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Book Review — Digitized Version

[Rezension] Hans-Bernd Giesler (Hrsg.): Die Wirtschaft
Japans. Düsseldorf [u.a.]: Econ Verlag, 1971

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Reviews

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

Hans-Bernd Giesler (Ed.), *Die Wirtschaft Japans*. Düsseldorf, Wien: Econ Verlag, 1971. 258 pages, DM 38,-.

Books on the Japanese economy may be roughly separated into two groups: those emphasizing economic growth and admiring its direct productive results, and those challenging traditional values by pointing to the limits to growth, the social costs of private enterprise, especially the deteriorating environmental conditions. Since 1972 may be recorded as the year in which the environmental movement developed from a mainly middle-class concern into a more general issue with increasing relevance to society and the world as a whole, one will readily concede that a book published in 1971 should belong to the first group. This is all the more to be expected as (the theme of the book is the) "Japanese Challenge", i.e. the superiority of an industrious and dynamic system compared to those of the old Western nations e.g. Germany.

In the meantime we have had the Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth", the "Oil Crisis" along with other crises, so that today our attitude towards such things as long-term prognoses is different. No one could as easily agree to the suggestion that the 21st century could be the "Japanese century" (Herman Kahn). It is fascinating to read a book on Japan viewed from the present state of discussion: what are the historical invariables of a particular growth process, the "historische Konstanten" as Arnold Bergstraesser called it?

The point of departure for the 13 contributions to this book was the question of the relation between the Japanese and their economy, the "Japanese mentality" and the way it differs from Western economic mentality. Though many intelligent clues are given, the answers show some points of divergence, but still to a large extent Japanese industriousness and economic motivation (Tüchtigkeit, Fleiß, Leistungsmotivation) are thought to be superior, especially in industry, foreign trade, planning and research. Other contributions, however, dealing more with the social conditions and consequences of growth, come to a more balanced view.

Yet while most of the authors are still followers of the theory of unilinear economic growth which prevailed until recently, some are already more in favour of a social and environment-oriented development. If that "dual approach" is kept in mind, the book may well be suggested for all practitioners and those interested in Japanese development.

Udo Ernst Simonis