

Comments by
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New Trends in Development - A Present Day Overview:
Some Comments on ICA and their Projects

Reverend Fathers, I have never spoken to so many superiors in my life, so I'm a little bit intimidated. My comments will be on four points. The first is a kind of overview of trends in development policy. The second will retrace some of the root causes of stagnation and underdevelopment; the third point is a short introduction of and some comments about my first contacts with the Institute of Cultural Affairs and my appraisal of it, and, finally, my experience with one of their largest projects, the Maharashtra Village Training Programme in India, which comprises an action for about 225 villages in Maharashtra State in the neighbourhood of the city of Aurangabad.

Now, development is quite a new concept. I remember lecturing on the human aspects of the efforts for technical assistance to developing countries in Rome in 1948. The late Pope Paul VI was then substitute at the Secretariat of State, and he received me afterwards and asked me what I was doing in Rome. I told him, and he smiled and then asked me, "Are you also going in for that kind of international tourism?"

I. Stages and Fashions in Development Cooperation

There have been fashions in development which can be defined as stages. My time indications are only approximative, but they certainly give the period in which the accent was on what I will describe.

- 1.1 The Extended Programme of the United Nations for Technical Assistance dates from 1948. The idea was that underdevelopment was due to a lack of technical skills and that when we could transfer enough skills and knowledge to developing countries, they would develop by themselves and cure all the evils of underdevelopment. A very prominent witness of this kind of approach was President Truman. On the 6th of January 1948 he delivered his famous 4-point speech and stated, among others, that all these people needed was to get hold of the same skills that the industrialised countries had acquired, and then (and this shows that he was a salesman), they would need very little capital to develop their own skills. Well, he was not a good prophet. He even associated then the idea of technical development with progress and virtue, as well as with moral standards.

- 1.2 The second period, which covered the 1950's (the first being 1947 to 1953 or 54), was that they said, "Well, technical know-how is not enough. They also need capital to start, to get their take-off in development." That was the period for transfer of capital and loans. Absolute priority was given to heavy industry because everybody was looking towards the model of modern industrialisation in the Soviet Union. As a consequence, agriculture was neglected and the developing countries became heavily indebted. Presently, 30 to 40% of all aid received flows automatically back into debt service. This led to a deterioration of agriculture and a series of famines which we baptised as emergencies. That was during the 50's.
- 1.3 During the '60's, which were marked by the wave of decolonisation, certainly the change of structures was important. It was then said, "Well, it is not enough to transfer knowledge, to provide capital. There must also be adequate and appropriate internal and external structures in order to permit development to take place. This meant change of structures within developing countries, and then community development came into the fore as one of the main methods for changing structures. Later it was called "promocion humana" (human development), and for the first time, I think, the whole development process, a hint of appreciation for the activities of non-governmental organisations came into the foreground. It was also becoming more and more scientific of course to establish country planning; that is, there should be a national plan for development, which most of the developing countries put together without any reliable system or data, so that it did not serve any purpose at all. At a world level, there was the coming about of the Green Revolution in order to repair the damage done by the over-accentuating of industry in the previous decade. We know, however, that the green revolution did not help the landless peasants or the small sharecropper very much.
- 1.4 We are still in the fourth phase today, the seventies. Seventy-seven countries met in Algiers in 1974 and coined the term of the 'New International Economic Order'. When I first lectured on it, all Western economists just shrugged their shoulders and said, "That is only a romantic idea." Yet, in my view, it was the first attempt at putting the whole development issue into a global perspective. Of course, if you read the first texts of this group (now grown to 118 members and representing the overwhelming majority in any international institution concerned with development) which were adopted in Algiers, later in Lima and then in Manila, they are still very much characterised by a feeling of resentment and a rather out-dated nationalism, a sensitivity of national sovereignty which we have probably lost because all of the Western countries have become satellites of one of the two main Powers. It remains an attempt, however, at globalising the problem and pointing towards overall solutions, within a framework of new relationships between Nations. Out of this came two very valuable ideas which are still valid. The first is the idea of doing something special for the poorest countries, the least prosperous - 17 and then 25; now I think 38. These are countries with a per capita income per anum of less than \$120. And generally they are countries without any valuable raw materials, so that they have no great possibilities for trade. They are intrinsically poor. And a second idea which is still very much in the foreground is that the very first priority in most of the developing countries should be the satisfaction of the basic needs of the whole population. Elementary needs -

that means food, clothing, shelter and a minimum standard of education and health. Now the developing countries have been so spoiled by the prestige politics of the rich countries that they react very much against the 'basic needs' approach as being very paternalistic and aimed at keeping them backward. They react against the idea of appropriate technology generally on the grounds that it is second-hand technology and that the developed countries do not want to share the most recent advances of science and technology with them. Now, that is the situation at present. The themes described here are also those of the Fifth UNCTAD conference in Manila, which is taking place at this very moment.

- 1.5 Which are the major conclusions out of this very rapid overview? Of course we have understood that most of the approaches, all of them in fact, were only partial approaches towards the global process of development and that all of them are still to some extent present in the current policy on development. You have to transfer skills. You have to provide capital. You have to proceed by country planning and take up agriculture again as one of the main sources of fundamental satisfaction of needs. A second point is that the first really global approach came from the developing countries themselves, and I think that will be, in later judgment and evaluation, a historic contribution to the solving of the most difficult problems of the world. A third point would be that we must take into account that it is very easy to draw generalised principles in development, which do not apply to anything. Priorities and situations vary from region to region, from country to country, and consequently any regional development policy has to be extremely flexible.

And then, to stress all this, I think that one of the main difficulties for an efficient development policy is that it is pure fiction to consider the state, the government of any country, automatically as being the perfect partner in development cooperation. I assume that the United Nations, being an assembly of sovereign states and sovereignty being a sacrosanct principle, there is no way out of this, but it is really a fiction, because governments are as underdeveloped as their peoples are, and they often are as incapable of running their country as a peasant is of working his land efficiently.

A further point is that the non-governmental agencies are now being recognised increasingly as an important channel for ensuring people's participation in development policies and actions. On the other side, the debit side, there is the fact that most developing countries are not very keen on free non-governmental agencies and that, in most countries, power is totally monopolised by the government.

Another conclusion is that the further elaboration and discussion of the new international economic order is an absolute necessity. The other alternative is a Third World War, so that by all means it is better to go on discussing. I think that the Western countries will learn to make concessions, which they must do. It is absolutely unacceptable that 93% of industrial production remains in the hands of less than 20% of the population of the world. This cannot be justified by any reasonable standard.

And a final point which I did not stress in my exposé just now is that in many of the developing countries there is a tendency to represent religion and cultural tradition as the opposite of the progress which is to be achieved. This is especially so in many Asian and African countries, and this carries, in my view, a risk of an aggressive kind of materialism, unknown so far to Western imagination because it grew on 4000 years of frustration.

II. Causes of Stagnation and Underdevelopment at the Present Time

My second series of comments is on the causes of stagnation and underdevelopment.

2.1 First of all, there is the colonial past, of course, which has certainly not contributed to the development of the so-called developing countries. Some things have been done, but they were done not as a real service towards the development of the local people or their country, but in the best interest of the administering powers. If you look at the location of all seaports in all developing countries, they are not oriented towards the inland, they are oriented towards Europe. That was their function. Another reason for stagnation is the so far unshaken monopoly position of the rich countries, and I will give you a few figures:

- industrial production, 93%
- world trade, 84%; This percentage is due to large imports of raw materials; otherwise it would be much higher.
- credit and banking, 93%
- insurance, 99%
- transportation, 93%
- and military power I shall not even speak of.

So this is a factual monopoly, and it is absolutely clear to anybody who is a thinking being that this is a situation which cannot last when towards the next century only 17% of the people will live in the industrialised countries and 83% will live in the developing countries.

2.2 Secondly, underlying all situations, at the level of each country individually, there are also some other basic causes.

2.2.1 The first one is that the territory of the state is not an integrated unit. There are such vast differences in resources, chances and services between, for instance, cities and rural areas that integration is not possible. There is an overconcentration of authority in the national government and far too little delegation of decision-making in regional and local authorities, with as a consequence generalised corruption of the administration.

2.2.2 Secondly, the population of the state is not integrated into one people. There are social and economic inequalities so huge that it is practically impossible to speak of one country. There are racial and cultural differences so that there cannot be that national cohesion which we can see in many of our own countries.

- 2.2.3 Thirdly, there is the exaggerated political power of the military. The reason is that there are always three symbols of unity in any nation - the national anthem, the flag and the armed forces. And since we all know how powerful the national anthem and the flag are, the armed forces increasingly monopolise power and appear to be the only guardian of the integrity of the country. There are consequences in terms of power distribution, because being the only symbol of national unity, they also claim to be the only guarantee of national integrity. The armed forces generally assume a different role from the one they have in any developed country, because they are not there for defense of the integrity of the country against external enemies, they are there to maintain the established order internally.
- 2.2.4 The fourth cause is the lack of people's organisations, that is to say of people's power, and as a consequence, the absence of a really representative government. The government does not represent the population. Traditional societies are disintegrating and no free organisations are there as channels for sharing power with the people. We in the West do not realise what an intricate network of all kinds of free organisations we live in - women, youth, workers, employers, labourers, cultural, religious, social, economic. In all aspects of our lives, the power of the state is shared and at the same time controlled by free forces and pressure groups, so that a balance against oppression is maintained. There is also real participation, of which we are not always conscious, but which does exist in fact. Whereas in the developing countries the society as an entity distinct from the state which has to function as a catalyser, a critical evaluator of the exercise of power, is far too weak and very often non-existent all together.
- 2.2.5 The fifth element is foreign interference - dependence of the ruling minority in most developing countries on outside support, culturally, financially, technically. And very often they are more loyal to their external supporters than to their own wretched people, because their cultural level and their ways of living, their habits, are much more like ours than those of their own people. Foreign investment guaranteed by foreign powers - I have pleaded in vain for years now that the guarantee of foreign investment should be internationalised so as to deflect politicising and make it really possible to have sanctions against bad investors. This is now impossible. The multinationals I put outside of foreign investment, because they are a special kind of foreign interference and there is so far no juridical, moral or political power to control them. And the last but not the least, the arms race. I have been told that the trade in arms with developing countries has grown by 5 times since 1971 so that an ever greater part of their budgets, which they could use for education, social security and other useful purposes was spent on arms to maintain the established order.
- 2.2.6 The sixth and last point (I could go on, but these are only the main points), is the generalisation in recent years of the violations of basic human rights, resulting in a situation where torture and imprisonment are normal measures in the administration of justice. A few years ago, I think in the early seventies, the most thriving branch of technical assistance was the recruitment of experts in torturing techniques from Western countries for developing countries.

2.3 So these are, in my opinion, six main points, root causes of underdevelopment and stagnation. Next, a few conclusions on this.

- 2.3.1 This shows the very essential importance of work at grass roots with small communities in order to get the ordinary people on the move, and this can only be done by non-governmental agencies, by missionaries, by charities and by development agencies.
- 2.3.2 Secondly: the necessity, in my view, of valorising traditional and spiritual values as a dynamic force towards real development. I think that the greatest tragedy lies in the consequences of the destruction of religious beliefs among the very poor people. Take a country like India. The very poor have only one ground left for hope. That is the sublimation they can still draw from their religious values and their adherence to some religious concept. If this were taken away from them, as is the tendency of development policies of the country, they would be pushed into utter despair. So, even from a humanitarian viewpoint, it is a necessity to strengthen their faithfulness to their religious adherences. I have been very actively engaged in the labour movement. I have been for 30 years Secretary General of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions and of course in Asia the creation of Christian trade unions would have been nonsense. What was no nonsense, however, was to show a model of social justice and of development, which mobilised also the spiritual dimension of man as an element of development. That is to say, reverting the Marxian axiom of the opiate of the people. If we think of the present very modern and very advanced concepts of human development (promocion humana), basic communities and others which are currently accepted in many Christian churches, that is the underlying concept. I feel it is a very valuable asset for the renewal of the development process.
- 2.3.3 The third point is the importance of stabilising measures for prices of raw materials, the improvement of the trade exchange. To some extent, the European Community is making a dent in that with its STABEX in the new Lomé convention, but I expect more from the New International Economic Order.
- 2.3.4 The fourth point is the importance of the issue of human rights. I spoke earlier of torture and the habitual violation of human rights and of the necessity of an adequate and effective international machinery and effort for the defense of human rights.
- 2.3.5 A fifth point is that regional and national planning are more than ever a must and should be very flexibly adapted to the realities of the country, and again
- 2.3.6 my first point is my sixth - the importance of the work at grassroots level of non-governmental agencies. That is the alpha and the omega as far as I am concerned.

III. The Institute of Cultural Affairs

- 3.1 And now, very briefly, how did I come into contact with the Institute of Cultural Affairs? Well, these fellows opened a house in Brussels. That was many years ago, and one day the man in charge of that house walked into my office and told me about his work.

3.2 I will first give you my negative points. I had certain reservations after these first talks. One of my reservations was that I had never been very pro-American. I share that with many Europeans, I think. In my whole trade union activity, for instance, I have been in need of huge sums of money for international solidarity in the 30 years I've worked in that field. I have never accepted nor received one single American dollar. Afterwards, it proved providential, actually, because I could hardly be accused of being an agent of the CIA. So, I found that they were too American. A second negative point was that (I still believe this to a certain extent) they are too rigidly set on their particular method of working. I have gone through so many adventures in my life that I do not believe in rigidity anymore. A third point was that when they came to my house or to my office sometimes, three, four or five of them, I somehow got the impression of being in touch with a kind of sect. I will later explain all of that. Maybe they should make a greater effort to adapt themselves to their surroundings wherever they live, to learn the language, the habits of the people and so on, so as to have more direct communication. These were my negative points.

3.3 My plus points were the following:

- They have, to my mind, an exemplary rule for their day-to-day lives, which is very regulated and very, very disciplined.
- A second point is that they had a deep sense of spirituality for themselves and for the world, allied with an equally strong sense of efficiency, which pleased me very much.
- The third point is that they really practised personal poverty and not only on an individual basis, but also as a community. When the man came to my office, the lock on his door did not work anymore, and he went to the proprietor of the house. The proprietor said, "Well, I do not see the need of repairing it. Nobody will steal anything from you. There is nothing to steal."
- Fourth, they have a habit of daily prayer and meditation.
- And now, finally, two other elements: I have a very positive impression of the various projects they have undertaken and which I have visited. And I have visited many projects sponsored by a variety of agencies around the world. I have also created the most important data bank on projects in the world. It counts over 150,000 projects stored in a computer. So I think I'm beginning to know something about projects.
- I am still Chairman of the Pro Mundi Vita and an advisor to a few religious communities in my own country, and I was a lay auditor at the Council. I have given a lot of thought to the difficulties of the religious congregations and to their re-orientation. I feel that the formula of life and work, and even the elements of spirituality which the ICA practise might give some indications for a re-orientation of some of our religious congregations.

So, this was the plus, and since the plus was in my view more important than the contra, I have been very much in touch with the Institute of Cultural Affairs ever since.

IV. The Maharashtra Village Training Programme

- 4.1.1 I visited the project, "Maharashtra Village Training Programme" in the State of Maharashtra in India. I must say that I had good reason to do so, since I had helped with financing to a certain extent through our government and a number of other sources. I wanted to see for myself also, because I was not totally convinced yet. Though I had given ICA my confidence, I wanted to verify it. This programme intends to achieve a global conscientisation and development action in about 225 villages. They started with one, of course, and they have spread gradually. I think they must be working in 130 or 140 villages by now. It is a global programme in the sense that it covers all aspects of development: rehabilitation and urbanisation of the village itself, embellishment of the village, housing, drinking water and water for irrigation and agriculture, food production, education, health, development of small industries, employment, services such as transportation, banking, postal distribution, electricity and so on - a very comprehensive programme of development.
- 4.1.2 From the very start, the whole village community was involved in the process of their own development, through a series of village meetings where they could present their own problems and discover their own needs. Such meetings stir of course a considerable interest in the villages. A team of qualified experts assists them and makes a draft programme on the basis of the data gathered in the meetings (in which these experts have participated), and then studies are obtained from the region and from the surrounding villages. The draft, which indicates priorities for implementation is again submitted to the village community before being put into operation.
- 4.1.3 In India the whole community (and that comprises all the castes, even the harijans), is directly associated with the implementation of the village programme and takes direct responsibility for everything that is achieved. It is not only an efficient means of conscientisation, but at the same time a permanent evaluation of the project and its achievements is carried out on the part of the villagers.
- 4.1.4 The main leadership of the programme lies not in outside but in Indian hands. A very capable young man has left an important business position to do this. Foreign experts are very few, and of various nationalities. Moreover, they live at the level of the villagers. Our government experts from Belgium cost about \$6000 per month. They do not even cost that amount in a year.
- 4.1.5 In order to promote local leadership, an effort is made by means of a training school which is at the same time a school in methodology, in theory, as well as in practice. When I was there 220 people were involved in the course. It is a very primitive school, but a school at a level where the villager encounters his own conditions. The training school operates for the whole area, so that replication schemes in other villages are possible. Now, in three and one-half years, 130 villages are being reached by this programme, and I think that towards the end of the year about 200 villages will be covered. You cannot imagine the pride and joy of ordinary Indian peasants and the villagers when they see that they have their affairs in their own hands and that it works.

- 4.1.6 All local resources are explored and put to use. Through continuous consultation, new ideas which come from the villagers themselves are welcomed and tested for their feasibility.
- 4.1.7 Foreign staff have no privileges, as I told already.
- 4.1.8 The general aim is that the villagers become conscious that they themselves are responsible for and capable of their own development and aware that they themselves have the means to achieve it. In this way, they become conscious citizens, which is a necessary step. They develop a sense of community which I have not found very much in any Indian village.
- 4.2 A few objections that I have heard from development agencies, Catholic and others:
- 4.2.1 "Aren't these Americans?" I think there are a few Americans and probably six other nationalities involved.
- 4.2.2 "Aren't these Americans imposing their system and their foreign cultural patterns?" They certainly have a methodology of education and work, and a very efficient one. However, the whole programme is permeated by Indian values and the whole pattern is Indian. No Indian Americans are produced by the programme. The pride which the villagers express is founded in the fact that they as Indians are doing things the Indian way with results.
- 4.2.3 Some say, "Well, we have seen school children lined up singing American songs." I have been there. It is simply not true. The children sing Marathi songs and they sing English songs - about Maliwada, about their village, about their country. And I think that they learn English along with Hindi. I feel that it is really discriminating to reserve English for people in the cities. Villagers also need English to communicate, even in India.
- 4.2.4 And then, "Is replication possible without heavy investment?" Well, I can tell you that for the work in replication, the cost per village is certainly not over 15-20% of what it is in the original village. That is at least five times less, and makes it possible to replicate without heavy costs.
- 4.2.5 "Will the project not confirm and even strengthen class and caste distinctions, because it tends to give a more articulate structure to the community which is now only loosely linked by traditional ties?" Well, I think that caste is an ubiquitous problem for all initiatives in all fields in India. It may, however, be said that the people in Europe generally think that caste runs along the lines of European social division, which is not true. It is not a question of material wealth. It is quite natural that in Maliwada, the village in which the demonstration is held, the caste issue has become a real issue. And it will probably remain a real issue in any village which will be touched by the development programme. But, what I have seen in Maliwada is that it is not an acute issue any longer. Now harijans and people of different castes participate in the same actual work and they sit together on village councils and committees. And I do not know of any other Indian village where that can be done. Even village women take part in village councils, with other women and men. And the more the project takes shape and the results become visible, the more the whole community will feel united and the less caste will remain an issue.

4.2.6 "What do the Indian authorities think of it?" There are Indian authorities who objected for political reasons, because it so happened that the central government was different from the state government politically, and so, whatever the state government approved, the central government disapproved of. But that difficulty was also overcome.

To conclude, I feel that the Maharashtra project of the Institute of Cultural Affairs has so many new elements in it, which I have never seen put to use by any other agency, which I have read about in a whole bibliography of theories on development, but never seen congregata in unum, brought together and put to application simultaneously, that I find that this approach is worthwhile being known, and that is is certainly worthy of every support.