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Book Review


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The great hope of development aid in the sixties has turned out to be a great illusion: the underdeveloped countries did not fully participate in the benefits of international trade,
the welfare gap between the North and the South has widened, social, economic and
technical dualism within the underdeveloped countries have not been overcome. Based
on this experience, doubts are rapidly growing in the industrialized countries as to whether
the aims and means of development aid are adequate to solve the basic problems of
underdevelopment. The present book calls our attention to two such problems: the situation
in the rural areas and growing unemployment and underemployment.

In the first part of the book, Hermann Priebe pleads for "development from below" and
especially for "development from the rural basis". He examines the basic facts of tradi­
tionalism and dualism, describes certain signs of the beginning of a process of rethinking,
and then puts forward several guiding principles for a development policy from the basis:
Incremental steps to mobilize the know-how of the traditional agricultural population,
actively using the oft denounced watering-can principle, decentralized development
activities and a combination of agricultural and industrial strategies are thought to be of the
utmost importance in reconciling economic and social aspects of development.

In the second part, Otto Matzke deepens this approach by investigating the possibilities of
labour mobilization. First he stresses the special responsibility (Eigenverantwortung) of the
developing countries themselves in looking for other goals than growth of the GNP, and in
taking the initiative in the introduction of appropriate technologies and population control.
"Development via employment", not "employment via development" should be the slogan,
and social marginal productivity should be the decisive criterion for investment decisions.
Only in a supplementary way and under very specific conditions is traditional development
aid thought to be of real help. Structural adjustment in the industrialized countries and
reduction of their protectionism, on the other hand, are held to be the real issues of devel­
opment aid.

Probably, the critical reader will consent to all or nearly all the analysis given and the
proposals made in this small book, but since no way is shown as to how structural ad­
justment and reduced protectionism could be reached in the world of reality, he may well
reach the conclusion: "I got the message but I can't believe it" — or as the Germans say:
"Die Nachricht hört ich wohl — allein mir fehlt der Glaube!"  

Udo Ernst Simonis