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Partners in the Global Society of the Future

By Prof Dr Dr h c Richard F. Behrendt, Berlin

INTERECONOMICS* has repeatedly published the opinion that the main objective of development aid has to be the raising of the standard of living in the developing countries without influencing the socio-economic structure of the recipient countries. This view is opposed by the well-known development expert Professor Behrendt of the Free University of Berlin. We here want to open a discussion upon this opinion.

For the first time ever, mankind is in the throes of a universal change which is affecting all sectors of life, every stratum of society, every race and geographical area. It expresses itself primarily in growth, i.e. it is a dynamic process. It originated in certain European countries and their "off-shoots" in Anglo-America and Australia (the dynamic "core countries"), and is now spreading at an ever-increasing pace over the whole world. This unique upsurge of energy, which initially started in and was exploited by the West, is now being demanded by the hitherto dynamic "marginal countries". These are demanding economic development, political independence, and racial equality.

However, none of those involved in this universal process of dynamisation were prepared for the revolutionary structural changes which were its result. This is above all true with respect to the liquidation of (1) the oligarchic system of international order which had developed all over the earth since the 16th century because of the European hegemony, and (2) the traditional hierarchical social structures outside the West.

The West (i.e. the dynamic core countries) failed in two ways in this process: it did not create social and political systems suited to its technical and economic progress—either for itself or in its dealings with the dynamic marginal countries. This is shown by the fact that two World Wars have taken place and, subsequently, by the West's inability to prevent the so-called communism by any constructive action. The creation of the prerequisites of a peaceful world order was neglected; no steps were taken at the right time to liquidate colonialism gradually, nor was development effectively promoted.

The solution of the contemporary development problems depends in the first place, though certainly not entirely, on the ability and willingness of "Western"

man. For we are the ones who have revolutionised the world, without realising what we were doing. Thereby, we have plunged the world into anarchy. But we also have the resources for narrowing the gap between developed and under-developed countries.

A Widening Gap between Developed and Under-developed Countries

In developed countries, the gap between the poorer and richer classes grows constantly narrower; at the same time, however, the gap between the relatively rich and poor countries is growing. Additionally, contrasts are becoming greater in under-developed countries between a minority, namely those benefitting from development, and the majority, who continue to suffer extreme poverty. However, these latter are becoming increasingly aware of this misery and inequality. Consequently, the probability of violent class struggle is now practically non-existent in developed countries, whereas in under-developed countries the prospects of such struggle are rapidly increasing. Since 1917 international relations had begun to assume the characteristics of class struggle. Since World War II these contrasts have become particularly apparent. They manifest themselves by America's failure to secure its spheres of influence in Latin America and Asia and by the break between the relatively advanced Soviet Union and China who is still in the proletarian and revolutionary stage. In addition, the political instability inside under-developed countries is becoming increasingly manifest due to internal controversies about the tempo and effectiveness of development policy and the distribution of its fruits.

In development policy there is an increasing gap between promises and their fulfilment, between intentions and realisations, between proclamations and performances. Consequently there is growing dissatisfaction on the part of both donors and recipients of development aid. For this reason the tensions are also becoming more acute, as is the

* Compare for instance: Controlled Development Aid, INTER-ECONOMICS 2/1967, page 31, and the editorial by Prof H.-D. Ortlieb, in this issue, page 143 seqq.

instability of domestic and foreign policies in developing countries and the possibility of dangerous effects upon world policy.

The Attitudes of Developing Countries towards the West

The attitudes of developing countries vis-à-vis the West can be summed up briefly, as follows:

□ The development gap between these countries and the West is much greater than that between them and communist countries.

□ Developing countries blame us for imperialism, capitalism and their remnants—both concrete and psychological ones—but do not blame communist countries. They find it difficult to place their trust in the co-operation with countries whose imperialist past is still too fresh in their memory. The more so, when the policy of such countries gives rise to suspicion—in the eyes of Asiatic, African and Latin American peoples—that they have not yet completely accepted the new situation. This is the reason why a large part of Western propaganda is ineffective or merely feeds the envy and resentment against ourselves, the “well-off nations”. We appear to be separated by unbridgeable distances from those with whom we wish to talk and work.

□ The disintegration of traditional autochthonous norms and values in under-developed cultures, the temptation to “get rich quick” by adapting to a culture of (apparent) affluence are almost irresistible in such situations. This often causes the loss of all realistic orientations. The urge to have whatever one sees is followed by bitterness due to the inevitable disappointment, by the lesson that only a few succeed in making the leap from the day before yesterday into the day after tomorrow; this is above all a psychological problem, too.

□ This creates foci of criminality and political instability. We find them primarily at the meeting points of North and Latin American or Asian cultures, for instance, in Mexico, Havana, Panama, Manila, Saigon. Precisely in places where there is very intensive or direct contact with people, ways of life, technology and military personnel from the United States, people normally react with resentment, nationalism and the symptoms of social disorganisation.

□ These are the reasons why Western production techniques and ways of life are being imitated in all the less developed countries as models of a desirable way of life—whilst Western economic and political institutions are frequently spurned.

The West is continuously being asked to give financial and technical aid. But any obligation towards the West with regard to economic or foreign policy is rejected as “new-type colonialism”, even in cases in which such obligations can be shown to be mutually beneficial. The United States are keeping Indians and Egyptians alive with their grain deliveries, but in spite of this—or perhaps because of it—people there feel resentful and insist on all the trappings and symbols of complete independence, irrational though they may be.

The Attitude of the West towards Developing Nations

The unique economic power of the West stands alongside its impotence in the socio-political sphere. This is due to its sociological ignorance, its lack of understanding of the basic and comprehensive changes and revolutions which it has, itself, provoked throughout the world. Many leading Americans still do not understand that other nations now feel the urge towards revolution—or why they feel it. The Americans—who were once revolutionaries and optimists themselves—have become conservative and pessimistic when faced with the task of seeking types of socio-economic incentives different from their own, but better suited to the characteristics of nations with dissimilar pasts and cultures.¹⁾

The following typical illusions about economically and socially under-developed countries are derived from this basic position:

□ the difficulties encountered in converting such nations into reliable allies on the foreign policy level and into worthwhile areas for our capital investments and exports, in helping them to achieve internal stability and in integrating them into our economic system are primarily due to communist influences;

□ such influences can and must be eliminated, with our assistance, by strong, authoritarian régimes holding the power in such countries. In order to achieve this, we are justified in aiding them with armaments and, if necessary, by direct military intervention;

□ economic development needs technical and financial encouragement; this can and must be achieved without basic changes in the social structure, particularly without revolutionary changes, as these might have negative effects upon internal stability and might discourage investments;

□ in these circumstances, “democracy” is an essential tool of Western propaganda, but in developing countries it is impossible to achieve democracy in the foreseeable future. Our interests demand that we should support well-meaning “development dictators”, while maintaining democratic forms, if possible, and that we should fully co-operate with them.

Effects of the Western Attitude

Naturally, this view is not aired so clearly in public, but is all the more apparent from day-to-day relationships and in the actual experience of under-developed peoples. It has the following effects for developing countries:

□ It points up a drastic self-contradiction in the Western attitude: technically, economically and even intellectually the West has been the greatest revolutionary in human history. Socially and politically,

¹⁾ A drastic, but very influential, example of this is the thesis of Walt W. Rostow, an American economic historian who is currently President Johnson's adviser on foreign policy. According to him, nations now developing will have to pass through precisely the same stages of development, and over the same periods, as have the developed Western countries. See his book: *Stages of Economic Growth*, Cambridge 1960.

however, it is attempting to neutralise the consequences of this by perpetuating existing systems, both to protect its own economic interests (as it sees them) and as a bulwark against communism. Developing nations often interpret this as hypocrisy and as an attempt to perpetuate Western domination over the "badly-off".

□ It alienates from us those progressive elements to whom the future belongs, in particular the majority of people of the younger generation with high-school and higher education. It forces them further and further to the Left because they have come to feel that communism is the only alternative to the preservation of what is, to them, an insupportable status quo. Thus it becomes ever more difficult for us to work together with nations who want to discard as rapidly as possible the remnants of their own static and oligarchic past as well as the remnants of a world order based on imperialism, international and inter-racial exploitation. In this they agree with the Russians and Chinese. It is no wonder that they often feel that our full hands are moved by empty heads and hearts. On the other hand, they do not always consider communism to be a tyrannical system. On the contrary, to members of the agricultural proletariat and the women and young people who have been suffering from enforced stagnation for centuries and whose horizons are now being broadened, communism often appears as liberator from hateful bonds and inhibitions.

□ It does not help us to secure capable partners in developing countries, either for encouraging development or constructing bulwarks against communism. On the contrary: only too often our aid is not properly used and does not benefit the classes which require assistance. Our development has been effective mainly in creating development parasites: opportunistic politicians, corrupt civil servants and army officers, their relatives, political entourages and girl-friends. In this way we have merely created, or at least strengthened, neo-colonialism within developing countries. As a rule, such groups are strong enough to ensure, in the short term, that development benefits be distributed in favour of a thin stratum of privileged people, but they are not strong enough to guarantee political stability—which is at least one of the pre-requisites for economic development. On the contrary: discontent is on the increase amongst large sectors of the population. Thus it is becoming increasingly probable that this discontent may express itself in radical and violent outbreaks against the development parasites and against those foreign countries which donate development aid and have helped to enrich these parasites—namely, ourselves.

□ It discredits Western development aid and democratic ideas, as represented by the West. It widens the abyss between official measures, proclamations and the façades of development, on the one side, and day-to-day reality, on the other. And large portions of the aid we give sink into this abyss. There is already so much dissatisfaction about its ineffective-

ness—on both sides—that the future of development aid is endangered.

It encourages the already powerful inclination in developing countries to allow themselves the luxury of enormously costly armed forces which, in practice, can be effective only in internal disagreements; their influence contributes even more to the chronic political instability of such nations. The higher echelons of the officers act—not always, but very frequently—as guardians of the status quo, because usually they are members of the new élite of development parasites and wish to preserve their incomes and property. This is why a Sword of Damocles hangs over the head of every progressive political régime; it is the fear that a military putsch will take place with the excuses of saving the country from communism or anarchy.

□ It neglects the only effective alternative to communism: the reform of the socio-economic structure in favour and with the assistance of the masses. Attempts are made to alleviate certain symptoms of this evil, without attacking its causes.

This also explains why so many of the "rulers" in developing countries, whom we see as our only possible partners in development policy, turn out to be powerless. Basically, "power" means the ability to do what one wants. In many developing countries, however, those officially in charge of the governments can do very little about development policy, even when they honestly want to. For the masses do not fulfill the expectations and requirements of the development planners. They persist in their ignorance, scepticism, apathy and in broad intellectual and social distance from the institutional authorities of the nation state. This is why the Americans constantly fail in their endeavours to encourage economic development objectives, in combination with their supposed foreign policy interests, by collaborating with conservative rulers and the upper classes, and with the armed forces as their executive organ.

The Socio-political Impotence of the West

Fundamentally, all this means that we "Western" men have remained essentially provincials. Even now we are not giving enough time and thought to global empathy², for the understanding of other peoples and cultures "from the inside". Instead, we allow our military and diplomatic officials the dangerous luxury of thinking and acting according to long-outdated formulae and stereotypes left over from the era of the concert of European powers, when war was a controllable form of policy.

This impotence is demonstrated in the large-scale failure of development policy (both domestic and international), in growing scepticism and mutual dissatisfaction on the part of both donors and re-

² A concept of Anglo-Saxon anthropology: the desire and ability to enter into the situation, conditions of feeling and thinking of other people, particularly of those in different social circumstances, with whom one has conflicting relationships, so as to form new patterns of behaviour which may decrease such conflicts.

cipients of development aid, and in a rapid erosion of the Western position (particularly that of the United States) in developing countries. The as yet undoubted technical, economic and military predominance of the West and its partly impressive aid contributions have not yet succeeded in strengthening the social bases of its relations with developing countries which, of course, are essential in the long run.

What has hitherto been the most telling Western argument, namely money, is becoming less and less convincing, as its lack of effectiveness—development policy-wise—becomes increasingly apparent as things stand. Furthermore, financial restrictions on our side, the excessive indebtedness of developing countries and the growing reluctance of private investors tend to restrict its use.

The growth of communism is restrained, not by anything positive, but merely by the partial persistence of mental and social lethargy. Some contributions to this are still being made by traditional religious influences, not only Christian ones. But this does not mean that we can count them as "allies" or rely upon them as bulwarks. Evidently, lethargy typical of static cultures is disappearing in many strata—largely thanks to Western influences. It seems very doubtful whether the new orientation toward assumption of more social responsibility among representatives of both Catholicism and Buddhism which is now beginning to make itself felt will come in time to prevent the triumph of violent revolutions.

Political changes in countries such as Indonesia and Brazil, which appear to favour us, do not signify any improvement in the dangerous internal tensions, caused by their social structures. They might, therefore, turn out to be of short duration, particularly where they are being used as an excuse to postpone once more effective reforms of the socio-economic structure, as has so often been the case in similar circumstances.

The New Partnership

As we have seen, the socio-political weakness of the West vis-à-vis developing countries is due to the difficulties which both sides experience in having to learn new roles in a new relationship. The old, habitual relationship of masters and subordinates, of the one-sided dependency of many weak people from a few strong ones, has become unrealistic and therefore unworkable. Centralised decision making and commands from above, or from across the seas, need to be replaced by co-operation based upon partnership. This is in everybody's interest: in our interests, because otherwise we shall force these countries towards régimes which are inimical to us in world politics, and in the interests of developing countries because they need our contributions for their own development.

Partnership between "developed" and "under-developed" ones, between former imperial powers and colonies, between white and coloured peoples, is still unusual

and demands of all partners powers of adaptation which have been exceptional up to now. A partner has to be more sensitive, more intelligent, more elastic than a master or superior and more, also, than a serve or subordinate in a relationship of dominance which both sides accept as natural. Neither we nor the "under-developed peoples" have yet learned enough about this new type of relationship; we have not yet even understood the necessity for new learning and the reasons for it.

The main thing is for both parties to understand that their common interest in securing and building a better future is far more important than any divisive interests, regardless of whether they are merely imagined or real.

One essential for the realisation of fundamental common interests, however, is the acceptance of unavoidably multiple systems of economy, state and society. It is only at a first glance that this appears a paradox. The optimum form of development in each case can only be discovered experimentally, on the basis of the specific situations and opportunities in each region. It is unlikely that these will be the same as the (largely ideologically determined) conceptions of the "capitalist" or "communist" systems. It would be extremely unrealistic to expect and to demand a repetition in countries now developing of the—inherently extremely complex—Western style of development, as this has grown over the centuries.

Nevertheless, as donors of aid, we are unable to avoid political engagement. We have to understand at least the necessity for us to make every possible effort to assure that development assistance goes to those who need it most and that these are in conditions to contribute to and control development policies. It is therefore essential that we should intervene in favour of a democratic orientation of the aims and methods of development policy. We shall find partners in these countries capable of planning development and putting it into practice only if we openly and manifestly declare ourselves in favour of the forward-orientated ("Left") groups and powers in such countries, instead of our present—usually not admitted, but effective—engagements in favour of the backward-looking, development-inhibiting circles. The pressures for changes of the social structure in the dynamic marginal countries are now so widespread that we can no longer hope to prevent or delay their political effects by opportunistic gifts of technical and financial assistance and of armaments to those who happen to be in power. We need to draw constructive political consequences from our failures.

The Necessity to Democratise Development

Democratisation, in the sense of broad, widely spread participation in planning, execution and control of development and in its benefits, is essential in order to:

- ☐ activate the masses;
- ☐ teach and learn practical development planning;

- ☐ prevent the formation of new élite groups acting as development parasites;
- ☐ spread and intensify co-operation between developing nations and ourselves; and
- ☐ prevent further Chinas, Vietnams, and Cubas.

It is no more possible, in the long run, to command "development" and to force it upon people, than it is to command freedom, love or happiness. It can only be practiced by people who want it and are prepared to work for it responsibly. For this they need democratic forms of decision making and action in community and nation building. Without them, development will become increasingly inhibited because "leaders" make themselves absolute and self-perpetuating and because of parasitic political cliques and sterile bureaucratic systems which smother any productive initiative with the excuse of allegedly unavoidable "paternalism".

It is a favourite argument (not only in the under-developed countries but also in ours) that the "under-developed peoples" are not ripe for democracy, that they still need several decades of benevolent "educational dictatorship". These arguments should now be discredited by the experience of the last half century. It has never yet happened that dictators educate their subjects to the stage of emancipation, in order to make themselves superfluous, never once in the long line of despots from Porfirio Díaz to Nkrumah, although these have always been recommended to us as anti-communist "revolutionaries" and champions of liberty. It has been sufficiently proved that it is impossible to approach democracy without experimenting, without trial and error, without self-education. "Strong men" only postpone the inevitable, even if painful and risky, process of learning, and thus postpone socio-political maturity.

Here—in the resolute encouragement of democratic systems—lies our strength vis-à-vis communism, if we only understood it and dared to use it. The only way to prevent violent social revolutions under radical leftist auspices and with communist support is open and resolute co-operation with groups trying to achieve reforms. We must give them financial, organisational and personal support, if necessary even against the wishes of conservative governments or of new oligarchies in the countries in question.

A Test of the Vitality of Western Civilisation

Obviously, it is extremely unlikely that we shall make a timely start on this, in spite of the catastrophic failures of the conventional approaches and official policies. Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress" was a step in the right direction, forced upon him by Castro's success in Cuba. But after his death it was immediately abandoned and followed by Johnson's intervention in the Dominican Republic which resulted in throwing back the development of inter-American co-operation by three decades.

By merely sketching a programme of self-education and mutual education for a social and political strategy of global economic development, as I have tried to do here, one is bound to provoke scepticism and charges of unrealistic thinking. The gulf between suggestions like these and the intellectual horizons and habits of those in power, in all major countries, is too obvious and wide. Our educational systems and the orientations prevailing in our social and cultural sciences are still far too ethnocentric. That makes it probable that our defective understanding of the requirements and possibilities inherent in our new social environment will be further perpetuated from one generation to the next—in contrast to our ever more rapidly increasing abilities to change this environment, be it for the better or for the worse. Thus, daily experience would appear to confirm the conservative argument that man is restricted to certain limits of adaptability and that he has reached them now.

In spite of all this, it must be said that in the three quarters of the earth which are under-developed and which are becoming increasingly aware of this, there are now being generated stronger socially explosive forces than we have ever known. Whether these will find violent and destructive expression or can be channelled into constructive directions depends upon our comprehension and our willingness to learn and take action. We are confronted here with a decisive test of the ability of survival of our own culture. This test will also show whether supporters of the materialistic view of history are right when they consider that "capitalism" is destined, by "natural law", to make way to socialism so that it is incapable of introducing necessary structural changes in proper time, and thus adapt itself to the new world which it has largely created itself.



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