THE JOURNALS

The Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte

Jürgen Kuczynski
Academy of Sciences of the GDR

The *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* has been issued regularly since 1960; at first in two parts, and from 1962 onwards in four parts with a total of 1,200 pages. It is published by the Institute of Economic History of the Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic. For a brief initial period the Jahrbuch was edited by J. Kuczynski, the then Director of the Institute; Wolfgang Jonas followed him as chief editor in 1962 and quickly brought the Jahrbuch to its present standard; Dr. Jan Peters succeeded him to the post of editor in 1970, shortly after W. Jonas was appointed Director of the Institute.

The 'Jahrbuch' is the only periodical on economic history published in the socialist countries. This fact, alone, at once defines its status in two respects: firstly, it is the only Marxist periodical of its kind; and secondly, it is the organ of the economic historians of the socialist countries. It is only natural, therefore, that the Scientific Advisory Board should include, next to the two representatives from the German Democratic Republik (J. Kuczynski and Hans Mottek), also S. I. Tyulpanov from the Soviet Union, W. Kula from Poland, S. P. Pach from Hungary, and J. Purš from Czechoslovakia. Leading Marxist historians outside the socialist community also serve on the Advisory Board: E. Hobsbawm (Great Britain), E. Ragionieri (Italy), and H. Aptheker (USA).

All ages — from the earliest history of mankind right up to the present time in both Socialist and capitalist countries — are dealt with by the 'Jahrbuch'. It is comprehensive also in its scientific range, devoting space to bordeline subjects as well where economic history overlaps with the natural sciences, political history, political economy, sociology, the history of

literature, and philosophy. Hence there is an inevitable, yet very gratifying breadth of methodology: there are a number of articles which are important for the way they open up new documentary sources, others for their quantitative treatment of various problems, and others for the way in which they investigate the relationships between economics, politics and literature, or in their methodology in studying social structures. The 'Jahrbuch' endeavours whenever possible to combine in the same article a useful collection of factual-information together with its analysis, as well as synthesis the only exception being straightforward statistical reports, which are usually without comment, such as the collection of data on the history of wages and prices in Germany from 1750 to 1850.

Another interesting aspect is the way in which the problem of book reviews has been tackled. Apart from special bibliographies, the 'Jahrbuch' only publishes review articles devoted to a particular problem in economic history, reviewing usually a number of books dealing with the problem. This has proved to be the most advantageous solution since it has become virtually impossible to discuss all the important books on economic history that are being published today; and any 'limited choice' is invariably unsatisfactory.

The 'Jahrbuch' often gives prominence to a particular problem or theme in some of its issues, typical examples being Part IV, 1967, which was chiefly devoted to questions concerning the Asiatic mode of production; or Part I, 1970, which consisted of four studies on the nature of the community and of community property in pre-capitalist societies. These specialised volumes sometimes contain papers read at colloquiums organised by the Institute, e.g. the Colloquium on the Development of Agriculture in the Industrial Revolution and in the Scientific and Technical Revolution under Capitalism and Socialism. Economic historians from Hungary and the GDR participated in this event, and their contributions were published in Parts I and III of the 1972 yearbook.

Once in a while certain volumes of the 'Jahrbuch' are devoted exclusively to one particular subject. Hence, Part I, 1971, was only concerned with Cuba, and it published the results of research in the archives of former US concerns in Cuba, which was conducted jointly by members of the *Institute of History of the Cuban Academy* and the *Institute of Economic History of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR*. These archives give a unique insight into the economic policy of these concerns which cannot otherwise be obtained for obvious reasons. Another specialised volume Part II, 1972, dealt exclusively with the problems of the economic history of the GDR.

One peculiarity of the 'Jahrbuch' that has evolved over the years is worth special mention in this context: that is the importance attributed to the discussion of different opinions on the same subject. Articles are often published with the express purpose of gaining critical or complementary

views for subsequent publication. Thus, the article on the Sociology of Imperialist Germany by J. Kuczynski (Part II, 1962) sparked off a lively discussion which was continued by scientists from the GDR and the Soviet Union in the ' Jahrbuch ' 1963. Parts IV, 1971, and I and III, 1972, were concerned with strongly diverging opinions on problems of the structure of the labour force, particularly problems of defining the working class — in the GDR and in general, both statistically and theoretically.

All this adds up to a 'Jahrbuch' that is a really comprehensive organ of Marxist economic historians throughout the world, and that presents an exceptionally broad range of subjects with an equally varied manner of treatment.

* * *

At the same time it must be remembered that the ' Jahrbuch ' is not only an interesting collection of contributions. It does not only show interest in major problems that arise internationally in the course of time, or in international trends, either by following or contesting them. The ' Jahrbuch ' is also of organisational importance for the development of economic history in the German Democratic Republic.

This can be illustrated by two examples. It is wellknown that the inspiration for writing histories of factories in the Soviet Union can be chiefly attributed to Maxim Gorki, long before entrepreneurial history began to develop in the United States in conformity with the conditions prevailing there. This movement in the Soviet Union radically contrasted also with the sort of literature that became more evident in Germany at the beginning of the century — that is the publication of commemorative writings to mark the occasion of the 50th or 100th anniversary of a business. Gorki's initiative was taken up widely in the Soviet Union. Its importance declined however, as might be expected, with the war and was, however, not resumed in the Soviet Union after the war, while in the GDR Gorki's initiative was taken up again and gave rise to a broad movement in subsequent years. This revival of the history of business enterprises originated among a circle of economic historians who later worked in the Academy. The natural consequence was that the 'Jahrbuch' devoted considerable space to furthering this branch of economic history for a long period, and the subject still receives considerable prominence.

A second ' special subject ' of the ' Jahrbuch ' is the history of productive forces — that is the history of tools and machinery, and of man who uses them and whose qualifications and social status are determined by them within the framework of the mode of production. Just as in the previous case, this trend in economic history which goes far beyond the framework of a « pure history of technology », was started by members of the staff of

the Institute under the giudance of its present Director, Wolfgang Jonas, and found its main literary expression in the ' Jahrbuch '. On this subject, the ' Jahrbuch ' is particularly concerned with the problems of the Industrial Revolution and the Scientific and Technological Revolution; a series of articles was, therefore, published on this subject which gave rise to a lively discussion of recent Marxist theories of economic history.

Finally, mention must be made in this context of the problem of state-monopoly capitalism, and the attitude of the bourgeoisie in general to monopoly. The ' Jahrbuch ' has published a number of articles on this subject, and they brought to light new factors for Marxist research, particularly regarding the economic history of Germany. As to the last two « special subjects », the emphasis given to these problems in the 'Jahrbuch' is also determined by the fact that two sections of the *Institute of Economic History* are devoted to these subjects as special importance is attributed to them by economic historians in the GDR, and by Marxist economic history in general.

* * *

These explanations show that there is only one uniting tie amongst the contributors to the ' Jahrbuch ', namely the endeavour to promote the Marxist science of economic history. Apart from this, they differ greatly in their views, methods, inclinations (towards theory or archival research), fields of interest, and schools of thought. The varied and stimulating character of the 'Jahrbuch', with its basis of Marxist thought, is due to the fact that the same problems are dealt with by scholars who differ so widely in their manner of work, that one article may employ empirical arguments drawn from modern as well as feudal economic history, (e.g. as when dealing with certain laws of economic history or specifically with the history of the productive forces), while the same subject may be treated in another article both statistically as well as from a logical-theoretical standpoint, and the same statistics may be interpreted differently by various authors. Investigations of social structure also are based both on census data as well as on works of literature, Such widely differing scholars as Hobsbawm, Kalecki and Kuczynski are represented in the 'Jahrbuch' as well as representatives of the schools of Varga, Pach and Kula. The internationality of subjects and contributors, and the diversity in the treatment of their subjects, are some of the reasons why such a large number of the subscribers of the ' Jahrbuch ' live outside the German Democratic Republic.

* * *

One of the peculiarities of the ' Jahrbuch ' is the generous space allocated from time to time to the publication of long range statistical series, three typical examples being:

1) A statistical survey of strikes in Germany during the years 1864 to 1880 (W. Steglich, Part II, 1960);

2) A statistical survey of prices and wages in the following towns during the given periods:

Chemnitz, 1770 to 1850 (R. Strauss, Part IV, 1962; Parts I, II, III, IV, 1963; Parts I, IV, 1964; and Part I, 1965).

Quedlinburg, 1750 to 1800 (W. Schulze, Parts II, III, IV, 1965; Parts I, II, IV, 1966; Part I, 1967).

Leipzig, 1750 to 1850 (E. E. Köhler, Part IV, 1967).

The directors of the municipal archives were inspired by the 'Jahrbuch' to prepare these statistical surveys.

International interest has been shown in Gertrud Hellings, statistics on annual production and productivity in agriculture (subdivided into vegetable and animal production) in the following countries during the 19th centurys:

Germany (Part IV, 1965; Part I, 1966);

France (Part I, 1968);

USA (Part I, 1968);

Great Britain (Part III, 1968).

* * *

One of the most important tasks which the *Institute of Economic History* has set itself for the coming period — and economic historians of a number of socialist countries are also pursuing the same aim — is the promotion of comparative economic history. The 'Jahrbuch' will not be content merely to reflect this trend of research; on the contrary, it will make a point of stimulating such research in the GDR.

This gives rise to a second task — a stress on the integration of specialised studies into the general framework of economic history. While, of course, avoiding any tendency to draw hasty and generalized conclusions from such specialised and individual studies, the results of specialised research will be more consistently compared with the knowledge gained on the corresponding general theme, in order to assess the importance of the individual results in support of, or in contradiction to, generalized conclusions that have been drawn on the wider subject in the past.

The 'Jahrbuch' also intends to promote more frequently than in the past the integration of problems of economic history with other scientific disciplines and with literature, and to treat problems from other disciplines from the standpoint of the economic historian.

To this must be added the continued strengthening of theory, especially in the discovery of new laws of economic development. In this field the

' Jahrbuch ' had confined itself mainly to the theory of the production conditions of capitalism. The foundations of the theory of the political economy of capitalism were laid before Marx by Petty, Quesnay, Adam Smith and Ricardo. The political economy of feudalism, and of slavery in antiquity, and of the Asian mode of production, on the other hand, have received little detailed and systematic-theoretical attention by either bourgeois or marxist political economists; this is an assignment which the economists of the world are apparently leaving to the economic historian who, in certain respects, may be better qualified to handle the job, particularly in view of the inadequate historical training of political economists which is evident throughout the world.

The 'Jahrbuch' is however unlikely to welcome as a closing comment in this review a reproach to the political economists, all the more so since the economic historian is fully aware of the fact that the political economist has a considerable lead over him in the application of mathematical methods — as opposed to simpler statistical methods. It is, therefore, only appropriate to point out that the ' Jahrbuch ' intends to follow the example of the economists and further the introduction of mathematics into economic history.

As we have seen, any analysis of the 'Jahrbuch' must take into account the fact it is also a guiding organ for economic historians in the German Democratic Republic; that it is, therefore, concerned also with the gaps that may appear in research, with inadequate attention paid to some vital problem, or with too limited a methodological approach, or similar deficiencies and weaknesses. The way in which the articles of the ' Jahrbuch ' show how such weaknesses can be overcome naturally also attracts international interest.