brought into focus, goes on to make it an admirable text book. One can almost see the blue lines and the bracketted ones and twos at the margin that the book would get to have without doubt, to the dismay of the librarians.

On the debit side, if it can be considered a deficiency at the particular level of exposition, the volume perhaps does not offer anything new to one's understanding. In spite of an apparent clarity of exposition, one suspects that Professor Datta is handicapped by the absence of a clear model. Thus his failure to emphasize adequately the investment in heavy industries, particularly in Russian case, as against the rise in the aggregate share of investment in the national income, may be noted. The same thing is perhaps highlighted by his comparative neglect of differential pricing of consumers goods and capital goods and the major shifts therein. It is perhaps on account of this limitation that he fails to find an adequate reason for the Soviet nationalization of foreign trade, which is made to look very much an arbitrary act (p. 30).

By contrast, Professor Datta has visualized the Japanese development as a subtler experiment in the exercise of human will and ingenuity. While it is difficult to say that it was not, one does not feel quite convinced about the need of slip back to purely non-economic explanations without trying much harder with the economic ones. Conspicuously, the author ignores the differences between a small island community and a comparatively large continental one and difference that secular shifts in terms of trade between manufacturing countries and their under-developed environment make to industrial development. In other words, he fails to examine adequately the imperialist and the nationally exploitative implications of the Japanese 'co-prosperity sphere' idea.

It is true that both Russia and Japan are late starting countries in so far as industrialization is concerned and were able to copy extensively from existing advanced technology. But the inhibitive elements of the late start were no less important and the differences between the history of two countries may perhaps be more fully understood when this aspect is considered adequately. Similarly, while it is broadly true that both Russia and Japan derived their investment funds from agriculture, through different institutional means (pp. 181-2), the issue seems to require further clarification for, at least, two reasons. In the first place, so long as agriculture is the only major economic activity, which is obviously so in a pre-industrial state, it is difficult to see where else the surplus is to issue from. One wonders whether the technical possibilities in agriculture under the different circumstances of the two countries did not have anything to do with this difference.

Secondly, it is not quite clear how the point is established without a much more rigorous analysis, in which the surplus accruing to the different sectors and the net capital formation therein, is related to the respective working force and population. The trouble with simple solutions is that they tend to ignore the fact that in economics, not only everything depends on everything else but they do so in different ways. One has, therefore, to pay a price for brevity.

K. MUKERJI

Democracy, Decentralisation and Development, Henry Maddick, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963. Pp. xii + 305. Rs. 20.00.

Extension in Planned Social Change, B. Rudramoorthy. Allied Publishers. Bombay, 1964. Pp. ix + 263. Rs. 15.00.

Village Government in India, Ralph H. Retzlaff, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962. Pp. 140. Rs. 10.00.

District Administration in India, S. S. Khera, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964. Pp. xvi + 272. Rs. 16.00.

All four books deal in a sense with a common theme that of decentralisation in an under-developed country. What is the nature of decentralisation? In what relationship does it stand to democracy? Is there, in other words, any direct relationship between the process of decentralisation and democracy? What are the problems it has given rise to? What techniques are necessary in operating a system decentralised to the village level? These and a host of similar questions arise in the mind when one enters the field sought to be covered by the books under review. Mr. Maddick's book is based on a study commissioned by the Public Administration Division of the Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations, to undertake a research in the contribution which local government and field administration can make for the more effective operation of governmental functions and for increased participation by the citizens in the context of the developing countries. The study involved visits to several countries, interviews with a great variety of people and the perusal of an impressive amount of published and unpublished material as the bibliography to this volume suggests. Mr. Maddick discusses the factors relevant to the distribution of functions between the central government and the field agencies; the disadvantages of a highly centralised system of administration and the dangers which lurk in unplanned and uncontrolled decentralisation. He points out to the fact that in many of the developing countries the maintenance of national unity gives cause for concern; there is considerable cultural diversity arising from poor or inadequate communications and the pressures for separation which are strengthened with the introduction of local government. These facts should caution uncritical enthusiasts of decentralisation. One is reminded of the remark of Edwin Chadwick when someone opposed his schemes of centralisation. "Why Sir," he retorted, "the devil himself fell because he opposed centralisation!" Mr. Maddick's book needs to be read more widely and more carefully in India where the virtues of decentralisation are uncritically extolled largely due to an incorrect interpretation of Indian history and to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Decentralisation and centralisation are not opposed principles and many factors are responsible for tilting the balance one way or the other. Further, decentralisation and development involve a cultural revolution in ways of life and

patterns of behaviour; it is therefore necessary that innovations are not forced upon a community too fast. Mr. Maddick's book is useful and instructive and if at times, it appears somewhat diffused, one should remember that the disciplining of the data of several countries to make them fit into a pattern of "Democracy, Decentralisation and Development" has been a real achievement.

Shri Roodramoorthy thinks in a different key and writes on a somewhat different level. He is concerned with the problems of extension in India particularly in the context of *Panchayati Raj*. In a useful chapter on Extension and Promotion of Desired Changes the writer touches upon the misconceptions regarding changes in the ways of life of village people. Shri Roodramoorthy's book is more descriptive and less analytical. The author has had extensive and first hand knowledge of the problems of extension and one wishes that more concrete data had been presented in these pages. There is needless padding and repetition and a refusal to go beyond broad abstract generalisations. The book has some limited value to extension workers in India but it adds little to available knowledge on the subject.

Mr. Ralph Retzlaff's volume stands in a category by itself. Mr Retzlaff was connected with the Cornell University Field Research Project which conducted research in the village of Khalapur in the Saharanpur District in Western Uttar Pradesh. He describes vividly the economic and social structure of the village, the introduction of *Panchayati Raj* and its effect on the village; the functioning of its first *Gaon Panchayat*, its difficulties and tensions and the factors which decided the election of the second *Gaon Panchayat*. In the period between the first *Gaon Panchayat* and the election of the second we discern significant changes coming over the attitude of the different castes in the village. In the first we notice the irregular participation by the people and the general lack of interest. The various caste groups were unfamiliar with their role in decision making and made no attempt to push themselves ahead. "After all", they used to say, "it was a Rajput panchayat—what could we do?" The part played by the *pradhan* is dealt with well. In an interview with the author, he stated how it was possible to collect some panchayat taxes without passing receipts! He defended his administration by saying that he had all along acted according to "village rules and not State laws" and provided several examples of the way in which he had tried to "protect" the interests of important people in the village; he had certified people as rightful tenants of village fallow lands when in fact they were not! Curiously enough, in spite of his methods to win friends and influence people, he found that he had really pleased no one. Factions are a part of village India and corruption seems natural in Indian life—urban or rural. The experience of Khalapur is a warning against idealising the facts of village life. Nevertheless, it is the author's view that we ought not to condemn the introduction of *Panchayati Raj*. He closes his study with the remark of one of the village leaders at the end of an interview: "Don't forget this," he said, "This is the first time we have had such a thing in Khalapur. We have made many mistakes, but we will not make them again, now we have learned what the powers of the *pradhan* and the panchayat are. We will watch the new *pradhan* carefully."

In the last book Shri S. S. Khera, a distinguished civil servant, describes the structure and functions of district administration in India. It is addressed mainly to officers involved in district administration but it does not pretend to be a comprehensive handbook for the practitioners; it seeks to provide "in a limited way"

“some signposts to action and also indicate some areas of experiment and research.” Shri Khera has had a long and continuous experience of Indian administration and if the fruits of this experience had been hammered out into these pages the book would have gained immeasurably in depth and value. As it is, the author has set for himself a limited task as indicated in the preface. In Shri Khera's perspective, law and order is basic to good administration and rightly so. He devotes some four chapters to this theme and it is these chapters which lend value to the book. The first two chapters are superficial and therefore disappointing and what is worse, they are, in parts, even badly written. This is all the more noticeable for the writer executes the remaining chapters with considerable competence. The chapter on Economic and Social Administration is elementary and adds little to our knowledge of the subject. When he writes on district administration proper, Shri Khera is on familiar territory and therefore writes with confidence. One wishes that he had elaborated and enriched his theme from his own first hand knowledge. The list of selected reading seems inadequate and the reviewer notes with perplexity the absence of Philip Woodruff's two volumes on *The Men Who Ruled India*. Readers familiar with this book and the writings of other British civil servants are likely to read Shri Khera's remarks on district administration in British days with some reservations.

S. P. AIYAR

African Agrarian Systems, Daniel Biebuyck (Ed.), International African Institute, Oxford University Press, London, Bombay, 1963. Pp. xiii + 407. 45s.

Interest in the economy of African continent is consequent upon the recent political emancipation of nations of this continent and their determined efforts at economic development. The scientist finds in this continent a vast social laboratory for testing his theories under varied social, political and economic conditions. It is therefore not without reason that scientific interest in the study of this continent, of the economists, social anthropologists, sociologists, jurists and political scientists converge. Not infrequently, as in the study under review, we find economic studies developed with a due share of other disciplines. In fact recently, renowned economists have indicated that important contributions to the understanding of the functioning of the economy at low level of material wealth and income are made by social anthropologists.

The present study is devoted to systems of land tenures. Since the functioning of the economy revolves very much round the land relationships, the title of the book, which would otherwise be considered broad, is justified. Being a collection of papers, the book embodies a rich experience of several nations, from Nigeria in North to Rhodesia in South and Congo in the Far West. The papers contained in the publication were presented at the Second International African Seminar held at Lovanium University, Leopoldville, in January 1960. As such, the papers are authentic documentation on little known economies of emerging nations.

The study is refreshing to Indian and Western readers in two ways. The commonly understood meanings of 'land' and 'tenures' or 'land tenures' outside do not apply to countries in the African continent. Without understanding their correct meaning the functioning of agrarian economies cannot be understood.

Secondly, even for understanding the historical importance of land relationships in more known countries, the study of tenure relationships in less known countries of African continent is helpful since one approvingly finds the march of the development of the tenure relationships, slowly but surely and firmly into the pattern more widely prevalent outside this continent. What causes this inevitable march to proceed in the destined direction can, therefore, be understood from this study better.

Economy based on abundance of land,—shifting cultivation, barter relationships, strong ancestral ties,—evolved tenures which had ‘geneological map’—in which holding of land was not defined with relation to any piece of land, it was relationship of one human with another for the use of land, the boundaries of which shifted continuously. In this economy wives have their ‘own’ lands as apart from lands of their husbands and children. The landless worker would be unknown here. Wife would share the produce of land with the husband for her labour and labour market would be restricted to ‘own’ family relations. Scarcity of land is not unknown, it emerges gradually but inevitably, land then becomes measurable piece. Cultivation is then stabilized. Markets emerge for crops, for labour and for land. Transfer of land through sales though not liked and definitely looked down upon comes to be recognised with its legal implications and despite feeling of insecurity of new occupants on account of traditional belief in outgoing occupants’ ancestor’s inseparable ties with lands once held by them. But in this stage tenancy and rental market of land is not known. The scarcity of land also leads to the known phenomenon of fragmentation, sub-division of holding, establishment of individual’s rights. These result from large population upsurges. The community lands with common rights used for cattle grazing, hunting, etc., still continue to exist, but they too do not escape the inevitable shrinkage in their size. It is not therefore surprising to find techniques of cultivation,—zooming, fallowing, rotating of crops, irrigation and even mixed farming—to vary directly in relation to the degree of land scarcity. If one permits in this system unhindered migration of people, and perfect adaptability of human skill, scarcity of land will no longer pose a difficult problem. But the social affinity and ties with land hinder human migration, which in turn prevents spread of better cultivation techniques. In land-dominated agrarian systems, local land scarcities do not encourage adequate flow of material capital. With the result, (unless the economy attains internal equilibrium with its population growth) it faces grim prospects of dwindling living standards and population pressure in rural areas is relieved by the emergence of dual economy with expanding non-subsistence sector—often with the help of foreign industrial skill flowing through imperial powers till recently. This process not being organic to the economy, leads to economic disease of drain and exploitation.

Thus one can see the functioning of a whole system around land relationships. The publication in depicting this system almost in its entirety makes a major contribution. The absence of an account of agrarian estates of western proprietors on the African continent in a study of *African* agrarian systems may be justifiable but it undoubtedly leaves incomplete the understanding of the politico-economic systems and aspirations of emerging nations and the means proposed by them like land reforms, to fulfil their immediate desires. This is a welcome addition to the growing literature on African economy.

Studies in the Problem of Growth of a Rural Economy, G. C. Mandal, Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, World Press, Calcutta, 1961. Pp. 118. Rs. 8.50.

Eight papers which in various ways seek to throw light on some aspects of agricultural development are put together in this book. It opens with a chapter on techniques of evaluating development programmes, which makes some useful suggestions towards improvement of procedures and emphasizes the need for breaking each programme into phases and evaluating them separately. Dr. Mandal places great store by capital accumulation as an indicator of progress. It is difficult to agree with him when he says, "... considerable emphasis on capital-creation induced in the private sector can be laid as *ultimate index which reflects all progressive changes in the economic, social and cultural structure.*" (p.4, italics supplied). In chapter 2 he discusses the concept of disguised unemployment and opines that there is little surplus of labour which could be removed without causing a fall in production. His main therapy is to introduce labour-saving devices in agriculture and thus to create a surplus of investible funds. Chapter 3 is devoted to the study of the nature and pattern of rural consumption primarily from the nutritional point of view. From data collected from some East Indian villages he concluded that it is not merely the volume but also the quality of production that must be emphasized. In chapter 4 he makes a plea for a 'curb on enhanced prices' in order to prevent hoarding and stimulate marketable supplies of food-grains. Chapter 5 brings out the plight of small farmers and prescribes co-operative farming for them. Chapter 6 on "Inter-relations of Agricultural and Industrial Prices" compares prices data over a few years and shows how industrial prosperity came about at the cost of agriculture. Here the author welcomes 'the present revaluation of agriculture' as a necessary condition of development—a position curiously inconsistent with the one held in chapter 4. The next chapter on taxation of agricultural land recommends adoption of taxation and land reform policies with a view to limiting the size of farms, since the author finds that the proportion of self-cultivated land goes on falling with increase in size. The author is aware of the limitations of tax policy in encouraging better utilization of land and prefers a combination of ceilings and a progressive land tax. Chapter 8 elaborates the plea earlier made for technological improvements in agriculture.

The theme that recurs in the book is the one about reducing labour costs in agriculture. Dr. Mandal does not show how his prescription of co-operative farming fits into his theory of creating investible surpluses by reducing labour costs. Also, he is altogether too optimistic regarding the re-employment of those released from agricultural work. In any case, he does not spell out his argument in any great detail. In fact, this observation would apply to many things that he says in the book. Also much space is taken up by findings and prescriptions which are already too familiar.

A complaint must be made in regard to the matter of presentation. Some topics which are not germane to the theme are occasionally discussed (e.g., industrial wages and industrial profits in the chapter on Inter-relations of Agricultural and Industrial Prices). Some tables could have been presented in a more useful form (e.g., Table 6.1 on p. 84 does not give the *relative* changes in agricultural and industrial products). Some tables contain columns which do not add much to analysis (e.g., column 3 in Table 2.5 on p. 20).

S. H. DESHPANDE