

Singapour 1959–1987: genèse d'un nouveau pays industriel. By JEAN-LOUIS MARGOLIN. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989. Pp. 315.

This book, based on Margolin's Ph. D. dissertation presented in 1982 at University Paris VII, is published with the support of the French National Center for Scientific Research. It is a useful contribution considering the very few studies on Singapore, ASEAN, or the Asian NIEs available in French.

Margolin adopts the classical dependency theory of development and proposes a highly critical and provocative, but out-dated, interpretation of Singapore's rapid industrialization. Not surprisingly, Buchanan's neo-marxist book on Singapore (1972) is mentioned as a "fundamental" reading in Margolin's bibliography. As a young French scholar, Margolin could have been expected, seventeen years later, to offer more than a pale and less talented reassertion of Singapore being the simple produce of a pro-Western autocracy allied with foreign multinationals. From such a distorted and polemical look at modern Singapore, the French daily "Le Monde" dated 17 May 1989 drew only two questions in a short commentary on Margolin's views: is Singapore a democracy? Can communism come back into the local political picture?

The book is rather poorly organized, the merger between some pieces of the doctoral dissertation and some more recent reflexions is not well balanced, and there is quite a number of factual and formal errors. The bibliography is detailed and informative but not too well ordered, and makes an arbitrary selection of authors supporting Margolin's leftist views (with non-scientific short comments by the author written next to some of the bibliographical references). Many significant contributions published during the 1980s on the industrialization of the Asian NIEs are forgotten (deliberately?), despite the sub-title of Margolin's book.

Both the introduction and conclusion, which are not part of the original dissertation of 1982, are highly doctrinal, even in style and wording. In the introduction, the city-state is presented as an economy of "savage" capitalism, as a product of a "scandalous" international division of labour "manipulated" by the multinationals, and as a "sophisticated fascist" regime!!!

The conclusion is also full of fallacies here and there such as: the "bloody" nature of Singaporean capitalism, the "crimes" of Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party (PAP), the "total exploitation" of local labour, the "semi-totalitarian dictatorship" of the regime, the very underdeveloped social services (including unsecure public transport?), etc. From a more economic point of view, Margolin goes as far as writing that the industrialization of Singapore (and the Asian NIEs) cannot be analyzed as a significant contribution to world manufacturing capacities, because it is just the result of industrial delocalization from the Western economies (p. 279).

The first chapters of the book, which are derived from the core historical parts of the doctoral dissertation of 1982, provide a rather detailed review of the conditions of Singapore in the late 1950s and how Lee and a faction of the PAP emerged during the struggling years against the local Communists (1957–63). Chapters 3–5 discuss the construction of an independent city-state after separation from Malaysia in 1965 and the transition of the 1980s towards economic maturity and sustainable development. Instead of being systematically critical and over-simplistic about Lee Kuan Yew's economic, political and social options after 1965, Margolin could have analyzed the very specific historical and structural conditions of Singapore's economic take off, and whether there was any alternative strategy at the time for the leaders of the four Asian

dragons — especially for those of a tiny island port-city, who had never envisaged becoming a sovereign state!

The political developments of Singapore after 1986–87 (the last part of the book) are presented even more superficially, though various issues and problems are correctly identified. In brief, the central conclusions of the book should not be whether Singapore is or isn't a model of development for third world countries (how could such a small republic pretend to such a role?), but they should concentrate on more key issues such as:

- the differences and similarities between Singapore and the three other Asian NIEs (as expected from the sub-title of Margolin's book);
- the role of historical shocks and psychological mobilization of society, the profile of the new ruling elites, the political attempt at self-legitimation through rapid economic and social change, the interaction between long term political stability and attraction of foreign investment, the high valorization of scarce human resources through education and social mobility, the flexible combination of strong state intervention and market forces for a sustainable development of the economy, as fundamental conditions for the economic take-off of the Asian NIEs;
- the rapid economic development of Singapore and the other NIEs leading to enormous social transformations (such as the emergence of a numerous highly educated middle-class) and to various demands for more participation of civilian society in the democratization process.

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THAILAND

A Life Apart Viewed from the Hills. By JON BOYES and S. PIRABAN. Chiang Mai: Jareuk Publications, 1989. Pp. 222. Maps, Illustrations.

This book presents interviews with members of the six major hill tribes of Northern Thailand (Yao [Mien], Akha, Lahu, Hmong, Lisu, and Karen). Unsatisfied with the image of hilltribe life contained either in a "glossy picture book" or a "heavy, fact-filled anthropologist's text-book" (p. 2), the authors spent ten months (1988–89) visiting eight villages in Chiang Rai Province to learn what tribal people themselves had to say. Interviews were conducted in Thai, not the native language of any of the hill tribes, and then translated into English. They are preceded by a brief historical and ethnographic introduction, much of which is borrowed from *Peoples of the Golden Triangle* by Paul and Elaine Lewis (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), duly cited among the sources. Where information in the interviews differs from that reported by ethnographers working in tribal languages, I would back the ethnographers.

Since the volume was written by non-scholars without scholarly intent, it should *not be judged by the usual academic standards*. There is thus no point in complaining that, contrary to the ethics of anthropology, the authors fail to protect the anonymity of people transgressing the law, in this case by smoking opium or establishing residence illegally after leaving a camp for refugees from Laos. Ironically, real names of people