
Impelled by self-interest and a sense of mission, industrialized countries and various international agencies have for several decades been giving financial aid to developing countries for projects and programs that donors and recipients alike have hoped would facilitate the process of development. Accordingly, at any given time, there has been a prevailing theory or consensus on what development consisted of—its goals, its methods, how best to spend money to induce it. Only in the past half decade has the consensus shown signs that rural development ought to play a more central role in effective overall development.¹

But if the central importance of rural development is increasingly a part of the international dialogue, clear differences of opinion on what constitutes the most effective kind of rural development are apparent. What kind leads to greater national affluence and well-being? What kind promotes greater equity? A central issue in this debate has revolved around the notion of agrarian reform.

The phrase "agrarian reform"² has had various meanings, ranging from the simple redistribution of land to sophisticated provisions for the political, social, and psychological impacts of any radical restructuring of rural life. Raup says that "land reform is...a basic change in land tenure arrangements—in relations among men with respect to land—together with supporting measures necessary to achieve its objectives."³ In general, despite attempts by some governments to water down its meaning and use it as a palliative, the phrase has retained its revolutionary implications—a drastic reordering of land tenure systems in the search for greater equity. The Mexican and Russian Revolutions defined it this way. So, inferentially, did the

American forces of occupation after World War II in Japan and Taiwan. Less drastic was the definition given by the Egyptian Revolution of 1952; dramatic actions in the name of agrarian reform broke the power of the absentee landlord class but finally did little to change the actual relationship of peasants and land.

Despite its position in major revolutions of this century and its pivotal importance in various countries after World War II, agrarian reform has had a somewhat happenstantial relationship to orthodox development theory over the past several decades.⁴ On the other hand, the relationship of rural development to development theory has been constant if sectoral, peripheral to development's main thrust but supportive in its sectoral way. Off in their special corner of the intellectual universe, both agrarian reform and rural development have been topics for discussion, refinement of thought, and missionary zeal among sectoral bureaucrats—such as the staffs of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), academics, and others. But when they have produced ideas for the consideration of the mainline theorists of development, the ideas have usually been absorbed into a general concern to achieve national production targets and boost per capita growth rates.

In the post-World War II era, among those who argued about the role of agriculture, two areas of belief, often overlapping, are discernible. The first, as already indicated, has to do with the conviction that rural development should be central to an effective overall theory of development; FAO, for example, has long sought to escape from its sectoral cage and play a greater part in formulating the strategies for development

decades. The second area of belief relates to the conviction that rural development, sectoral or central, will not be successful without agrarian reform. The ideological component in the second belief is strong, and from time to time agrarian reform has thrust itself into public view, breaking out of the entanglements of rural development theory and standing on its own against the skyline of revolution.

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It is instructive to look at some of the interplay between notions of development, agrarian reform, and other concepts during the three and a half decades since World War II. In 1951, the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin sponsored and hosted the International Conference on Land Tenure and Related Problems in World Agriculture.⁵ Funded largely by the Technical Cooperation Administration and the Mutual Security Administration of the United States, it lasted 7 weeks and brought together 3 representatives from each of 40 countries (excluding the Soviet bloc countries) to report on their land tenure problems and discuss the need for comprehensive programs of agrarian reform in the world's various regions. While it did not ignore other aspects of rural development, such as the need for new roads and drainage systems and better agricultural training and research, nonetheless its major preoccupation was the developmental wisdom and distributional justice of land reform.

The final impact was expectably small. Sweeping change is seldom the result of international conferences, however fervent the call to arms. Indeed, after the reforms induced by war and other upheavals in the late 1940s in Eastern Europe and East and South Asia, there was a land reform lull. Agrarian reform furled its revolutionary banners and—despite events in Egypt (1952) and Bolivia (1953)—resumed its place in the literature as one of the obedient handmaids of rural development. After the Wisconsin conference, a number of persons who had attended went almost directly to a meeting of the FAO governing body and were among those who arranged the passage of a resolution to the effect that FAO should take upon itself the study of agrarian reform. The resolution expanded the definition of agrarian reform to include such problems as marketing, agricultural credit, rural taxes, and the purchase of supplies. In one sense, this expansion of the definition can be seen as a logical response to the growing complications

caused by new agricultural technology.⁶ In another sense, it can be seen as an effort by the forces of moderation, in the name of rural development, to encompass and control the ideological and radical thrust of agrarian reform.

Development theory of the early and middle '50s focused largely on technology and "know-how," and later in the decade, when the evidence suggested that technology was not enough, the notion of investment (the more massive, the more effective in production terms) was added. Rural development fit easily into these perceptions—as a sectoral supplement. The sector should, according to theory, do its part to add to the totality of national production, with an emphasis on agricultural production for export. Agrarian reform was increasingly seen as merely one of several incentives that might be used to improve the agricultural sector's contribution to the whole; its call for radical rural change became only one voice in a chorus of calls for technologically "sound," production-oriented measures in the countryside.

In 1960, when the proposals for action in the first development decade were drawn up, new notions were introduced. Production and investment, it was noted, are important to the development process but "there is now greater insight into the importance of the human factor in development, and the urgent need to mobilize human resources."⁷ Stress was laid on good national planning as the way for each nation to advance, and the approaches to planning should be comprehensive, including social and cultural as well as economic factors. Community development in the rural areas was cited as one example of the comprehensive approach and as an activity of coming importance; it was described as "a method and an approach which is applicable to the problems of rural development as a whole, including the key element of land reform. Land reform, in this context, is much more than changes in land tenure or redistribution of land ownership; it is in the widest sense of the term synonymous with agrarian institutional reform."⁸

The 1960 proposals for action also foreshadowed other notions and practices of later years. For example, tucked away in the document in one place or another are most of the then-existing ideas on development, as if each UN agency or each pressure group had worked its own notions into the document at whatever cost to the internal consistency of the whole. Radical bits of

theory, such as agrarian reform, are put into intellectual isolation in the middle of otherwise conservative paragraphs. Yet the resulting theoretical potpourri exudes a spirit of universal consensus that hovers over and helps hide its discrepancies—a fact that was doubtless pleasing to those who believe that ambiguity can be politically productive. In later years, as rhetoric improved and internal inconsistencies became fewer in international documents, the consensus-seeking habit remained, and it has influenced the ways in which developed and developing countries behave toward each other, as I hope to show.

Though the document is internally inconsistent, its treatment of rural development and agrarian reform is strikingly consistent with a great deal of past practice. The two concepts are kept in their sectoral place. Appearing, ironically, in the agricultural section are several pleas that agriculture should play a more important role in the planning process. Aside from a discussion of rural areas under the rubric of community development, the also-there status of the peasant is perpetuated. Significantly, in his five-page foreword, Acting Secretary-General U Thant did not mention the word “agriculture” or use any phrase that referred directly to rural matters.

But in 1961, in the rhetoric of the Alliance for Progress, rural development did achieve a more central place—led there, significantly, by a surge of interest in Latin American land reform. In the “Declaration to the Peoples of America” that precedes the Charter of Punta del Este, the following paragraph is given prominence.

To encourage, in accordance with the characteristics of each country, programs of comprehensive agrarian reform, leading to the effective transformation, where required, of unjust structures and systems of land tenure and use; with a view to replacing latifundia and dwarf holdings by an equitable system of property so that, supplemented by timely and adequate credit, technical assistance and improved marketing arrangements, the land will become for the man who works it the basis of his economic stability, the foundation of his increasing welfare, and the guarantee of his freedom and dignity.⁹

Other parts of the declaration and the Charter contain complementary specifications for what amounts to a blueprint for revolutionary change. The Charter was signed by the United States and all Latin American countries except Cuba.

The impact of the Alliance for Progress is a matter of dispute. An American diplomat who was involved says that it established the climate for most of the reformist changes that have occurred since 1961; a Brazilian civil servant also interviewed by this author says its principal contribution was to frighten Latin America's conservative forces to the point that genuine reform became virtually impossible. In the 1950s, according to one writer, Latin America had “emerged as an area in which land redistribution was most needed—and most vigorously debated.”¹⁰ The Cuban Revolution of 1959 added a note of urgency for those who wanted to use reform to avert further revolution in the hemisphere. Another writer adds that the Alliance for Progress made the debate a respectable one and “discredited those politicians who argued that all programs of land redistribution were Communist-inspired...and it probably spurred several countries which otherwise might have stood still to undertake at least a beginning.”¹¹ The United States contributions were in the form of program aid, as opposed to project aid, and were awarded on the basis of country planning that appeared to meet the right specifications.¹² Despite the contributions, however, land reform programs in the Latin America of the 1960s were quiescent, even inert, in all but a handful of countries.¹³

Of particular interest is the commitment to land reform and rural revolution that Latin American countries made at Punta del Este. Many of the regimes that signed the Charter clearly did not intend, at least in the light of subsequent events, to put the rhetoric to the test of reality. Presumably, at a time when notions of reform were becoming stronger throughout Latin America, it was politically expedient to be associated with the Alliance, and presumably the possibility of massive United States aid was a powerful attraction. Whatever the reasons for signing, Latin American governments became part of a consensus, or rather consensus-in-rhetoric, joining a major donor government in a statement of developmental intent. Comparing the Charter to the UN proposals for action for the first development decade, the principle of establishing a consensus-in-rhetoric remains the same but the rhetoric of the Alliance is more internally consistent and more radical. And the gap between rhetoric and reality is wider.

The gap widened, of course, as idealism increased. While notions of equity had always been sprinkled about in the literature and had even

been dominant on special occasions such as the Wisconsin conference of 1951, in the 1960s they became a major theme of, and even an organizing device for, a great deal of development rhetoric. The goal of development, by implication, became fairness to the have-nots within developing countries as much as it was national affluence. As at Punta del Este, agrarian reform was the natural spearhead for the effort to be fair to peasants.

A growing concern about rural equity led to the World Land Reform Conference of 1966. Sponsored by both the UN and the FAO, it brought together some 225 persons nominated by 76 governments plus a group of about 100 specially invited participants, officials of the UN system, and representatives of private organizations. The stated purpose was "to provide an opportunity for the exchange of experience on a worldwide scale...in order to assist Governments in their assessments of agrarian policies as related to the planning and implementation of structural reform programs."¹⁴ During the two weeks of the conference, three working parties wrestled with the following topics: (1) problems of land tenure and structural reforms; (2) social and economic aspects of land reform; and (3) administrative, financial, and training aspects of land reform. An entire range of points of view on each topic is reflected in the conference report, which nonetheless shows a praiseworthy internal consistency. Verbal escape hatches, expectedly, allow for the special circumstances faced by individual governments, and hence nothing that might be construed as commitment stood in the way of the unanimous adoption of the working-party reports and the final resolutions. The report lays special stress on the productive aspects of land reform and its special place in successful development programs. In one of the opening addresses, Gunnar Myrdal dampened some of the ideological fires by reminding conferees of the unproductive results of indecisive action: "It is the worst of both worlds to have a radical ideology of 'land to the tiller' and a largely ineffective legislation conforming to that ideology...."¹⁵

Despite the emphasis on the potential of greater productivity if agrarian reforms were adopted, it is the rhetoric of equity that sets the tone of the 1966 conference report. Significantly, some of the rhetoric explored the relations of developed and developing countries. In an analytical mood, Myrdal anticipated that "the rich countries will find it necessary to press for reforms in the underdeveloped countries; and the

latter countries will be forced to press for aid from the rich countries to enable them to carry out the reforms.... More reform in the [under developed] countries will make aid seem more meaningful in the rich countries, while more aid will increase the scope of possible reform."¹⁶ Less analytically, but presaging things to come, Hernan Santa Cruz, the chairman of the conference, spoke in his closing address of the "insistent demands for greater equality and social justice. The disparities of income and wealth between the industrialized and the underdeveloped countries are increasing day by day. This pattern carries over to underdeveloped countries, where there is a tremendous gap between conspicuously wealthy minorities and the poverty-stricken masses."¹⁷ This coupling of injustice between nations and within nations has now become commonplace on the agendas of international forums.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the 1966 conference, or any such conference. Like the Wisconsin conference of 1951, it was a specialized gathering, reflecting the sectoral concerns of those immersed in or well-acquainted with agricultural affairs. A principal theme, as before, was the crucial role of agrarian reform for both rural and general development. Though the conference may have created a momentary flood of interest in rural affairs, it did not succeed in finding for rural development a central place in development theory. In terms of consensus-in-rhetoric and its relation to reality, the gap was as wide as the ideological component was strong.

At the launching of the Second Development Decade in 1970, the rhetoric had changed somewhat but not its place in rural development. The General Assembly resolution makes only one direct assertion about agrarian reform and rural development. Under the section entitled "Expansion and diversification of production," the following appears:

*Developing countries will formulate, early in the Decade, appropriate strategies for agriculture... designed to secure a more adequate food supply..., to meet their nutritional and industrial requirements, to expand rural employment and to increase export earnings. They will undertake, as appropriate, reform of land tenure systems for promoting both social justice and farm efficiency.*¹⁸

Clearly, the agriculturalists at the 1966 conference had not succeeded in persuading others that rural affairs were more than sectorally important.

The notion of equity still pervades the General Assembly resolution of 1970, but the emphasis is different from that of 1961. It is less on the poor of developing countries than it is on the unfair imbalance between rich countries and poor countries. While calling for development and asserting that the responsibility for it is in the hands of developing countries themselves, the preamble reflects a preoccupation with "international cooperation for development"—by which it plainly means more development aid, more effective transfer of technology, and above all better terms of trade for the developing countries. This emphasis had been emerging in other international forums, notably meetings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and it had become a central poor-country concern. Having achieved voting majorities and having formed a voting bloc (the Group of 77) at international meetings, the developing countries now began to define their interest in international dialogue in terms of that concern. This approach to dialogue continues today in all international forums, whatever the formal topic.¹⁹

Thus, before the so-called food crisis of 1973-74, both developed and developing countries had, with varying consistency, adopted postures and strategies that required of the other group a radical change of attitude, if not action. Both were sporadically insisting on their own definitions of justice.

* * * * *

The World Food Conference of 1974 was held in an atmosphere of crisis. When the conference was first suggested in 1973, the harvests had been excellent; when it finally met in Rome in late 1974, bad harvests had created a food disaster.²⁰ Developing countries were under pressure to consider publicly their internal problems related to food production. If agrarian reform promoted greater food production, why should developing countries not act accordingly? And developed countries, not only the food-exporters but all who might provide external aid for local food production or participate in trade schemes to increase income available for agricultural investment, were faced with the necessity of exhibiting a sense of global responsibility and of responding as if the world were as interdependent as all had been saying. The atmosphere of crisis was deepened by the success of OPEC in quadrupling the price of oil and the expectation that the price would rise further. For both developed and developing countries, the prospects were dismaying.

At the same time, the insistence of the developing world on new terms of trade was crystallizing. Trade patterns for food and other commodities had already been the subject of considerable international discussion, most clamorously at UNCTAD meetings. In early 1974, the UNCTAD dialogue and other factors (such as the heady atmosphere brought on by the success of OPEC) led to the adoption—with careful reservations by most developed countries and outright disagreement by six of them—of two General Assembly resolutions that are now referred to as the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO has set a standard for the demands of developing countries and is a blueprint for what they think developed nations should agree to in order to improve the trade position of those less fortunate.

The agenda of the World Food Conference reflected the concerns of both groups, with the NIEO getting its share of discussion. Sponsored not by the FAO but by the United Nations itself, the conference based its deliberations on the notion that the issues to be confronted were political and economic rather than technical and that "firmer political wills were needed to commit the increased resources and make the policy decisions essential for a more rapid increase in food production."²¹ It was attended by ministers from all parts of the globe, including many who were *not* ministers of agriculture; unlike other international conferences on food affairs, it received extensive coverage in the world press. The debate dealt with matters of food production, food security, and food trade. The final resolutions represented rhetorical trade-offs between developed and developing countries; there were alternating exhortations for concessions on food trade and aid and for internal reforms as incentives to greater food production. One example of such alternation will suffice: food trade should be expanded, liberalized, and stabilized, but a fair share of the increased national income of developing countries should go to rural populations.

The results were mixed. In terms of food trade, agreement was minimal and the whole matter was plainly in the realm of continuing dispute. In terms of food production, however, the conference resulted in a marked increase of external aid to food-deficit countries.²² In terms of food security, good beginnings were made for global planning, including the creation of a negotiating arena for the planning process in the form of a Committee on World Food Security lodged

within the FAO. Moreover, several other new international institutions were created, two of which have survived. The first is the World Food Council (WFC), which is really an arm of the UN Secretariat, and is striving to establish itself as a security council for world food affairs, a ministerial-level mechanism for coordinating political decisions about food. The second is the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a separately and amply funded specialized agency in its own right, which provides development aid for agriculture, particularly to those countries and to those populations that the President of the World Bank had spoken of in the early 1970s, namely, the "poorest of the poor."²³ This proliferation of international "food organizations" reflects a new preoccupation, which has also brought about a proportionally greater investment in food production on the part of such older organizations as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The presence of the two new organizations in Rome, where they are to some degree hosted by FAO, has created an atmosphere of careful rivalry in both rhetoric and action. Some observers interpret the existence of WFC and IFAD as a reprimand to FAO, a signal from the World Food Conference that FAO had been sticking unimaginatively to its technical jobs without meeting the challenges of the times.²⁴

With regard to the international consensus, whether for rhetoric or action, the significance of the World Food Conference is its invitation to agriculturalists to come out of their sector and take part in development dialogue as full partners. The agenda of any discussion of general development at an international meeting now devotes some prime time to problems of rural development. Understandably, ambivalent feelings remain about the role of agrarian reform; political structures are conservative. But insofar as ideas about it are entangled in theories of rural development, agrarian reform is now bound to receive more debating time—even without the revolutionary thrust that gave it such prominence at Punta del Este.

Indeed, food matters have become so pre-occupying to governments that they have become an important instrument of international relations. Since the World Food Conference, governments have been unable to avoid knowing that a real food problem exists, and they have become uncomfortably aware that control of the problem

is becoming more difficult year by year. The projections, even at their most optimistic, are deeply discouraging.²⁵ In this situation, developing countries, giving the appearance of deft maneuver, have come to recognize and use the leverage value of food. In the words of a Third World delegate to numerous international conferences, "food is now the weak man's instrument." Under the banner of food for the hungry, developing countries can use strong, indignant language without fear of appearing to whine, and they can put donor countries on the defensive. Food, it turns out, is an effective shield in the battle to move toward the NIEO; what better way to get at problems of international trade than through publicity-sensitive debate on the trade of foodstuffs and other raw materials between rich countries and poor countries?

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Since 1974, there have been many international meetings of one sort or another in the UN system. Some have been for specialists, some have been high-level. But all have used the issue of equity to score rhetorical points and move the climate of opinion in the direction of (1) more internal social justice, especially in rural areas, or (2) better terms of trade and more aid. The assumption is that the international climate of opinion or consensus, or the intersection of two climates of opinion, will determine in some measure the definition of development under which cash transfers occur.

A case in point is the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), which took place in July 1979. It was sponsored exclusively by FAO and was, in fact, seen by some as an FAO attempt to regain the initiative it lost at the World Food Conference. WCARRD was a full-dress affair with the customary over-ample documentation, long statements of country positions—chiefly for home consumption—at a plenary session that lasted the entire two weeks, and representation from almost every country in the world. Many delegations were large, often led by ministers of agriculture; in some instances delegations were led by distinguished public figures, such as Andrew Young of the United States. Several heads of state and the Pope came to address the conference.

The result was a "Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action,"²⁶ which had been initially drafted by the FAO secretariat and

revised slightly and approved first at the level of a preparatory meeting several months earlier and then at the plenary. The detailed work of getting the approval was done at the conference by two commissions. In conformance with the accepted pattern for debate, one commission dealt with the section entitled "National programs of action in developing countries," and the second dealt with "International policies for agrarian reform and rural development." The importance of this pattern was candidly acknowledged in private by an FAO civil servant before the conference took place; the developed countries, he said, were interested in coming because they wanted to discuss internal reforms in the developing countries, and the latter wanted to discuss the NIEO in the guise of discussing the trade of food commodities. The compromise, he hoped, would be that each side would listen to what the other wished to talk about and give a little on previous positions. In the meantime, he asserted, the job of the FAO as the middleman in the great debate was to stress and publicize the central role of rural development in the planning process. He might have added, but did not, that if the publicizing was successful, the lead role of FAO in rural affairs would be reaffirmed at a time when other members of the UN family were clamoring for greater portions of the new action made possible by the new interest in food.

As expected, in the commission on international trade the developed countries showed their willingness to discuss the terms of trade and aid and continue the NIEO debate from other forums. As usual, they entered numerous reservations at the relevant parts of the text of the program of action, watching carefully lest they might be called upon at some future date to translate words and postures into funding commitments. An American delegate compared the concern with wording of such documents to the common law of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. If, he said, his delegation did not pay careful attention and, say, out of sheer weariness permitted without specific dissent the inclusion of unacceptable phrases, the phrases would then be repeated in subsequent documents and could become part of "a generally accepted body of international opinion." Correspondingly, of course, the expectation of the Group of 77 is that each international forum, under continuing pressure of attack from behind the shield of food and other inequities, will produce minor changes in conventional wording that will finally add up to something financially useful.

The developing countries took a different defensive tack. With reservations from only a handful of countries, they agreed to a text on national policies that implied approval of revolutionary changes in internal power structure. In interviews with more than a dozen Third World delegations, it was plain that agreement on the text did not, in their view, commit their governments to any particular line of action. Consider the following plea:

In countries where substantial reorganization of land tenure and land redistribution to landless peasants and smallholders is needed as part of the rural development strategy and as a means to redistribution of power, governments should consider action to implement redistribution with speed and determination backed by preventive legal sanctions to avert disinvestment and evasive transfers... (emphasis added).²⁷

They were being asked, they said, to consider actions; to say they would consider them was a small price to pay for the chance to talk about international trade. Among the delegations of the developed countries was a tired acceptance of this gap between the home performance of developing countries and the rhetoric they gladly espoused, but it was also possible to detect among those delegations a faint hope that one day, perhaps this time, rhetoric would have an effect on action. Plainly, however, delegates who agree to international documents like that of WCARRD cannot be called to account. The crunch does not come until the moment when specific projects are negotiated between donor and recipient, the moment when the country with the money can influence action.

To what extent can the country with the money influence action? Theorists of development disagree.²⁸ After Punta del Este, when the United States made money available on the basis of approved and detailed national plans, hopes were high, but the result tended to be rural development rather than the agrarian reform called for in the Alliance charter. This experience, it appears, is not unusual. Idealistic rhetoric beforehand notwithstanding, donor countries and donor agencies find it hard to give money for projects that help the "poorest of the poor."²⁹ Some would claim the donors do not want to do so—because of their regard for the power structure in the recipient country, because of power structures among donors, or because in a world of nation-states it is the course of least resistance. One seasoned negotiator from the Third World said that if the World Bank took McNamara's

earlier pronouncements on equity too seriously, no World Bank projects would exist.³⁰ On the other hand, even fitting in with a national plan that seemingly favors the continuance in power of a dominant elite, a project or series of projects can provide a crucial push in reformist directions or can even have unforeseen spin-offs that accelerate greatly the process of social and political change. Delegates at WCARRD expressed a wide range of opinions on the matter, but most donors and recipients agreed, recognizing the conservative implications of what they were agreeing to, that the right of governments to make their own final selection of projects available should not be infringed by the power of other nations.

It would be wrong, of course, to give the impression of a seamless uniformity among either developed or developing countries. Among nations there is an intricate set of networks that does not depend on membership in the OECD or the Group of 77. If there is a special form of dialogue for North-South relations, the same is true for the confusion of other relationships that exists between and among national and cross-national entities. These other relationships create significant divisions and linkages within and between each camp. Equally significant, however, is the growing determination on the part of developing nations to adopt a common strategy at international forums—despite other pulls and pushes. At WCARRD, the Group of 77 held special meetings, and the Group's current chairman, recognized as such by the conference chair, often spoke on behalf of other Third World nations.

If the adoption of a common strategy toward the other world should not obscure the divergence of beliefs within each world, the same holds true for beliefs within each country. A wide range of opinion about agrarian reform, for example, exists in the United States. In the view of some, it interrupts the building of an infrastructure on which rural development must finally depend, or it prevents the emergence of commercial agriculture on whose efficient methods the world must finally depend; in the view of others, it promotes the production of food and fosters food independence, or it is crucial for the establishment of an equitable society. The same range of belief, though not always articulated perhaps, exists in many developing countries. At WCARRD, some members of some delegations from countries with highly inequitable land systems expressed themselves as sincere

believers in agrarian reform and in off-the-record interviews allied themselves with the forces of change at home. Some stated explicitly that the elites of the developing world, presumably including themselves, are the principal obstacles to development; echoing recent literature of dissent in donor countries,³¹ they suggested that the effectiveness of development aid has not only regressed in recent years but that development aid is in fact counterproductive because it sustains elites in power and prevents the revolution or rapid evolution that would bring about a fairer distribution of national wealth. At one point the British delegate to one of the commissions, referring obliquely to such notions, ruffled many developing country delegates by stating that his government wanted "value for money" and had it in mind to provide less aid on a government-to-government basis and more aid by way of voluntary agencies; several Third World representatives of my acquaintance gave their silent approval to this threat to by-pass elitist influence.

Indeed, though they were all aware of the gigantic difficulties involved in planning radical social change, several developing country delegates were outspokenly self-critical. The high point of rhetoric, if not awareness of realities, was a speech on the second day by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. He divided his speech into the two customary categories and spoke with great candor of the disparity of rich and poor between developed and developing nations and within developing nations. About the latter inequity, asserting that the poor of the developing world are largely rural, he said:

*Governments by themselves cannot achieve rural development. They can only facilitate it and make it possible. They can organize, help and guide; they cannot do. For rural development is people's development of themselves, their lives and environment. And the people cannot do it if they have no power....*³²

And then, quoting Michael Lipton (*Why Poor People Stay Poor*) against himself:

The sincere egalitarian rhetoric of, say, Mrs. Gandhi or Julius Nyerere was, allowing for differences of style and ideology, closely paralleled during early industrial development.... But the rural masses of India and Tanzania lack the power to organize the pressure that alone can turn such rhetoric into distributive action against the pressure of the elite.

Later in his own words:

If the people are to be able to develop they must have power....At present the best intentioned governments—my own included—too easily move from a conviction of the need for rural development into acting as if the people had no ideas of their own. This is quite wrong. At every stage of development people do know what their basic needs are. And just as they will produce their own food if they have land, so if they have sufficient freedom they can be relied upon to determine their own priorities of development and then to work for them.

Still later:

And finally, but underpinning everything else, effective decision-making power—political and economic power—must lie with the inhabitants of the rural areas. Political power has to be exercised by the poor if the present flow of wealth towards wealth is to be stopped....

Elsewhere in the speech, President Nyerere drew a parallel between poor rural areas and rich urban ones within countries, on the one hand, and poor developing nations and rich developed ones, on the other. He implied, though did not say specifically, that if rural areas need political clout to protect themselves and make certain of their rights, so do developing nations. One Third World delegate commented later: "The trouble is that the only clout we have comes from OPEC and a voting majority in UN institutions."

The matter of political clout carries the equity arguments one step further. Political clout emerges as one of the ways to achieve equity and perhaps the only way to maintain it. To give genuine political power to peasants is, in most developing nations, more of a revolution than agrarian reform—it is agrarian reform plus a preservative. In Egypt, for example, it is unthinkable that real rural power should pass from the hands of government officials, despite the rhetoric of land reform that has been a part of Egyptian life since 1952; urban elites will not be giving up their prerogatives in the countryside to the peasantry. Nor will rich countries be giving up more than they must to poor countries. It will be almost as hard to sell the NIEO to the electorates of the developed world as it will be to persuade urban elites of the developing world that peasants can manage their own affairs in the national interest. The problem is that each debating team is asking for something that goes against the grain of the other's system and

style—and the strains will grow as the rhetoric improves.

The overlap of the two positions defines the liberal stance in both instances. Developed countries, say the liberals of the developed world, should make concessions on international trade, agreeing to what amounts to international legislation for equity. Developing countries should, at the least, arrange for projects that reach "the poorest of the poor." Most bureaucrats of the UN system find themselves in this overlapping area as they seek to act as international brokers. Indeed, it is this overlapping area in which the international consensus is lodged and institutionalized by the UN system. As compromises and trade-offs are sought, the consensus sets guidelines. It provides directions of change for groups of activists and revolutionaries. It sets standards for action leading to greater equity, for what each country ought to be doing about its leaders. As developed and developing countries seek the approval of the community of nations—and in some measure all of them, or factions with them, do—the consensus by its very existence exercises what Soedjatmoko of Indonesia has referred to as a "sanction function." When developing nations seek development aid, they use the verbiage of the current consensus to justify the request—and donor countries or international agencies, whatever their political motives, respond in kind.

Yet few of the delegates at WCARRD saw anything good coming out of the conference. While some were pleased that the need for rural development was receiving effective publicity, most were persuaded that the rhetoric would not lead to significant action. They discerned not a consensus but an obstinacy on the part of the delegates of the other camp. But the consensus exists in the minds of some, and it has changed since 1974. Rural development is "in" as a major factor in general development, and agrarian reform has become more respectable. Its increasing appearance in consensus circles will in some measure affect political climates in the Third World. A proposition at WCARRD may also affect that climate; FAO, it was resolved, should take the lead in monitoring Third World progress in rural development and agrarian reform. Such monitoring would entail public judgments, and if political circumstances were to permit a modicum of honesty beneath the wordy diplomatic overlay that FAO publications occasionally exhibit, liberal positions in the developing world would be strengthened.

As this is written, the rhetoric for the resolution on the Third Development Decade is being negotiated. If consensus-in-rhetoric can sometimes affect the climate of decision about internal reform, trade, and aid, the resolutions should provide clues for the near future. Will the role of rural development be stressed, and what recog-

nition will be given to the role of agrarian reform? First indications are that greater food production will receive major attention. The next question is: Can more food be produced and greater equity be achieved simultaneously? The consensus says this ought to be possible; the sticking point is the slow pace of reality.

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NOTES

1. I am particularly grateful for comments on an earlier version of this paper by Barbara Huddleston of the International Food Policy Research Institute and by Howard Handelman, Director of the AUFS Politics of Food Project and Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

2. Or its near-twin "land reform." Though some make distinctions between the two phrases, I am not making them here. Agrarian reform is sometimes seen as the more inclusive phrase, including not only land reform but the other measures necessary to make it effective socially and economically.

"Rural development," on the other hand, is used here as a catchall category that subsumes not only agrarian reform but any other measures (radical and nonradical) that make rural areas more productive. Rural development (in the form of the building of roads and dams or the improving of extension services, for example) can occur without agrarian reform.

3. Philip M. Raup, "Land Tenure," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), p. 571.

4. For a description of the "conventional development theory" of those years, see David Goldsworthy, *Analyzing Theories of Development*, Working paper No. 12 (Melbourne, Australia: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1977).

5. See Kenneth H. Parsons, Raymond J. Penn, and Philip Raup, eds., *Land Tenure* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955) for the report on the Madison conference. Though not formally established until 1962, the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin was among the conference's outgrowths.

6. Raup, op. cit., p. 572.

7. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The United Nations Development Decade, Proposals for Action*, Report of the Secretary-General, E/3613 (1962), p. vii.

8. Ibid., p. 38.

9. Alliance for Progress, Official Documents, Pan American Union, Washington, D.C. (1961).

10. Raup, op. cit., p. 572.

11. Robert J. Alexander, *Agrarian Reform in Latin America* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 41-42.

12. For a discussion of the difficulties of administering program aid and, by inference, some of the difficulties encountered by the Alliance, see Albert O. Hirschman and Richard M. Bird, "Foreign Aid: A Critique and a Proposal," reprinted in Albert O. Hirschman, *A Bias for Hope: Essays on Development and Latin America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 197-224.

13. Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia introduced land reform legislation but change was minimal.

14. United Nations, *Report of the World Land Reform Conference* (1968), p. 3.

15. Ibid., p. 66.

16. Ibid., p. 67.

17. Ibid., p. 72.

18. United Nations, *Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its Twenty-Fifth Session*, Supplement No. 28 A/8028 (1970), p. 48.

19. For an account of the emergence of the approach in the 1960s, see Charles F. Gallagher, "Rich Countries and Poor Countries" [CFG-1-'69], *AUFS Reports*, West Europe Series, Vol. IV, No. 9 (1969). For an account of the early and middle 1970s and the evolving issues, see Martin Kriesberg, *International Organizations and Agricultural Development*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Economic Report, No. 131 (1977), pp. 115-122.

20. For an account of the food situation at conference time and before, see Grant Cottam, "The World Food Conference" [GC-1-'74], *AUFS Reports*, West Europe Series, Vol. XI, No. 5 (1974).

21. Kriesberg, op. cit., p. 15.

22. For an analysis of the context and results of this increase, see Jon McLin, "Changing Fashions in Bilateral Aid to Agriculture," in Barbara Huddleston and Jon McLin, eds., *Political Investments in Food Production* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 203-220.

23. For evolving rhetoric at the World Bank, see Robert S. McNamara, "Address to the Board of Governors," International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Washington, D.C. (1973). McNamara calls for "new forms of rural institutions and organizations that will give as much attention to promoting the inherent potential and productivity of the poor as is generally given to protecting the power of the privileged."

24. For developments on food affairs within the UN system and elsewhere after the conference, see Jon McLin, "Remember the World Food Conference?" [JM-2-'76], *AUFS Reports*, West Europe Series, Vol. XI, No. 2 (1976).

25. For a recent assessment, see World Food Council, *Current World Food Situation*, WFC/1980/6 (Rome, 1980). Or see "A Grim Year 2000" in *Newsweek* (August 4, 1980).

26. WCARRD, *Report* (July 1979).

27. WCARRD, op. cit., p. 6.

28. See Hirschman, op. cit., pp. 183-87.

29. On December 20, 1975, the United States House of Representatives passed the International Development and Food Assistance Act of 1975 (HR 9005), which required that most U.S. development aid be allocated to projects that benefited the poor of developing countries. The results have been decidedly mixed.

30. See also Richard E. Stryker, "The World Bank and Agricultural Development" in Huddleston and McLin, op. cit., pp. 221-240. Stryker points out that the World Bank has now substantially increased the proportion of its projects that fall under the rubric of rural development. The degree to which these projects help the "poorest of the poor" remains, of course, a key question.

31. The amount is growing. For starters, see Susan George, *How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger* (Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld, 1977); and Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1977).

32. This and other quotations from the speech are taken from a copy distributed by the Tanzanian delegation at WCARRD.