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Review

Reviewed Work(s):

Kulturwandel in Ceylon: Eine Untersuchung über die Entstehung einer
Industrie-Unternehmerschicht

by Hans-Dieter Evers

Review by: Nur Yalman

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danger is remote. The few developing countries which have practiced a measure of liberal parliamentary democracy (e.g., Nigeria and India) face with increasing acuteness the necessity to choose between tyranny and disintegration.

2) McCord fails to specify to whom democracy and freedom are supposed to apply. Surely, the Western democracies, which McCord would like to see developing countries emulate, were not, until quite recently, genuine popular democracies. The "democracies" of the 19th-century Europe were bourgeois democracies where political power was monopolized by propertied classes. As to the non-European developed "democracies" (United States, Canada, Australia), they were what I have called "*Herrenvolk* democracies" based on skin pigmentation. To suggest, therefore, that elitist Western democracies and their political-legalist revolutions are models relevant to social revolutions in Africa and Asia is, in my estimation, a dubious proposition. To speak (as does Seymour Lipset) of the United States as the "first new nation" in any but the most limited political sense obscures basic historical dissimilarities. Besides, which is the more heinous crime: to disfranchise millions of citizens on grounds of color as in the United States or to jail a few hundred intellectuals as in Ghana? Can one country be described as a "democracy" and the other as a "dictatorship"?

3) McCord does not satisfactorily deal with the old antinomy between freedom and equality. Because of their elitist nature, Western democracies have stressed a special legal conception of freedom, but, in "social" or "people's" democracies, the accent is on equality. How can one expeditiously destroy a landed aristocracy, or a caste system except through considerable use of coercion? The civil rights struggle in the United States faces, of course, the same dilemma of means and ends: in order effectively and rapidly to enforce racial equality, some coercion and force on the part of the Federal Government is necessary. The intelligentsia of the Third World has, by and large, conceived of the emergence of their countries as a two-stage process: first freedom, but in the sense of political emancipation from foreign rule, not of a bill of rights and *habeas corpus*; second equality, again not simply in the legal sense, but in the sense of the abolition of ascriptive differences in power, wealth, and status. Who is to tell whom what is the right ideology and the proper priority?

In spite of his humane, urbane, unpatronizing, and sympathetic treatment of his subject, McCord has nevertheless fallen into the ethnocentric pitfall of reifying "freedom" and "democracy" as objective entities which mean the same to everybody. He also assumes that social democracy is a linear outgrowth of liberal democracy, which is at least questionable. Finally, he accepts the dogma of liberal political theory that pluralism is conducive to democracy, when it is obvious that many pluralistic societies have lived under tyranny, and that numerous monistic societies have been quite democratic. Without being a historicist or an extreme relativist, I believe that liberal democracy is too complex and specific an ideology not to be culture- and time-bound. Kenyatta's *Uhuru* is *not* simply a Swahili translation of Jefferson's Liberty.

Kulturwandel in Ceylon: Eine Untersuchung über die Entstehung einer Industrie-Unternehmerschicht. HANS-DIETER EVERS. (Sozialwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Entwicklungsforschung, Band 1.) Baden-Baden: Verlag August Lutzeyer, 1964. 206 pp., appendix, chapter notes, glossary, index, references, 18 tables. DM 27,- (paper).

Reviewed by NUR YALMAN, University of Chicago

The volume is the first of a series of studies devoted to social change and development in non-European countries to be published under the auspices of a number of re-

search institutes in Freiburg, Köln, and Dortmund. The series is intended both to provide information on particular countries and to further the analysis of the special problems of underdevelopment. Dr. Evers' volume, which is particularly welcome as a new and worthwhile addition to the numerous books devoted to the investigation of Ceylonese society, is of interest both for its methodology and its central problem.

In terms of the methodology, Dr. Evers unites some of the best aspects of the Weberian approach with a firm attention to social structure. He is interested in relating the alteration of the positions of certain groups in the social structure with the changes that take place in the general system of cultural values.

The study is based on an extended period of work primarily in Colombo and the Maritime Provinces; the author is also conversant with the extensive literature on Ceylon. The general plan is directed to the following main problem, evidently a major interest of the Institute. If economic development is to be anything more than a slogan in the underdeveloped countries, it must be associated with groups of entrepreneurs (in the private or public sector) who have the necessary interest, technique, knowledge, capital, and opportunities to take risks and make productive investments. At what niche in the social structure are such activist groups to be found? And, does the traditional system help or hinder the rise of such "capitalist" groups? What are their relations in the public and the private sectors of the economy?

The author makes the interesting point that what is usually regarded as "culture change" is in fact always linked with group "mobility" in the social structure. It follows that by watching the movements and manipulations of groups and the possible choices in front of them, we may, first, observe the internal (endogenous) factors in culture change and, second, have an empirical base for the observation of changes in ideology.

It takes a good many pages for the author to clear the decks and come to grips with the kernel of his problem. There are extensive chapters on the history, traditions, and educational system of the Sinhalese which may be useful to the uninformed reader, but are probably unnecessary in a specialized treatise.

When the problem is engaged, detailed and accurate observations follow. The author makes a selection of the directors and managers of the most important enterprises in Ceylon. He notes their affiliation to the various communities and castes.

As usual, we find that certain minorities, the Borah, the Muslims, etc., are far over-represented in such commercial positions in proportion to their numbers in the total population. (This curious feature reported from many parts of the world has never been satisfactorily analyzed.) Moreover, the author finds, as anyone familiar with Ceylon would expect, that one caste, the Karava ("Fishers") dominates all others in the commercial field. We are provided with excellent historical details on some highly mobile and important Karava families and their rise to wealth and power. Finally, the author examines the reasons which have prepared the Karava for the active part they play in the island's economy. This role is certainly not associated with the European domination of the Maritime Provinces since the 17th Century. If so, we would also expect the high caste Goyigama ("Cultivators") whose fields are only a few hundred yards from the coast to be equally active. On the contrary, there is an important difference between them and the Karava with regards to business enterprise. Dr. Evers does try the old Weberian game on them: there is some evidence that certain Buddhist strictures may influence the Karava to turn away from sinful "fishing" to find their salvation by mercantilism. Is Buddhism playing the unlikely role of Calvinism here? The author finds that there are far more immediate reasons for the Karava (who have always been involved in a market economy by having to sell their catch of fish) rather than the Goyigama (who farm the land) to be the spearhead of industrial entrepreneurs.

The observations in these sections of the work are noteworthy. The role of the Karava in the economy of the island is well known, but Dr. Evers deserves credit for the precision of his argument and analysis. On the other hand, the empirical evidence on which the argument is based certainly seems rather meager. After nearly two years of field work, one tends to expect massive and detailed documentation of the role of the minority groups, the Karava, and other commercial "activists" in the economy. This is not forthcoming. We are given at best a preliminary sketch of the larger picture which still needs to be painted. Much more work on the Bazaar system of the entire island (again largely in the hands of the Karava) must be done. There is also the further task of explaining the background and role of those Goyigama who are represented among the industrial entrepreneurs.

In dealing with the larger and more complex question of the effect of the traditional culture in assisting or hindering industrial activity, Dr. Evers notes that the sharp reaction to Colonial rule has in fact revived the desire for a Buddhist-style welfare state and that this runs on broadly socialist lines. Marx is said to have torn a page from the Buddhist scriptures.

There is here a hint of irony since the changes in the social structure, economy, and the cultural values which led in the direction of industrial activity were directly engendered in Ceylon by Colonial contact and European mercantile values. With the traditionalist reaction, conditions have evidently been unfavorable for further industrial and entrepreneurial investment. So the business community accuses the government of ineptitude in handling the economy, but curiously, when asked for improvements, many businessmen (contrary to European experience) immediately suggest more, rather than less, state intervention and state controlled investments in the economy. Indeed, somebody even suggested "more machine guns" (i.e., "dictatorship") as the answer to Ceylon's problems.

Here the author is on long disputed ground. More state-owned enterprises will obviously compete with the private entrepreneurs. The conditions may then be unfavorable for the further development of industrial enterprises in the private sector, but will such conditions not simply transfer individuals with such active interests into the public sector? Or is there some inherent reason why an entrepreneurial and managerial class with the proper economic objectives cannot be effectively developed in the public sector? With the primacy of political considerations over growth and efficiency in public organizations, it is probable that this is the case. But it is a case which must be argued out in its specific context in Ceylon.

These are some of the questions raised by this volume. It might be worthwhile to compare the Ceylonese experience with Thailand or Iran where the colonial influence was less directly felt and not very prolonged. Is there less interest in the ancient traditions, and, is the history less involved with national identity in these countries? Do we really find fewer hindrances to the development of economic "activists" in Thailand than in Ceylon?

This is an interesting book, and the author deals effectively with questions of considerable importance. The bibliography is excellent, and there is a Glossary and an Index.

Culture, Stone Age and Modern Medicine. V. F. P. M. VAN AMELSVOORT. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Co. N.V., 1964, 245 pp., 2 bibliographies, numerous unnumbered tables and figures, index, map, 12 plates. Hfl.19.75.

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