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Book Review — Digitized Version

[Rezension] Heinrich Schweizer: Sozialistische Agrartheorie und Landwirtschaftspolitik in China und der Sowjetunion : ein Modell für Entwicklungsländer? Bern [u.a.]: Lang, 1972

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Heinrich Schweizer, Sozialistische Agrartheorie und Landwirtschaftspolitik in China und der Sowjetunion: ein Modell für Entwicklungsländer? (Reihe Ost-Kontexte, Bd.3) Bern und Frankfurt a.M., Verlag und Buchhandlung Herbert Lang & Cie AG, 1972. 266 S., SFr. 38.-

Heinrich Schweizer's work shows great scholarly abilities, and is an excellent contribution both to the field of development theory and policy.

The author concentrates on three main questions: what have been the basic theoretical ideas and concepts of the prominent socialist thinkers in respect to agricultural development; which of these ideas have been put into practice in the two socialist economies of China and the Soviet Union, and how; and, finally, what implications do these socialist agrarian theories and policies have for the developing countries of today, and to what extent and in which sense could they be called a "model"?

The method used in the book may be described as an historical-theoretical approach. This involves a study of the historical experience of development in two countries to discern their differences and similarities, and the use of theoretical books and concepts to order and analyse the empirical historical evidence. From the beginning Schweizer leaves the question open as to whether history really can "prove" anything; he contents himself with the experience that man, in thinking about the future, always holds on to the past.

In a relatively long chapter, various socialist theories and concepts are discussed (Early Socialists, Marx, Engels, Kautsky, David, Lenin, Mao), while those of the "Agrarsozialisten" and the "Agrarreformer" are deliberately left out. This is because the impact of these theories on the policies of the countries analyzed is thought to have been stronger than any other economic theory in the West, and because of the weak image Western scholars are thought to have of Marx and Engels as agrarian theoreticians.

In the empirical chapter of the book, first the actual agricultural policies of the Soviet Union in the period 1928 - 1953 (the "take-off" period) are investigated. As far as China is concerned, the author tries to cover the

whole period from 1949 until recent years. Both these sections are a bit too short, compared to the theoretical chapter of the book and with respect to the conclusions drawn in the following chapter. However, since the author, in his endeavour to deduce four main lessons for the developing countries of today - i.e. "scale of production and organization of work", "resolving the discrepancies between urban and rural areas", "agriculture and capital formation", "choice of techniques" - repeatedly has to refer to the empirical aspects of development in both countries, he finally achieves a good balance between theory and practice.

Regarding the lessons to be learned from agricultural theory and policy in China and the Soviet Union, the author's message is to follow neither example exclusively. His message is that of selective choice. One need not, and cannot, adopt the whole political, social and economic system but nonetheless one can learn from a thorough analysis of the two countries and the underlying agriculture theories.

To sum up, one may say that Schweizer's book will be of great value to all those who already know, and to all those who should know, about the decisive role of agriculture in and for comprehensive development.

Udo Ernst Simonis