

BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

ANTON BEBLER

Military Rule in Africa — Dahomey, Ghana, Siera Leone, Mali

Praeger Publishers, New York, 1973, Pp. 267.

The appearance of soldiers on the political scene of Africa has generated all kinds of theories concerning the causes, techniques and effects of military intervention. Some see in the soldiers saviours of the new states from inefficiency, corruption and eventual disintegration; others consider them as no more than another group of self-seekers who have replaced the politicians. Dr. Bebler's book is concerned with military government in the West African countries of Dahomey, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Mali. The first part of the study (pp. 10—102) is an account of the political development in the four countries before and after military intervention. Those who have been following events in these countries may not find anything new in this part of the book. However, it is useful to have the complex facts of West African politics presented in a clear exposition.

Dr. Bebler's own contribution starts with the analysis of the interrelationships between sociopolitical environment and military intervention (pp. 103—156). He examines the various crisis symptoms in the four countries prior to military rule and assesses to what extent they may have influenced the soldiers. According to the author, fragmentation of civilian elites, social class and intra-elite cleavages did not lead to direct military intervention in politics although, as he rightly points out (p. 107), „in Ghana it coincided and to a degree represented conflicts between the upper and upper middle indigenous strata in the most developed, stratified, and complex society of the sample“. Nor were regional-ethnic cleavages as important as others believe in explaining military coups in the countries examined. Dr. Bebler's sample does not include Nigeria and no one can criticise him for that. But the reader must be reminded that the various explanations offered in this book should not be generalized to cover the whole of West Africa. For example, the regional-ethnic cleavage may not be important in explaining military intervention in the countries considered here but it is definitely of tremendous importance in the case of Nigeria.

An obvious cause of military intervention is the attempt by a radical government to change the social, economic and political system to the disadvantage of the army. This was clearly the case in Ghana where the officers, attached to British notions of social order, viewed Nkrumah's socialist experiments with anxiety and felt that their privileged position was being endangered by the radical policies of the ruling Convention People's Party. Keita's policies also antagonized the Malian army to some extent. But Dahomey and Sierra Leone had no radical governments prior to army rule and so radical policies alone cannot account for military intervention.

Economic difficulties arising from mismanagement, corruption or an unfavourable world market may aggravate an already disastrous economic situation but are not decisive. A more significant factor for military intervention is the existence of a para-military organization of the ruling political movement which threatens the corporate security of the military establishment (p. 122). Ghana and Mali offer

good examples of civilian governments creating a para-military organization as an alternative to the army and thus inviting the soldiers to react in self-defence.

Dr. Bebler does not attach much importance to foreign instigation as a factor contributing to eventual military intervention but he admits that if the vital interests of the strong states were sufficiently threatened by developments in an African country, they would probably resort to direct action (pp. 131, 134).

The author dismisses as myth the belief that the soldiers in West Africa are selfless patriots and modernizers (p. 210) and expresses his final assessment of the military thus: "The African military as the ruling power is hindered by the limitations of the technocratic mind, by its anti-political ethos, and by its selective adherence to Western liberal ideals. The military lacks the political instruments to shoulder the task at which the civilian leaders with political parties at their disposal flatly failed" (p. 211). This is a judgment to which many critical voices in West Africa will subscribe although those who regard Africans as being incapable of self government will hotly dispute it.

Kwame Opoku

VINOBA BHAVE:

Dritte Macht

Hinder + Deelmann, Bellnhausen 1974, 126 S., 18,— DM.

Dies ist das dritte Buch von Gandhis Schüler Vinoba Bhave, welches der obige Verlag in deutscher Übersetzung herausbringt. Während das erste* und zweite Buch die religiöse Grundhaltung dieses Mannes umrissen, ist das vorliegende Buch mehr der politischen Auswirkung dieser Haltung auf seine gewaltlose politische Bewegung gewidmet. Es enthält 8 Beiträge, 6 Reden und 2 Aufsätze. Zeitlich liegen die Beiträge zwischen 1950 und 1968. Sie sind chronologisch geordnet.

Nach einer etwas zu stark enthusiastischen Einführung von J. Narayan (S. 7—12) beginnt das Buch mit Vinoba Bhaves Einleitung (1950) zu einem Buch von K. G. Mashruwala über „Gandhi und Marx“ (S. 13—26), in welchem die beiden Ideale, der Charakterveränderung (Gandhi) und der Veränderung der Gesellschaftsordnung (Marx), gegenübergestellt werden. Insbesondere wird die Elastizität Gandhis gegenüber dem starren marxistischen System hervorgehoben. „Eine systematische Aufstellung von Ideen versorgt einen lediglich mit Munition gegen rivalisierende Systeme. Ähnlich wie militärische Bewaffnung neigt sie dazu, den Konflikt zu verschärfen. Der Krieg der Worte, weit davon entfernt, die Probleme zu lösen, trägt zur Verwirrung bei.“ (S. 21).

„Die Dritte Macht“ (S. 27—41), eine Rede von 1953, die den Titel dieses Buches abgab, behandelt den dritten Weg, der weder private Gewalt noch staatliche Gewalt (Gesetz) ist und durch Umschulung der Menschen eine gewaltlose Macht erstrebt, eine Art sanftes Absterben des Staates. So heißt es: „Wenn die Leute sagen, Indien scheint keine Regierung zu haben, könnt ihr sicher sein, daß die Herrschaft der Gewaltlosigkeit begonnen hat“ (S. 37). Es werden vier Arten der Praxis zum Ziel der Wohlfahrt aller (Sarvodaya) — d. h. allgemeine Liebe (bhakti) (S. 68) — genannt; nämlich Schenkungen von Land, Geld, Garn und Arbeitskraft. Als fünfte

* Siehe die Besprechung VRÜ 1972, S. 337—339.