

Towards Long-Term Cooperation

by Georges Gorse*

In assessing the criteria for deciding when aid should be granted - or refused - to countries where government policies contradict the economic and social prerequisites of development, Dudley Seers is right to stress the importance of two principles, which are too often ignored: -

- Aid for development purposes presupposes the active cooperation of the recipient country.
- The basic aims of aid should be seen as part of a long-term plan.

1. It takes two to 'cooperate'. Unless the recipient country genuinely wishes to develop, aid will have little chance of producing the expected results.

Mr. Seers is quite right to remind us that the maintenance of unjustifiable social inequality and the continued priority accorded to the interests of the town and of the privileged classes can only lead to the frustration of aid policies. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few big landowners and a few city dwellers, prevents the effects of growth from spreading, which is essential if a deep-rooted development process is to be initiated. It leads to waste, to luxury consumption, and to expensive investments which have little effect on the level of employment.

But although it is clear that in the extreme cases quoted by Mr. Dudley Seers aid should be withheld from governments so firmly set against development, in most cases it will be difficult, if not impossible, to put such a radical measure into practice.

Programmes of bilateral aid are rarely based on the criteria analysed by Mr. Seers. The reasons which bring the big aid-giving countries to assist in the development of

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particular countries are historical, cultural, political, even sentimental. The 'profitability' of the programme, i.e. the effectiveness of aid for development, is clearly not, and can scarcely be, the main reason for the support given to the efforts of a developing country. It would be utopian to disregard this basic fact.

The 'map' of bilateral aid, in which each donor has his traditional 'clients', is therefore the outcome of network of complex considerations.

Nevertheless, within this group of more or less traditional 'clients' the donor countries can and should regulate their actions according to the behaviour of the governments of recipient countries, at the same time bearing in mind their development needs.

It often falls to the donor country to encourage the awareness which is the essential foundation for subsequent development. The responsibility of the advanced countries is all the greater for being in most cases the originators of the tools of development, which they transpose (or transport) to the countries concerned. There are, I believe, few fields to which this applies more strongly than to education, which is as likely to be beneficial as it is to constitute an intolerable burden on development. Reform of the education system should be a priority everywhere, even if the countries concerned show little interest in this field. Assisting a state to reform its national education system, in the broadest sense, including schools and universities and other types of education or training, should be regarded as a priority task, whatever the nature of the government of the country in question. The future hinges on this question.

2. Aid should be given on a medium or long-term - only rarely on a short-term - basis, and its results for development should only be expected to emerge in the medium and long term. Governments of poor countries, like all governments, will clearly be anxious to see short term effects. Governments expect to be judged by tangible results, not by promises for the future: they seek swift and spectacular success, and may begrudge the less glamorous measures which aim at more lasting results. All too often the industrialised countries share this short term view. Export of the most expensive, most advanced technology, takes precedence because of their commercial interests, even though this kind of technology could have disastrous effects on the level of employment in the so-called 'beneficiary' country.

However, aid programmes can only have results in the medium and long term. One has only to take into account, for example, the importance of the expansion of the domestic market, the modernisation of the traditional rural world and its introduction into an exchange economy. This is a process which requires painstaking research and the popularisation of its findings. Obviously, development cannot normally be understood as a short term programme.

At the same time, when viewed in the long term, the dispute over whether or not to grant aid to 'bad' governments, according to the criteria of development, takes on a new aspect. In the long term, the aim can no longer be aid to a government, which is likely to change during the period, but the encouragement of the development of a people, regardless of the nature of its government.

Translation by Diane Goldrei.