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Controlled Development Aid

In considering the relationship between industrial and developing countries—the donors and recipients of development aid—the use of any type of force by industrial nations is all too hastily defined as a sin against its spirit. However, one type of “resort to power” could be discussed with reference to past experience of development policies: the influence of donor countries upon the effective use of development funds made available.

Industrial nations have never lacked incentives to put such measures into practice. However, time and again their implementation comes into immediate conflict with the stern reality of the categorically opposed policies of the East and the West. This unfavourable, antagonistic state of affairs strengthens the hand of developing countries which decidedly refuse to be subjected to any kind of influence.

After hundreds of years of political regimentation, it is understandable that such countries are allergic to any sort of development policy which smacks of force or of conditions imposed from outside. The justification for this basic rejection of strings or controls upon application and results is pretty often stated to be the prevention of neo-colonialism—an imputation against which all donor countries rightly protest.

The chief aim of Western development aid should be to improve living standards in young states, to introduce in the long run effective processes of growth and to achieve a greater integration of such states in a world economy based on division of labour. In order to realise these aims, it would be necessary to prevent to a large extent misdirection of funds and their less than optimal employment—in view of the limited amounts of such aid funds. By influencing the use of these funds it would be possible to prevent a great deal of misapplication. It is no secret that it has thus far been impossible to avoid misapplication. This accumulation of failures has led to a general feeling of resentment against development aid which, in future, will probably make it more difficult to implement development schemes.

As long as the ideal of genuine collaboration has not been achieved—and this would require, on the one hand, the recognition of the economic potential of donor countries by developing countries and, on the other, respect of recipient countries' sovereign rights—it will be necessary to seek other openings. We must therefore examine what the West can do to ensure effective application of development aid.

One essential is to improve the position of non-Communist industrial countries by agreeing upon a common strategy. This means a single political guideline for all countries, even though everybody is aware how little this is, in fact, realised. Both between separate nations and internally the co-ordination of measures and strategies is largely incomplete. Often repeated attempts to improve upon this situation on an international level have necessarily remained unsuccessful since development policy measures are largely used as a means of promoting national interests. This means that from the first any chance of influencing the most effective application of funds is greatly restricted, even if advocates of a nationally-orientated development policy do not always accept this. Unless there is such a common strategy, even straightforward economic aims can only be partially realised.

This is even more true of the influencing of socio-political structures. However, in the present circumstances, this latter objective may be merely wishful thinking.

Dietrich Keschull