ASIAN

EXCHANGE

On
Voluntarism

Contents

In this double issue of *Asian Exchange*, we examine the voluntary sector in Asia — the plethora of non-governmental, non-party organizations and agencies engaged in an even wider range of activities, and relying, at least initially, on the voluntary spirit of those who work for them. A phenomenon of the 60s and 70s, the voluntary sector seems to have "come of age" in the 80s. For one, it has certainly earned the recognition of the people whom it has aimed to serve. For another, even the State as well as institutions of private and international capital, have come to recognize the 'NGO' as a potential ally — and threat.

It is, at best, a compliment to the sector that a number of governments in Asia are increasingly trying to regularise and coopt, if not suppress, NGOs. In some societies, the notion of voluntarism has even been extended (read, perverted) to one of "vigilantism", to justify State support for armed civilian groups particularly in communities of the underprivileged. One can certainly view the greater attention given the voluntary sector by governments and international institutions as a sign of their effectiveness. But one cannot take it too lightly, especially considering that many voluntary organizations have emerged in support of — if not out of — people's struggles, no matter how localised or inconsequential these may seem to others.

This issue is an attempt to present a critical survey of voluntary agencies in Asia, their history and evolution, the challenges they face at present, and the future role that awaits them. Furthermore, the notion of voluntarism is touched upon, in the context of local/national "spaces" for and processes of participatory democracy, vis-a-vis the State, private capital, partisan politics and people's movements [together with all their attendant crises]. The challenges faced by voluntary groups in the context of an increasingly transnationalised global political and economic setting, are also discussed.

The voluntary sector has been a rather loosely defined one. In the first place, there is no one name attached to these groups; in some countries in Asia, even the term 'NGO' has a politically foul connotation. Their size, operational style and organizational structure vary, as do their activities. Yet there are common traits that allow them to be brought together as one, albeit non-homogeneous, sector: their concern for the grassroots, their people-based expertise, their willingness to try new ways of doing things,

even to the point of redefining established notions, relationships, traditions. There is no doubt that, despite having no ambition to capture state power, voluntary groups have succeeded in challenging the status quo in many innovative ways.

Of course, these challenges have elicited some adjustments from the very forces who benefit from maintaining the status quo. Such adjustments range from attempts to coopt voluntary agencies with money if not the lure of power and influence, to enacting laws or imposing bureaucratic requirements that would inhibit NGO activity and subject voluntary groups to closer scrutiny by the various agents of the State, to outrightly harassing them.

Such responses are taking place at a time when the voluntary sector is itself going through a transition, not only in response to the changing local, national and international environments in which voluntary groups are located, but also as a result of their own inherent dilemmas and crises, which proceed partly from the logic of voluntarism itself. This is comprehensively discussed in the first article, which provides a critical assessment of the possibilities and limitations of voluntarism, based on the experience of voluntary groups in India. An important point raised in the article is the potential these groups have "for moving towards a new politics of the future". Such potentiality precisely springs from "their growing recognition of the non-political and non-economic aspects of the contemporary structures of power and domination embedded in the culture of modern politics".

The second article focuses on the adjustments that authoritarian regimes of the Third World and super powers such as the U.S. are increasingly acceding to, in response to growing popular demand for democratisation. At the same time, Third World economies are undergoing a new wave of "economic squeeze", caused in part by the economic crises in the North, and in part by their failure to deliver the promised fruits of development to the people. It is in this context that a new role is being offered to NGOs by such international institutions as the World Bank and by Third World states, that is, to act as the "delivery agents" of development, and thereby bestow "a new mode of legitimation for the State suffering from unceasing systemic crisis".

The articles on NGOs in the ASEAN region, on Thai NGOs in particular, and on voluntarism in Bangladesh, all give us valuable insights into the nature and role that voluntary groups have played in different national and sub-regional contexts and, while not providing all the answers, raise important questions about the direction such groups must take in the future. Finally, the article on the organic farming movement in Japan gives us a detailed example of how citizens of a modern, highly

industrialised and developed state have chosen to define for themselves their lifestyle, technology, and the mode in which consumers and producers relate to each other — all of these in contrast to what has been shaped by modern industrial society.

In focusing on the voluntary sector in Asia, we hope to contribute to and promote wider discussion, within the region, on NGOs and on voluntarism in Asia. We recognise that much discussion and debate on this issue are taking place amongst many groups in many Asian countries. It is our hope that by bringing together, in this publication, the experiences of voluntary groups from the various sub-regions of Asia, such ongoing discussions can be broadened and acquire a regional perspective.

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Redefinitions: Groups
In A New Politics
Of Transformation

Harsh Sethi

Despite a great deal of concern in India about development and the problems of the rural and urban poor, conditions in the country are deteriorating, and the position of the lower strata worsening.[1] Politically there has been both an increase in the power of the urban-based educated elite and the alliance of this elite structure with the upper and middle castes in the rural areas. On the whole, "development" is more rhetoric than reality and, on present indications (with concentration of economic power and a continuous narrowing of the base of the political system) there seems little chance of matters improving.[2]

· These and various other trends of increasing poverty, inequality, growing landlessness and unemployment on the one hand, and a growing centralisation of power on the other, coupled with a more frequent and intense use of the repressive machinery by the State to crush any local movements, have been clearly in evidence for some time now. What is more shocking is the incapacity of the macro-organisations of the poor — the communist parties, the *kisan sabhas* (peasant fronts, attached as mass fronts to communist/socialist parties), the trade unions — to act effectively against these trends.[3]

It is in response to the continuing negative trends and failures of the macro-organisations to initiate both positive developmental and participative tendencies, that of late, attention has begun to be focused on organisations and activities outside the purview of both the government and the political parties. Variously called voluntary agencies (VAs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or non-party political formations (NPPFs), these organisations have been the focus of a concerted and heated debate in India over the last decade. This paper is an attempt to intervene in the debate about the role, responsibility, functions and limitations of these groups and activities.

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The debate derives its legitimacy from an increasingly popular conviction that the conventional forums through which the "masses" attempt to participate in decision-making, as well as vent their discontent — the State and its development agencies, political parties and their mass fronts, are fast being devalued. We even have a clear admission by the State that the official agencies are by themselves unable to plan and implement officially stated development objectives. Therefore the involvement of VAs or NGOs in government programmes ranging from adult education centres and rural health services, to facilitating the organisation of the rural and urban poor, becomes important even to the State, as documents of the Planning Commission show.

At the more formal political level, a myriad of small and large struggles have erupted outside the confines of the traditional political organizations. Prominent amongst these are the Gujarat and Bihar agitations in 1973-74; the struggles against the Emergency in 1975-77; the farmers agitations in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharashtra during 1980-81; and most recently the textile strike in Bombay.[4] In addition, hundreds of efforts at local and regional level organisations — in both urban and rural areas, with different strata, and displaying different degrees of militancy — are attempting to articulate the interests of the popular classes.

Some Issues Regarding Classification

VAs, NGOs or Action Groups (AGs) are loose categories. The examples referred to above represent a bewildering mix of ideologies, objectives, working styles, social composition, funding and support sources, size of organisation and operation, which preclude any possibility of putting this heterogeneous collection under a single rubric.

At the formal level, the only common characteristic of such organisations is that they are registered under the Societies Registration Act (1861), are not expected to make any profit on their activities, and are considered non-governmental and non-political — *non-governmental* only in their not being part of the official machinery, and *non-political* only in their non-participation in any direct manner in electoral processes. This, however, is only a juridicial classification, not an analytical one.

Leaving apart the juridicial concerns, these activities spring from a similar context, a similar concern, and in many ways represent a common tendency. Most of the groups/activities that I will be discussing emerged after 1965, having internalised the experiences and critiques of official development strategies as well as the more political of the movements led by the Left Parties. "These groups are organisations composed mainly of sensitized/radicalised middle-class youth, working for and with the

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oppressed and exploited strata with a view to transform society. They are involved in a range of activities from development with a political perspective to militant organisation of the masses. These activities take place outside the control of the government and political parties. There is no primary focus on the capture of State power."

While the above definition provides a broad organising umbrella, a better way to develop a classification is to look at activities and the organisations behind them. The activities may be classified in a number of broad domains: relief and charity; development; mobilisation and organisation; politics; and political education.

The organisational classification would be development and charity groups; action groups involved primarily in the processes of conscientisation, mobilisation and organisation of the oppressed without an explicitly stated political perspective (very often, posing as non-political or even anti-political);political groups carrying out tasks very similar to action-groups but formed with reasonably clearly defined political perspectives and goals; pre-party political formations formed with the purpose of graduating on to the level of political parties; and support groups carrying out specialised tasks of bringing out journals, documentation and resource centres, lawyer's forums, etc., working in tandem with other groups/political parties.

Nature of the Activities under Consideration

I shall attempt to present the dynamics of various groups within each activity domain listed above, indicate how different sectors view these organisations and activities, attempt to demonstrate the linkages across the domains, and finally examine the strengths, weaknesses and possibilities indicated by the history of these groups within the current context.

Much of my work has been made easier by earlier work of Roy and Aftab. Roy, in a series of papers written over the last seven years, has analysed the historical emergence and role of these groups in relation to the major shifts that took place in our society and polity. Aftab has concentrated primarily on the more political of these groups. I shall also indicate my areas of agreement and disagreement with the analyses offered by these two scholars.[5]

Further, most of my observations are based on the experience of a very specific sub-stratum within these groups — ones which I consider having the potential to contribute to the development of participative polity. My observations are also coloured by my own experience of working at the

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fringes of some of the Left political parties, and having got the opportunity to participate in the debates being held within these groups.

1. Relief and Charity

The charity organisations are the most established of all the VAs. By definition, they are only ameliorative organisations very often working under religious inspiration, and drawing upon the innate qualities of altruism present in all human beings. There are many examples of this kind of organisation, which are considered useful both by the State and political parties — presuming that they work honestly.

Even when considering such organisations, problems with the official definition of VAs immediately arise. Are these organisations or such activities non-political? This would very much depend upon where they draw their funds from and to what use they put their resources. A substantial number of the larger organisations draw their resources from foreign agencies. While this may in itself not be objectionable, it constantly gives rise to the fear that these organisations are operating at the behest of some foreign power. Very often they are accused of proselytization, particularly if they are non-Hindu, or being part of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States government. Organised charity has always been big business, which permits some of these organisations to use the goodwill they have built up for activities other than what they were constructed.

Individual or group charity, carried out with the noblest of purposes and with all honesty, does little to change the situations and processes that give rise to the necessity of these activities. Altruism, self-sacrifice and the prospect of being rewarded in heaven do not carry sensitive individuals very far. Having confronted misery in its starkest forms, they are forced to ask the questions — "Is all this suffering necessary? What causes it? How come it is only the poor who suffer? Can social problems be dealt with by charity?" Then starts the process of internal turbulence and debate. Very often individuals and organisations change through a process of open-ended questioning. The pressure is to push them towards developmental activity, as illustrated by the history and experiences of organisations such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and the Ramkrishna Mission.[6]

It is interesting to note that as the nature of internal debate and activity mix undergoes a change, so does the nature of external criticism. If earlier, the charity agencies were accused of helping contain the contradictions which became apparent in disaster situations, they are now, if they start questioning the political economy of disasters, accused of making political capital out of human misery. From charity-merchants they are converted into death-merchants. Irrespective of how this debate

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gets resolved, it is now clear, even to most charity practitioners, that their activity is not politically neutral.

2. Development[7]

Development activities begin where charity ends. These groups essentially attempt to provide the basic social and economic infrastructure to facilitate the development of productive forces. Shying away from political involvement, they supplement the State effort for development in areas where such effort is either non-existent, insufficient or inefficient. So we have groups digging wells, doing farm extension work, running schools and hospitals, setting up credit and marketing agencies — all with a view to helping the target population reach income and social self-sufficiency.

The major strength of these groups lies in their ability to draw in "motivated middle-class professionals" willing to provide their expertise at rates lower than what they would otherwise command in the market. Combine this with their relatively more flexible organisational structure and approach, and you are likely to get results which are far more spectacular than the government's, at least in the specific area of their operation.

The fact that such groups are "non-political" encourages State support to an extent that we have plan documents basing a number of their programs on such agencies (viz., the N.A.E.P. during 1977-79; the Antyodaya Programme in Rajasthan; the Lok Jumbish programme in the same State, etc.).[8] They also serve the interests of business houses and banks who view such efforts very favourably, because they help integrate newer sections into the modern market spectrum.

These groups also receive support from the clientele for whom they work because they are so much more efficient and less arrogant than the lower echelons of the bureaucracy that the vast masses of our populace have to deal with. What is important to remember is that these groups have no retaliatory power, and cannot tax, harass, imprison and otherwise trouble the poor, as the bureaucracy so often does.

The reaction of the political parties, particularly of the Left, is also predictable. At best, these activities are dismissed as reformist, do-gooder attempts which can never solve the basic problems confronting society. At worst, there is a direct hostility towards these groups, because their work "defuses tensions and delays the much awaited revolution". The fact that such activities receive liberal support from State and non-State (including foreign) sources makes it easier to dismiss them as part of an official conspiracy to weaken the Left.

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But no matter how committed or innovative these groups may be, they still have to face serious limitations. Most of them are small and operate in restricted areas. While this facilitates flexibility and deeper knowledge of the local area and people, it also limits the range and type of activity they can engage in. The fact that most groups depend upon external funding very often forces them into accepting programmes which are designed to suit funding agency requirements, and end up being irrelevant for the local population.

The major limitation, however, is inherent in the nature of development activity. Very few development groups started their work with any explicit understanding of the political environment. As long as they view development as a neutral process depending primarily on technical skills, they survive. But no group, if sensitive and dedicated to its original charter, can escape the brutal reality. The local bigwigs, the bureaucracy, the politicians — all serve to frustrate any attempt at honest work. And then begins the tussle of ideologies, not as empty abstractions, but as concrete reflections of actual working styles, and the groups start entering a crisis phase.

Individual members accuse each other of being more or less political. Involvement in technical activity declines. Funding agencies become a little chary of extending support to a group that spouts radical phraseology. Local vested interests become hostile as they sense that the organisation will no longer toe the line. Increasingly, we get a dissonance between the inherited organisational structure, and the professed ideology.

The more politicised of the group members see their activity as futile and become either cynical and disheartened, leave to join another more explicitly political group, or continue where they are, ineffectual. The "technicists" too lose out in the process, and very often return to more conventional jobs where they can turn this brief exposure to concrete reality into a paying asset.

This loss of cadre finishes off most organisations. Some make fervent attempts to replace the external middle class professionals with local cadre, but this does not necessarily solve the problem. While local cadres provide a greater link with the local environment, the group starts facing additional problems. The first relates to the relative inability of such cadres to attract funds from external sources to continue the programme, and programmes of this sort, with salaried personnel, can rarely be funded out of local resources. One must not forget that the target population that such groups are working for rarely has the surpluses to support such a group.

A second and greater danger is that of "localism" — the group loses its ability to stay out of local factional fights and very often ceases to have the wider perspective that impelled it to undertake this activity in the first place.

This, in brief, is the story of most development groups which are not organised as a business. But does this mean that such activities are useless? I would plead otherwise.

Constructive work activity has a value not only in itself, or in providing an entry point for more radical work, or in generating cadres for organisational and political activity, or in supporting the work done by more overtly political action groups and parties, but very much because such groups offer the possibility of experimentation with alternate styles of doing things, and with different organisational models and processes.

Of the potential roles suggested above, the first three do not require much elaboration. The entry point argument is now well accepted, not only as a tactical move but also as a gradual process of learning, which takes place in each group which permits the transcending and converting of a non-political activity into a political one. Sometimes these activities are also considered useful in consolidating the gains made during the process of "struggle". Not all phases are war phases, and any long term revolutionary activity has to plan for times of "peace". If carried out with a different consciousness, development activity helps tide over and consolidate the periods of lull that trade unions and kisan sabhas find so difficult to deal with.

The fourth position requires some elaboration. As an example, Rajnikant Arole's work in the area of health care in Jamkhed,[9] is useful and meaningful not only because the population covered gets better health care, but because we learn how alternative health care delivery systems can be designed and run. We put into operation systems which challenge the conventional notions of health care, explore the possibility of alternative doctor-patient relationships, demonstrate the value of preventive and social medicine over hospital based curative techniques, and above all, convert an ostensibly "neutral technical profession and task" into a "political" one. An Arole not only becomes a symbol for others in the profession, the work at Jamkhed challenges the very basis on which medical mystification is based. The values and the operating style of the profession get a jolt. Even if such work cannot be replicated or extended, it is a constant reminder of what in fact is possible, even within the existing structures, and this to my understanding is an extremely important "political" task.

This needs to be elaborated. What I am arguing is that work such as that of Arole in the field of health care, or ASTRA[10] in the field of Appropriate Technology creates two kinds of "political tension". The first relates to the delivering capacity of the existing structures and system. If Arole's work can alter the health statistics of his project area, then pressure naturally gets built upon the official health machinery to perform as well, if not better. The other, and more important political tension arises within the profession itself, wherein the norms of the profession themselves get challenged. Now, it is no longer a question of working more *efficiently*, but of its ability to work *differently*. The profession, thus, is forced to contend with the charge that either it too should follow the initiative of the innovating group, or if this is not feasible within current systemic constraints, then part of the "professional concerns" have to be with facing up to and changing these constraints.

3. Mobilisation, Organisation, Politics and Political Education

Activities in this sphere take on a far more intense form. Much has been written in the past on the role of action groups. Aftab's article referred to earlier is the most detailed analysis of organisations in this domain. While he has explained the inherent limitations of action groups in a variety of situations — slums, factories, tribal areas, with fishermen, etc. — he does not explore a number of possibilities. Aftab's formulations follow a classic Marxist position, and he sees the possibility of combating the present political crises only through the intermediation of a macro working class organisation. Consequently, he views the actions of the numerous groups at best only as a feeder into larger political formations — and at worst as diversionary and anti-revolutionary.

Political involvement and action, more than any other activity, brings home the macro constraints inherent in our situation. So what if a group succeeds in mobilizing and organising a bunch of workers, or peasants, or tribals, or slum dwellers? Does it change anything? Is it not a weakening of the existing macro formations which are attempting to challenge the system? The latest CPI(M) Central Committee resolution on Action Groups[11] would have us believe so. And given the existing scenario wherein a number of the groups are non-marxist, or even anti-marxist, supported by a variety of internal and external sources, linked to religious bodies, etc., only tends to strengthen this formulation.

But we forget that the existing Left parties, though the major carriers of the tradition of struggle against colonial and feudal oppression in the country, are beset with problems. If only we remember that most of the action-groups emerged as a result of the continuous limitations and failures of the Left parties, we would be forced to come to a slightly different conclusion.

The strength of most action-groups comes from their local character — the fact that they are where the action is. They are aware of the local environment, responsive to and responsible to it. Unlike the political parties, their relationship with the masses is not one of "making use of them". Their size permits flexibility, and an innovative possibility, that larger parties lack. Their selection of issues, the processes of mobilisation and organisation, the relative stress on empowering the people rather than the organisation, all tend to mark them out as different from the political parties, including those of the Left.

It is possible to illustrate this through a few examples. In both Shramik Sanghatana, Dhulia and Bhoomi Sena, Thana the full time cadres of the organisation sit along with the Tarun and Mahila Mandals to examine each of the decisions taken.[12] Not infrequently, the cadres admit their errors and the decisions get revised. Each decision has to be constantly explained to and ratified by the mass bodies, not as in periodic party plenums, but on a frequent and regular basis. It is because of such frequent interactions and the notion of being "accountable to the masses" being practiced that the groups display a greater degree of involvement with issues of daily concern. An example of fairly extreme accountability may be cited from an independent trade union working with powerloom workers in Belgaum, where even the interpersonal relations of a cadre-couple were collectively discussed.

The involvement of a Chattisgarh Mazdoor Shramik Sangha (CMSS)[13] in issues of health care, in children's recreation and education, in fighting the tendency towards alcoholism, etc. — issues which rarely excite the attention of the normal trade unions, to my mind, springs from their ability to make a break from a patron-client, leader-led kind of relationship that other organisations suffer from. A similar tendency is evident in the Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union (BCKU) for which issues of tribals, of deforestation, of regional development, etc., are as important as issues relating to wages and bonus.

But action groups too are facing a crisis of survival, of growth, of identity. How does a small group survive the onslaughts of the local vested interests? What if the repression is also from the forces of the State? Where does one draw the links and forge alliances? There are dangers of localism, of lapsing into a parochial and reactionary fold. Can they survive without the active support of the Left parties? These are some of the key questions that form part of a rather intensive ongoing debate.

I think most of these questions and fears are valid, and many action groups have in fact broken up because of them. The attempt to combat localism has basically taken three forms:

a) *Join up with a major political party*. This provides an all-India perspective, of having allies one can count upon. The ability to withstand repression increases and the problem of identity gets partly resolved. However, and this has been borne out in all such attempts, the group and the activity loses whatever distinctive character it had, that had marked it out as an effort worth watching. It is rarely that the larger political party will change its style just because a group, or a number of groups, have been included within its fold. However, this process may strengthen the anti-bureaucratic tendency within the party.

b) *Try to form an autonomous federation with other non-party action groups*. This move has succeeded only at a regional level when the ideology and objectives of the groups have been similar. Even then, as the experiments of "Jabaran Jot" [tribal groups in Maharashtra getting together to press for the resumption of cultivation rights to trials on cleared forest land], or the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha [a federation of tribal and local groups in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa to demand for a separate State in the Indian Union] clearly indicate, these federations work only for a limited period to attain or attempt to attain a specific objective.

c) *To remain autonomous but have a working relationship with one or a number of political parties*. The major limitation in this strategy emerges from the difference in the relative strengths of the two parties trying to enter a contract. Because most groups have a popular base, and do not have electoral ambitions, sometimes, larger parties are interested in forming alliances with them during elections — but only then.

These three variations have been mentioned only to indicate that the action groups are aware of some of their existential weaknesses, and are trying to overcome them. The value to their experience is however not insignificant. Again, like the developmental groups, not only do these groups select areas and issues neglected by political parties, their relative success in these areas indicates that groups and strata considered unorganisable for social transformation, both in conventional Marxist theory and in practice (because of their relative unimportance in decisive struggles for capture of State power) cannot so easily be denied their respective roles in the struggle for change. The experience of a Bhoomi Sena or a Shramik Sanghatana, a Swadeshi workers collective or a Chattisgarh Mazdoor Shramik Sangh, underlines the importance of different organisational models and processes. More importantly, and this will be argued a little later, their very existence challenges the notion of a macro-Bolshevik Party as the only viable agency for social transformation. What we learn is that while the politics of capture of power,

the *raison d'etre* of political parties, may be a necessary condition for transformation, it definitely is not a sufficient one.[14]

4. Protest Groups and Related Activities[15]

We have still not touched upon the activities of the environmental groups, lawyers' collectives, alternative professional associations, groups fighting for civil liberties and democratic rights, radical journals, theatre groups, etc. These too have significantly contributed to both our understanding of and attempts for social transformation. The functioning of such groups raises both micro and macro issues normally neglected by both developmental and conventional political organisations. They contribute to the development of a heightened sensitivity and debate that draws conventionally apolitical citizens into expressing and fighting for their basic right to participate in the decision making process in the country.

Equally important, these are also assertions by professionals to question the role and functions of their own professions. They demonstrate that a doctor to be political does not necessarily have to be a Datta Samant (a doctor turned trade-unionist) but can fight to transform the medical profession (through organisations such as the Medico Friends Circle or Voluntary Health Association of India); that theatre groups can subserve the interests of not only the paying public (read commercial establishment) but may work for the underprivileged sections, and equally importantly challenge the established understanding and practice of art-society relations (Samudaya, Jan Natya Manch, etc.);[16] that natural wealth cannot be exploited rapaciously (Chipko). All these attempts represent the right of citizens to take the initiative, to know and to act, and in the process contribute to the development of a generalized sensibility that challenges the right of any minority to rule over others.

Some General Comments[17]

Having discussed the role of the groups in different activity domains, we are now in a position to make a few general observations, though, as has been stated earlier, this generalisation is not without its hazards.

The first major point to be underscored is that irrespective of the activity domain, the groups are in a position, and have demonstrated the capacity to make some significant contributions. The major contributions of such formations are:

- responsiveness to local situation and population;
- a mass democratic method of operation;

- work with neglected sections and issues;
- a political approach to many spheres of life traditionally considered non-political.

But the groups too reflect, and not surprisingly, the fratricidal divisions that characterize their larger and better organised compatriots, the political parties. They too seem in a state of shock, with events constantly overtaking them, creating in turn an incapacity for effective intervention, even at the micro-level. What is more important and interesting is that the validity of political action at this level is itself being seriously questioned, in the absence of a larger ideological and programmatic framework.

This internal debate has ideological, organisational and personal dimensions which get reflected in different kinds of conflicts manifesting themselves at the level of the individual, the activity, and the organisation.

1. The Dilemmas

a. *Ideological.* The major ideological dilemma facing the groups comes from their accent on the "people" and the "masses". This emphasis on people and not on a class is part of a strong populist streak which "idealises the wisdom and innate qualities of the people and all spontaneous actions are seen as transformative with some hope for future." Part of the leaning towards "people" is a direct result of the Gandhian legacy, but equally, it is due to the rigid denial by the Left of any central and political role to the non-industrial working classes. "In a country where the organised sector working class is small, and will continue to remain so for the foreseeable future, this theoretic and strategic bias is, to say the least, misplaced."[18]

But, who are the people? It almost appears that the people comprises anybody who catches the fancy of the groups. Even if we add oppressed, exploited, deprived, marginalised, etc., as qualifying adjectives to the people, we are still left with a loose category that blurs the reality of class.

An accent on the "people" pushes the groups towards a strategy of organisation, commonly referred to in the relevant literature as "Community Organisation" (CO). The CO strategy, drawing its inspiration essentially from the writings of Paulo Freire and Saul Alinski, is based upon attempts to organise the community on issues that the community identifies as crucial to its existence. While the CO strategy provides a much needed weightage to the concerns and beliefs of the group being organised (which a large number of the Left organisations seemed to have conveniently forgotten in their mistaken belief that as professional revolutionaries in vanguard organisations, they have grasped the "true" nature of working class consciousness and can inject it into the class in the movement for social transformation), it makes the mistake of seeing

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the community as one. It disregards the "objective" material forces and idealises whatever may be the current concern of the people.

A combination of the populist streak and the CO strategy serves to confuse the analyses and organisational activity of the groups. The notion of "people power" and a "peoples movement" is most relevant when political power is held by a small coterie who have lost all legitimacy in the eyes of the people. In such a struggle, as against a foreign power, or an illegitimate dictatorship with a narrow social base and excessive reliance on repressive mechanisms, a multi-class alliance with well defined narrow objectives, as in the case of China or more recently in Nicaragua may have some meaning. Otherwise, this ideological orientation by itself cannot resolve the contradictions of a class society.

Of course, in the concrete case of India, many have characterized the country as a "Spoils Society", where the Indian State has been confused with an individual and a small coterie. While not underplaying the importance of the increased "privatisation of the State", I do feel that it would be wrong to present the Indian reality as just that. The ruling coterie has its autonomy, but only in a limited terrain. The spoils system may ensure a particular kind of loyalty, so necessary for the survival of a populist regime, but it cannot ensure the implementation of stated objectives.

The preceding discussion refers to two sets of problems, both operating at different levels. The first relates to giving primacy to any single category of analysis. In our kind of situation where no societal category (class, caste, community, sex, religious or linguistic identity, citizen, etc.) can emerge as a pure and sharp category, posing the analytical framework in either class or citizen terms (the basic categories used by the Left parties and groups) necessarily turns out to be inadequate. Rarely is it realized that each issue is, in a sense, a multi-category issue and has to be seen in a context where each category of analysis is itself constantly undergoing transformation.

The second problem arises before all those groups or parties operating within any of the frameworks (Marxist or otherwise), who not only want to understand and analyse, but make positive interventions. The problem now changes from deciding the categories of analyses to one of giving relative weightage to different strata, viz., even if the primacy of class analysis is accepted over other frameworks of categorisation, how does one decide that a "strata" cannot only be identified but also its role designated.

It, therefore, is not surprising that there are frequent swings between the choice of both categories of analysis as well as the strategic

importance given to different strata (i.e., working class over peasantry, or dalits over non-dalits, etc.).[19]

b. *The Organisational Question*. A second set of dilemmas facing the groups relates to the organisational question — the form and content of the organisation, inner organisational democracy, the relationship between the leaders, cadres and masses.

Intrinsic to the group psyche is an ideal of a mass, participative democratic and unifying activity. The political parties, particularly those of the Left, were criticized strongly for their substitutionist tendencies. So were their mass fronts. This tendency becomes even more galling when each party claims to be the sole, legitimate voice of the working class, with complete disregard for the reality of the fragmentation of the class. The groups have absorbed a strong sense of suspicion against such vanguardist proclamations.

This dislike for authority and hierarchy within the organisation, and a leadership role vis-a-vis the class, often pushed groups into adopting loose organisational models which in practice may become ineffective. Rarely is it realized that the hierarchical and authoritarian tendencies so evident in the political parties, while not to be eulogized, are not merely a result of the personal aberrations of some leaders. Nor is it that all organisations beyond a certain size fall prey to Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy — irrespective of ideology, aims and objectives. Shaping an organisation in both its internal and external relations is strongly conditioned by both its aims and objectives, as also the nature and consciousness of the groups the organisation works with.

In addition to sorting out ticklish theoretical and practical questions relating to the inner organisational mode of working, groups have also to contend with their small size and localized character. This issue is inherent in their evolution and structure. Groups are not macro organisations spanning the country. Their effectiveness stems from their ability to respond to the specificities of the local situation — an ability sorely lacking in the local units of larger organisations, tied as they are to concerns of a different order. This effectiveness becomes also the source of their weakness, because issues are not always local, and dealing with them requires a perspective and an organisation that goes beyond local concerns. This becomes evident both in developmental and politico-organisational tasks.

The small size of the groups raises perennial questions, both financial and organisational, regarding stability. Where does the group draw cadre from? Can it survive the cooptative or repressive strategies of the State? Survival becomes a key question, and when this issue becomes intense,

inner organisational democracy is one of the first values to be sacrificed. Most groups started around a key individual or individuals. They display a cultish character, for it is this fanatical obsession with themselves, their group and their leader, which gives them the ability to survive the tensions created by their size. But what happens when the original leadership departs? Just as the local cadre are rarely a workable replacement for the external middle class cadre (within the developmental groups), the new leadership is rarely able to replace the old. The range of tasks, and the small size of the groups, normally heightens the division of skills within the groups, with an important range of decisions being made exclusively by the leadership. This practice is rarely questioned as the groups, in a sense, formed themselves around a charismatic leader. Rarely, therefore, are groups able to survive a leadership transition.

Finally, this brings us to issues related to attempts to overcome the limitation of smallness. By this, I am referring to the debate about link-up with other groups and/or political parties. I am deliberately not discussing the possibilities of and attempts at lateral expansion — firstly because this tendency is not empirically prominent, and secondly because larger groups necessitate a more formal organisational structure with well defined roles and responsibilities at different levels of the organisational hierarchy, which as a model, is very different from those of groups.

We have already discussed the possibilities and problems encountered in the process of federating groups, whether on an issue criterion or on a regional basis. Issue based link-ups have succeeded temporarily, as for example in opposition to the Rape Bill, or the proposed Forest Act, but they tend to have a strong negative orientation. So long as the issue is live and important, groups can disregard their differences of ideology and approach, but as soon as it loses force, the alliance breaks down. Not that this is necessarily a bleak picture, because more stable alliances can develop only through the social practice of working together, and at least there is always the possibility of a mass protest on the specific issue in question.

Regional federations have also come up in the country, and in many ways, they have a better chance of success because the issues that the groups in a region face are more likely to be common. But such organisation too, tends to slur over some of the fundamental differences between the various organisations participating in the alliance.

The fate of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, a multi-group/party alliance fighting for the formation of a new State within the Indian Union, is a case in point. Though the alliance did serve the twin purpose of highlighting both the exploitation of the region by other regions and the exploitation of the majority community — the tribals — by non-tribals, the cohesive

nature of the struggle very soon started developing cracks. Personal rivalry considerations apart, it became difficult for the local exploiters (the backward castes in this context), and the exploited (the tribals) to forget their differences only because of the cultural contradictions relating to sub-nationalism.

Both forms of alliances are at best temporary and depend upon a strong and emotive resentment about a specific issue. We have as yet to see this social practice emerging with an alternative stable and programmatic focus.

Relations with political parties, particularly those of the Left, have been a major bugbear of groups and parties. This is only to be expected because many groups either consciously emerged out of criticism of these parties, or their very existence is a critique of parties. They hurl accusations at each other — the groups accusing the parties of dogmatism, monolithic structure, big brother attitude, non-democratic and manipulative practices and bureaucratism. The counter-accusations are equally vicious and essentially center on the groups considering the Left parties as the major enemies, dividing the progressive forces, entering into dubious alliances with right-wing forces, and playing into the hands of the State. This spree of mutual accusations has so vitiated the ideological space that their coming together seems almost impossible.

Examples of collaboration are however not unknown, and organisational dilemmas have nudged many a group into applying for membership or partnership status with political parties. This is only to be expected as the survival crisis of the groups becomes more intense following a more repressive policy by the State.

In my view, this debate, though very vociferous, is sterile. Groups are not parties, and the same is true in reverse. Both operate in different domains and the clash comes out of a mistaken perception that they are organisations vying for control of the same political and ideological space. So long as groups continue to operate on parameters similar to those of political parties, and engage in similar practices, there is bound to be a clash of interests. They have to realize that their relations, though contradictory, do not have to be antagonistic. We are not arguing that groups should cease to be political, but that their forte lies in operating outside the considerations of capture of State power.

One issue in this debate retains a degree of seriousness. In a situation of increasing resort to repressive acts by the State, and a general right-wing resurgence in the country, how far is it correct or desirable to continue to identify the Left parties as a major enemy? We are aware that similar bogeys have often been raised by the Left parties and their unions

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whenever their rule is threatened, but an all out attack on the Left, without constantly keeping in mind the institutions and strategies of Capital, can very easily lead the groups into providing the rationale for the attack on the Left parties and their mass fronts.

c. *Some Personal Dilemmas.* In addition to the ideological and organisational dilemmas facing the groups, the range of their personal dilemmas is not insignificant. A major section in the groups, as has been repeatedly stressed, comprises middle class activists — a stratum which has its own peculiar problems. One important sentiment governing the psyche of these activists is sacrifice and self-denial. There is a feeling of having given up what might have been theirs, in their work with the poor. This process of class and self-denial can express itself in a variety of ways when the overall conditions turn difficult.

There are the constant pressures for settling down, for taking up a stable job, for displaying responsibility towards one's family. These are routine. What is a little more difficult to express, but probably more serious, is the tension that results from the desire at one level to "develop as a person", and the sacrifices and self denial constantly demanded in the name of "the cause". The "cause" however is elusive, and leaves behind a nagging feeling of somehow having been cheated.

This tension arises primarily out of the apocalyptic vision of politics that most middle class cadre have. The revolution is imagined as a spectacular event and its imminence is felt very personally. Thus, when the pace of change is not to one's liking, and the much awaited revolution is a little long in coming — there is a strong sense of disappointment leading sometimes to a resolve for further work, but more frequently to cynicism and withdrawal.

A specific expression of this tension emerges in the case of professionals involved in political work. A major criticism of political parties relates to their inability to design appropriate politico-professional tasks for their professional cadres. Most groups suffer from the same handicap. The general tendency is to view "professional work", viz., relating to theatre, art, medicine, law, research, etc., either in conventional professional terms, or as merely feeding into the political programmes. Either outlook tends to be dissatisfying, resulting, even in conventional terms, in neither good professional nor political work. Both outlooks tend to strengthen the view that politics is a specialised activity to be monopolised by the specialist politicians.

Another expression of this dominance between the growth of the individual as a person and meeting the requirements of the cause emerges in dissatisfaction with being effective *only* at the local level. Radicalized middle class cadre often suffer from what one might be tempted to call

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delusions of grandeur — an aspiration to play a role on a larger stage. Their so-called sacrifice and self-denial further strengthens this delusion, having now armed it with a moral imperative. The resultant feeling is one of being trapped into an activity and role which is felt to be much below one's capacities and talents.

The small size of most groups creates its own tensions. Isolation, lack of companionship, paucity of intellectual stimulus are some of the common complaints. To draw strength from the masses is an easy slogan — not an easy task. These issues are not easy to discuss openly, and this is sad, because frank and open discussion could definitely resolve some of these tensions.

2. The Crises

The various issues and dilemmas discussed above generate a strong sense of crisis and helplessness in most groups. The alarming rate of fatality of groups can, for the most part, be explained by their relative inability to resolve these dilemmas to any satisfactory level. This crisis is partly one of specification — at two levels. At one level it is that of micro-groups (both developmental and political) confusing themselves with macro agencies — borrowing their range of organisational objectives — which as we have argued, they are structurally incapable of meeting. The second relates to a more generic question — which affects every organisation, large or small, that sets up its objective function and constraints in such a manner that no preferred solution is possible. What I am referring to, is the tendency of setting up absolute objectives — say the desire to usher in an egalitarian, exploitation free, non-scarcity society, using democratic, open-ended and participatory means — without reference to the socio-historical context within which the attempt is being made. This very "success" towards the achieving of a partial goal, is seen not as a success, but only a failure. It almost appears that "there is a desire to prove unsuccessful".

This crisis has different manifestations and gets reflected at different levels.

a. The Individual. The most commonly felt conflict is at the level of individual, mainly the external middle class cadre. The range of personal dilemmas that we have described very often result in the expression of a strong feeling of dissatisfaction. This results in deep introspection, which often ends up in the external middle class cadre looking for new options. While this loss of cadre is serious, and may cause the group to fold up, it cannot by itself be taken as a proof of the invalidity of group activity. Dissatisfaction of the middle class cadre with their consequent impact on the groups and activity does not imply that the group was not serving a useful purpose. All it implies is that the activity will have to be designed

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keeping in mind that the involvement of the external middle class cadre is likely to be transitory.

b. The Activity. A second and a different kind of conflict arises from the nature of the target population most groups work with. As has been stressed earlier, most groups work with the poor — oppressed and marginalised — in sectors of production and existence that can best be described as precarious. It is not totally without reason that those areas have so far remained unorganised — though not unorganisable. Working with shifting populations or artisans in a declining trade, in slums and far off villages generates pressures difficult for small groups to handle. More often than not, the target population is linked in a patron-client relationship with exactly the same forces and individuals that the groups want to struggle against. It is not surprising that success is a little elusive though the work done by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad, or the organisation of domestic workers in Pune, gives cause for hope. We call this an activity based conflict.

c. The Organisation. By far, the most serious conflict groups face is from forces that are not local in character and cannot be resolved or tackled locally. In situations of riots — caste, language, communal or revivalist upsurges, etc. — small groups just get swamped by the tide generated. Years of dedicated work can just be wiped away in such a situation, and in the current state in the country, it is this limitation that is brought home most sharply to groups. We call this a crisis of the organisation. The fact that macro organisations too seem incapacitated in such a situation does not absolve the groups of this charge.

It is this combination of dilemmas and conflicts that gives rise to what one may term as "the structural crisis of the groups" — an inherent inability to overcome and resolve macro contradictions in a micro frame, leading in turn to a high degree of mortality in all such efforts.

There have, of course, been attempts to respond to this "structural crisis" — arising mainly out of the local character and small size of the groups. As discussed earlier, one response has been to set up regional and/or national federations of groups and agencies. There are obvious problems connected with this approach. In our understanding, it is neither useful nor feasible to bring together groups characterized by a large variation in ideologies, activities, operating style and organisational strength. Most of such attempts only end up in creating debating forums, which too, rarely get off the ground.

More fundamental in our view is the error of presupposing that groups which came up in response to the local questions can, just by being brought together, play a positive role on an altogether different plane.

Regional federations, however, have a better chance of success, mainly because the issues groups in a given region face are more likely to be common. With a commonness of shared reality, it should be easier to design a common response.

For similar reasons, issue based federations will continue to have a future, albeit a limited one, and that too of protest. The furore over the proposed changes in the Rape Law and the Forest Act, are adequate testimony to this. Though limited, this role must not be slurred over. These actions at least serve to demonstrate the wide base of resentment to specific actions of the government, and it is only through many such experiences that the capacity to focus on more complex problems can develop.

Another empirically equally significant tendency is the attempt to link up with the macro-organisations. Even though the experience of such moves has not always been very happy, this tendency demonstrates that the search for new answers and organisational responses is not limited to groups alone. Political parties too are willing to shed some of their older inhibitions and come together with smaller, local groups.

Groping For A New Tradition

While new organisational models are a necessary requirement, we do, very often, spend far too much time attempting to unify the existing individuals, groups and parties. An equally critical and urgent task, to which there seems to be no answer, is the search for "a new unifying tradition". This is not to argue that we disregard the deep and fundamental schisms that divide our society, but only that no fragmentary ideology, based on sectional interests, can serve a transformative function.

In a country such as ours, we confront a dual problem posed to us both by our fragmented reality, as well as the nature of our intellectual tradition(s). The requirement, simply stated, is to draw from one or many of our traditions and concepts an analytical framework that can explain both the concrete and the general, and can link up our past with our future. In more formal terms, as Saberwal so elegantly states, can we combine the sociologists' and social-anthropologists' tools, with that of the historian.[20] The former, who have worked with the traditional concepts — caste, kinship, family, ritual, status — have ended up only explaining how the individuals and groups relate to each other. The latter, who attempt a sub-continental analysis, work with concepts — nationalism, secularism, socialism — which are not rooted in the traditions. What, if any, is the way in which we can reconcile the demands and the opportunities of our two, possibly disparate, worlds? Is it possible to move

to a more general analytic ground, in which we can consider both layers simultaneously?

In my view, none of our existing traditions offers us more than a partial answer. If the Gandhians serve to remind us of the essential unity of ends and means, of having a morality in politics, their social practice and theory leaves much to be desired. Their Luddite rejection of science and technology binds them to a rural vision of not only low productivity, but also all the ramifications of caste, class and sex oppression that go with the glorification of our villages. More disturbing is their tendency to defuse all antagonisms and appeal to the goodwill of those in power to effect social transformation. Reconstructive activities can hardly be built upon by neglecting the fundamental inequalities that characterize our system.

The Lohia Socialist tradition[21] is only a variant of the Gandhian theme. While it constantly points towards the necessity of evolving a native tradition, and has a legacy of struggle against Brahmin hegemonism, it carries its anti-Western attitude towards an anti-urban one, leading its protagonists into the blind alley of pronouncing the rural-urban conflict as central to the Indian polity. Their social practice thus leads them into unqualified support for the rich farmer, as for instance is evident in their stand on the recent farmers' agitation.

The Marxists too are not without their failings. Their dogged perseverance with concepts and theories derived from nineteenth century Europe often leads them into a class reductionist attitude. Having classified Marxism as "the scientific truth", they are convinced that their reading of history cannot be wrong. "If the masses at the moment are unable to comprehend the movement's line and language, the movement itself must not lose heart. It has to be continuously at it, until comprehension dawns on the people, and they embrace the red flag."[22]

True that the Marxist parties have a heroic record of being in the forefront of the anti-feudal struggles, and have rarely fallen prey to caste and religious chauvinism, but their excessive preoccupation with the leading revolutionary role of the industrial proletariat serves to create barriers between them and the struggles of the Dalits and tribals. If the Gandhians and the Lohiaites serve to glorify all that is "Bharat",[23] the Marxist tradition, tied as it is to the visions of a Western industrial society (the deep crises of those societies notwithstanding), cannot without serious modifications help us to understand and discover forces of change in a predominantly agrarian society.

The search for a new unifying tradition, or at least for its essential preconditions, can lead us down many a blind alley. The answers are not self-evident, living as we are in a world characterized by disintegrating

visions. The task becomes more difficult, in ex-colonial countries like ours, because all versions, as present today, are both informed and distorted by our colonial encounter. A critical necessity is in "decolonising our minds". "Only when the intellectual doors of our perception are cleaned shall we be able to grapple with the fundamental reality."[24] The answers, if any, can only be sought in the attempt to overcome both biases — of seeking answers in our past (the mythical Ram Rajya);[25] or of mistakenly believing that the West of today or tomorrow offers us a vision of our future. Only the multiplication of many autonomous and different attempts towards the synthesis of a new praxis can create a dialectic complex enough to unify our diverse strands. We should strive towards such a vision.

An Assessment, Auto-Critique and Some Possibilities: Moves Towards a Reconstructive Politics

What situation do the groups find themselves in the beginning of the 1980s? The overall macro situation can only be described as bleak, crisis ridden, and as displaying little or no strength for a radical transformation. The centralising tendencies; increasing resort to State violence; the slow dismantling of the planned economic system; large areas of the country left completely at the mercy of local vested interests; increasing neo-colonisation of the State; growth of fissiparous regional, linguistic, communal and caste tendencies; and above all the almost complete exclusion of the vast majority of our people from the benefits of growth — have all been documented in great detail.[26]

What we seem to have at the top are the twin tendencies of *erosion* — of institutions, values, frameworks and ideas, and a corresponding *insecurity* that governs the actions of everybody, from the very top to the bottom. In brief, we face the prospect of a fragmenting State and society. The situation may well be summed up in this quotation from Kothari: "slowly and imperceptibly we are moving towards a new political dispensation, backed by a new political ideology which if not countered decisively and through the united intervention of all those who care for the country, will end not only Indian democracy but possibly the Indian State as well."[27]

This state is not, unlike the arguments put forward by many analysts, the result of the vagaries of certain individuals and groups in power. Rather, the roots of the current crises have to be traced to the functioning of the very system we have inherited and attempted to run. The crisis is not one of management, implying in some way that the problem is only of sub-optimal decisions, and that in principle, "right" decisions can be taken. Instead, what we confront today is a structural crisis, where all options are between "wrong" decisions which weaken the system and increase its strains. "Politicians no longer have options between policies

which will enhance the crisis and others which will lessen it. They only have the lesser option of deepening it in different ways."[28]

It is not as if this steady degeneration has gone unchallenged. If one dominant tendency in our recent history has been the steady dismantling of our institutions, the other has been that of protests — at all levels from the electoral to mass movements and ethno-regional upsurges. Whichever way we look the nation is in a turmoil. Caste tensions have aggravated, implying among other things that the Dalits are no longer passive. The nationalities, or rather the subnationalities question has come to the forefront with agitations gripping regions as far away and diverse as Assam, Punjab, Jharkhand or Chattisgarh. Equally important is the continuing struggle of the textile workers in Bombay, where thousands of workers have been on strike for well over a year.

Far more significant than large and spectacular movements has been the mushrooming of small, sporadic individualized and group protests. The emergence of the non-party political formations has to be seen within this context. It is not as if the various movements do not have glaring inadequacies. They have them in abundance. What is heartening is that they represent a mass stirring against the cynical manipulation of the people. A new spirit of questioning is slowly overtaking our normally passive and apathetic society.

One factor which has significantly emerged through all these movements and counter-movements is the devaluation of political parties as instruments of social transformation. This should not however be interpreted as an argument against politics. The State has always supported a tendency towards depoliticisation in its attempt to convert every problem into a techno-managerial one. This move finds much favour with the "traditional middle class view", strongly upheld and propagated by all our institutions, that "good and honest citizens should concentrate on their work, leaving the business of politics to politicians".

Ironically, the crusading sections of our press have, perhaps unwittingly, helped consolidate this feeling. Their valiant exposures of the gross misdeeds of our elected representatives has created a confusion between politics and politicking. Disgust at the activities of politicians and political parties, in the absence of a cohesive critique of the processes which give sustenance to such behaviour, very often only strengthens the feeling of apathy and depoliticisation that the State desires.

A critique of the parties should not be confused with a condemnation of politics. The solution lies not in being non-political, but in understanding the functioning of the formal political sphere of which the parties are an integral component. It is our contention that the very functioning of our

formal political sphere is populist, plebiscitary and manipulative, and offers little or no space for genuine participatory involvement of the people in deciding affairs crucial to their own existence. By confining themselves to the formal political sphere, all political parties are open to the charge that they alienate the common man from the political processes. By setting themselves up as the exclusive and specialised mediators, they only serve to institutionalize a feeling of helplessness, of leaving one's fate in the hands of the specialist — the politician bureaucrat.

If the political parties are in a state of crisis, in many ways, so too are the action-groups, the non-party political formations that are the focus of our analysis. We have argued at some length that the groups too face serious dilemmas and conflicts — at the ideological, organisational and personal level — which not only limit their effectiveness but very often pose stark questions of survival. The answers, if any, will have to be sought in the concrete histories of the myriad parties and groups and their experiments.

As a start, we will have to rethink and redefine the dominant views about politics and power. The Social Democratic view pre-supposes that the Parliament and allied electoral activity are the sole legitimate ground for politics. Politics becomes that which is done by political parties. Underpinning this view is the understanding that political power resides in electoral institutions. Periodically, at election times, this power is momentarily dispersed amongst the citizens before it becomes reconstituted into a new unity. Hence the entire energies of the political parties should be polarized towards that supreme moment when power is dissolved and resolved.

Ironically, the conventional Marxist-Leninist view is a mirror image of this viewpoint. It dismisses the Parliament as a facade to be participated in only for tactical reasons, and insists that power resides in the central core of the State apparatus that monopolizes the legal use of coercion. The capture of this inner citadel by some political or quasi-military manoeuvre organised by the Party then becomes the ultimate objective of political activity, to which everything else is secondary.[29]

Both versions have been presented in a highly schematized manner. All Social Democratic parties also function outside the electoral framework, just as all Marxist parties work for aims other than the ultimate revolution. But, both these visions have their focus on the capture of State power, without controlling which, it is considered impossible to effect societal changes. Little, if any, importance is given to the spontaneous and autonomous actions of individuals, groups and strata. Politics is constantly reduced to a specialised activity, reserved for the specialist politician.

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Both views may disagree as to the specific location of political power, but they are one in regarding power as the exclusive preserve of a narrow range of institutions. Neither view appreciates that dominance is exercised by a web of interlocking structures, including many not recognised as political. Both end up unnecessarily restricting our strategic perspective.

Rarely is it realized that unless part of the new societal vision is translated into actual reality in the course of the struggle itself, we are likely to end up with a social formation similar to Khomeni's Iran. The focus on the capture of State power, the smashing of the bourgeois State, does not by itself, help fill the void created after a revolution. The tendency then is to revert to tried and tested methods, and continuing old social practices necessarily gives rise over time to old social relations. This is in many ways the trap that all post-revolutionary societies have fallen into.

What we are arguing for is not the creation of a modern "Yenan", a new revolutionary base from which sorties are made into the existing society. This, to start with, is hardly feasible in the present conditions. Instead, what we are advocating are attempts to inculcate new social practices, individual and institutional, that constantly strain existing social barriers. The future has to be encapsulated into the present, for the future itself to have a reality different from the present.

New Frontiers of Struggle

What we require is to go beyond old traditions, concepts and models of organised practice. A key element to be underscored is that in a country like India, where power is exercised through a web of interlocking institutions and structures, and no single set of issues can be isolated to which all attention can be directed, the focus on capturing one or the other institution may be necessary for social transformation, but it definitely is not sufficient. Our plea is for the "politics of hegemony",[30] or what Bahro calls "the new historic compromise": "We must transcend the old divisions to set into motion an overwhelming majority for the 'peaceful conquest' of the State machine in all its levels and departments. Nothing short of this will do."[31]

The task, therefore, is long and arduous. It demands the winning of the diverse structures of power. The struggle will have to be carried out wherever it is feasible, not only in the arena of formal politics. The key emphasis is on the relative importance given to the *processes* of social action, rather than only to the *structures* of the exercise of power.

Fortunately for us, India still has a democratic legacy, and a number of working institutions that are not very easy to wipe out. This offers us space

for action in all spheres of social activity, and our energies must be concentrated on maintaining, deepening and extending the spaces for democratic and collective action.

Is it that we are overreading into the level and nature of the institutionalization of democratic tendencies in our system? In reacting to the "narrowly political" perspective of the revolutionary Left, are we committing the obverse error of minimizing the reality of the coercive apparatus? Do we believe that the ruling classes will permit a slow and peaceful dismantling of their State apparatus? These doubts are all valid and get sustenance from the historical fact that no revolution has so far been peaceful.

Our plea for the politics of hegemony does not imply that the coercive power relations backed by the State will just wither away as a result of positional skirmishes in different institutions. It stems more from a reading that in societies like ours, violent revolutions resulting in the overthrow of the State, are more of a chance than a necessity.

I do not visualize any short-term or even medium-term possibility of the working-class establishing its will over society through force. There is also a nagging feeling, based on the experience of "post-revolutionary societies", that violent revolutions result in the imposition of a "new authoritarian logic", undoubtedly different from the earlier capitalist system, *maybe* even better, but nowhere near what we are striving for.[32] Large, heterogeneous and multi-cultural societies can only transform themselves over a long period of learning how to accommodate their differences. This transformative process may be interspersed with shorter periods of violent change and realignment of societal and class forces, which may facilitate long-term transformation, but the process in its essence has to be long drawn out and peaceful.

A call of this nature very often takes an idealist turn, and we are overcome by despair and hopelessness, the tendency then being to either give up or wallow in voluntarist euphoria. In his "Reasons for Hope", Shourie points to the countless acts of heroism, both great and small, that individuals have displayed in their rejection of the present system. It is his understanding that it is the acts of betrayal by the many which have brought us to this state of affairs, and it is only when the individual, the common man, refuses to acquiesce to the vagaries of our rulers, that the change will come.

Be that as it may, a greater sign of hope lies in the very existence and activities of the groups and individuals we have characterized as non-party political formations. As has been argued earlier, the groups are in a flux. Charity and welfare groups are displaying a development

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consciousness, while development groups are moving towards a struggle orientation. The more political groups are seeking new allies. These recent changes in the various developmental, non-political transformative, and semi-political groups, and the growing interaction among them indicates that they have a potential for moving towards a new politics of the future.

For a start, these groups are not structured in the image of a party. Politics, for them, is not a professional activity, but only a means to a larger social transformation. They work on issues directly concerning the poor, not for them but with them. This opens up for them a whole range of neglected human and cultural issues not evident when people are viewed, not as subjects of change, but as mere objects to be mobilized for an external vision. The same empathy brings them into contact with strata — the Dalits and tribals — that are rarely in the forefront of political discussions about transformation. Finally, they are not constrained by the logic of capture of State power. This allows them flexibility and open-endedness, experimentation and innovation in devising their programmes and picking issues. Taken together, the potentiality of these several types of non-party groups lies in their growing recognition of the non-political and non-economic aspects of the contemporary structures of power and domination embedded in the culture of modern politics.[33]

While this capacity to learn gives a definite edge to the micro-movements under consideration, they have yet to address themselves to another equally important task, that of combining the new micro practice with the creation of a new social knowledge. Without the creation of an alternative macro structure of thought and institutions the movements are likely to be absorbed only as pressure groups to correct local anomalies. They may, of course, survive as anachronisms, to be admired and studied, but hardly the focal points for social transformation.

It is therefore necessary to recognize new issues, contradictions and challenges that our changing polity continuously throws up. This is not easy in a society where issues related to survival still reign paramount. Given our degrading poverty and deep-rooted inequality, the struggles will for some time revolve around issues of livelihood, land, wages and dignity.

We shall thus have to learn to handle these issues differently. How do we handle the issue of "land to the tiller" in the face of an extremely adverse land man ratio. Can cooperatives be thought of and put into practice, not as a vision for a far-off future, but as a practical alternative to individualized peasant production or capitalist farming dependent upon wage labour? The tribal struggles in Dhanbad in the early 1970s combined opposition to moneylenders with the simultaneous creation of "grain goals" to meet consumption needs during the lean season. They also

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initiated cooperative farming to raise productivity.[34] The Bhoomi Sena experiences provide indications for combining the social and the economic. Their handling of bondage with changes in marriage rituals is the kind of innovative step we should be looking for.

What of issues related to ecology? These encompass not only problems related to the changing structure and rapid depletion of our forest resources, or the complex problems related to water management and building dams in the seismologically sensitive Himalayan regions, but also the hazards millions of our slum and pavement dwellers face in daily living. The demand for eco-development is not just a cry of the middle-class nature lover, but forces us to question and revise the very basis of our understanding and application of modern science and technology in the creation of an industrial civilization.

To be relevant, the groups have to face these and many other challenges. They must continue to engage in a wide range of social practice, and simultaneously strive for the creation of alternative macro theories and institutions. It is only through the dialectic of micro-practice and macro-thinking, grounded in the objective forces of change, that we can visualize the promise of a new politics.

Footnotes and References

1. It is necessary to point out that this paper is a part of and an intervention into a much larger and ongoing debate between individuals, groups and political parties seeking to find ways of social mobilization and transformation. Many stances taken are only tentative, designed as much to provoke reaction, as to place on record the current understanding. Parts of this paper were earlier presented in the Inter-disciplinary Research Methodology Workshop organized by the Madras Institute of Development Studies at Coimbatore, June 1982. I am grateful to Prof. Kurien and other participants for helpful comments. I would also like to thank friends at LOKAYAN and BUILD. This paper has developed as a result of a running dialogue with them.

     Rajni Kothari, "An Alternative Framework for Rural Development", in Another Development: Approaches and Strategies, The Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, 1977.

3. Making such a statement immediately raises a few problems. First, it is argued, "Why single out the Left for criticism? Is the record of any of the non-Left unions (both rural and urban) and parties any better?" Such a concern can partly be met by a counter-argument that vis-a-vis the others, one never had any illusions or hope. It was/is only the Left, which had/has the ability to create the "illusion" about its potential. Thus the fact that the comment has been directed to the Left is only symptomatic of the relative regard that it is held in.

     Secondly, the issue is raised that such a criticism is hardly fair. After all, the Left exists, but in a scattered manner, barring the few States where it enjoyed or still enjoys electoral power. This too, in my view, is only begging the question. If, in a city such as Kanpur, where the Left had for years controlled the unions in the Textile Industry, it was still possible for a "Swadeshi Mills massacre" to occur, with hardly any upheaval taking place in the city, or in West Bengal for urban slum-dwellers or rickshaw pullers to be brutalised in the same manner as by the Congress regime in Bombay, then it is, in my view, fair for us to raise questions about the ability of the Left parties, as currently constituted, to handle the problems thrown up by our distorted society.

4. The Gujarat agitation, referred to in literature as the Nav Nirman Movement (Movement to Create a New Society) was a student based movement directed against corruption in the provincial government. It finally led to the Chief Minister of the state being dismissed and replaced. The Bihar agitation, also referred to as the J.P. (Jai Prakash Narain — an important Gandhian leader) Movement, quite like the

Gujarat agitation, also based itself amongst students and youth against the rampant corruption in the state machinery. It was finally crushed by the imposition of a state of emergency on June 26, 1975. Many of the leading activists of these two agitations were jailed, and after the 1977 elections, with the victory of the Janata Party, emerged as important regional political figures.

5. Dunu Roy, "The Problem of Communication between Groups and Individuals Engaged in Social Development and Change", Report submitted to the ICSSR, 1982. Also, see Aftab, "Crisis, Action-Groups and Political Action, A Note", Background Papers, BUILD Documentation Centre, Bombay, March 1981.

6. The Ramkrishna Mission is a sect comprising of the followers of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa, a leading 19th century mystic-saint, and his disciple, Swami Vivekananda. The Mission has also set up numerous foundations running schools, hospitals and general welfare and development works.

7. Some of the points raised in this section have earlier been discussed in Dunu Roy, The Structure of Interventions, unpublished manuscript, 1975; and Cadres and Cadre Formation, unpublished manuscript, 1976. Also, see H. Sethi, "Alternative Development Strategies: A Look at Some Micro-Experiments", Economic & Political Weekly, Special Number, 1978; and "Between Myth and Uncertainty: The Making of a Vision", Mimeo, ICSSR, 1979.

8. The National Adult Education Programme (N.A.E.P.) was a major programme to eradicate adult illiteracy initiated during the Janata regime. The Antyodaya Programme, literally meaning "lift the bottommost", consisted of identifying the five poorest families in a village and organising schemes/activities for their economic upliftment. The Lok Jumbish was an innovative programme which focused on energising existing developmental programmes meant for the poor through seeking an active involvement of voluntary agencies.

9. Rajnikant Arole was Director of the Comprehensive Rural Health Care Project, a programme marked by tremendous innovation in the training and use of illiterate village dais (midwives) as health delivery agents.

10. ASTRA, or Application of Science and Technology for Rural Areas, is a department of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, which in the last decade and a half has done pioneering work in the field of generation and dissemination of appropriate technology for rural areas.

11. This resolution (1982), amplified in an article "Action Groups/Voluntary Agencies: A Factor in Imperialist Strategy", Prakash Karat, The Marxist (1983), lays out the party line on the voluntary sector and phenomena. Basically it argues for stringent state control on foreign funding for the voluntary sector, within a framework that sees the phenomena as an anti-national/anti-communist fifth column.

12. The Shramik Sanghatana is a Marxist action-group organising tribal landless labour in Dhulia district, Maharashtra. It became very important in the late seventies, early eighties since its organisational base was substantial enough to threaten political parties and the state. Later the organisation split, with some of the leading activists joining the CPI(M), with others preferring to maintain their independent organisational character. The Bhoomi Sena is a tribal organisation working on issues of bondage, wages and employment in the Thana District of Maharashtra. Mahila and Tarun Mandals are women and youth groups, respectively.

13. The CMSS is a militant and independent trade union of informal mineworkers in the Dalli-Rajhara mines attached to the Bokaro Steel Plant in Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh. The union charted out new paths in organising the workers into cooperatives and using the surpluses to run schools and a hospital.

14. H. Sethi, "Lok Chetna Jagaran", unpublished mimeo for the ICSSR, January 1978.

15. This discussion has drawn upon S. Sarkar, Citizens Initiative Movements, unpublished manuscript, 1978; and M. Bookchin, Post-Scarcity Anarchism, Ramparts Press, New York, 1978.

16. Samudaya is a theatre group in Karnataka that received public recognition through its innovative campaigning against Mrs. Gandhi in the 1978 by-election in Chickmaglur. The Jan Natya Manch is a street theatre group active in Delhi, and loosely affiliated with the CPI(M).

17. This section is based on the discussions which took place in the UNRISD-LOKAYAN Workshop on "Non-Party Political Formations in India", December 21-23, 1982.

18. Can this criticism be handled by diluting the role of the working-class to one which primarily is that of providing leadership, as for instance, in the concept of a Democratic Revolution? I do not think so, because the notion of the "working-class" and "working-class consciousness" is itself in a flux. The worker is a complex and contradictory human, who like everyone else, operates on multiple concerns, with different

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concerns and identities taking primacy in different situations. Merely converting this complexity to cliches and slogans only reduces the "working class" to the factory workers and the appeal in the name of its consciousness to whatever may be the current fancy of theoreticians and leaders of the working class. Each act of resistance and struggle is thus judged against a "mythical norm" which workers as humans may or may not relate to. For further elaborations on this argument see Human Futures, Special issue on Trade Unions and the Labouring Poor in India, New Delhi, 1982. Also, see Arvind Das, "Working Class Movement: Straws in the Wind", Probe, June 1983.

19. Dalit is the political term to denote scheduled castes.

20. S. Saberwal, "Societal Designs in History: The West and India", Occasional Papers on History and Society No. 1, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1983.

21. This refers to a political tendency initiated by Ram Manohar Lohia, a prominent socialist leader.

22. A.M., "Calcutta Diary", Economic & Political Weekly, January 29, 1983.

23. The Hindi term for India, "Bharat" denotes a naturist political category, distinguishing those who talk of Bharat from the urban, westernised Indians. Fits well into the Michael Lipton urban bias thesis.

24. South, January 1983.

25. This is the metaphoric allusion to the mythical golden age of the past, the rule of Lord Rama. The phrase was popularised by Gandhi during the struggle for independence.

26. As small sample, see Rajni Kothari, "Democracy and Fascism in India", mimeo, 1981; "Towards Intervention", Seminar, January 1982; and Arun Shourie, "Reasons for Hope", Indian Express, August 15, 1982.

27. Kothari, op. cit., 1981.

28. S. Kaviraj, "Economic Development and the Political System", Paper presented at the Vienna Colloquium on Contemporary India, University of Vienna, 1982.

29. For a good discussion on this theme, see M. Prior and D. Purdy, "Out of the Ghetto", Spokesman, 1979.

30. Ibid.

31. R. Bahro, Socialism and Survival, Heretic Books, London, 1982.

32. S. Banerjee, "The Island of Dr. Marx", Economic & Political Weekly, January 1982.

33. D. L. Sheth, "Movements and the Future of Politics", Paper presented at the Seventh World Conference on Future Studies, Stockholm, 1982.

34. K.G. Iyer and R.N. Maharaj, "Agrarian Struggle in Dhanbad", mimeo, National Labour Institute, Delhi, 1976.

New Global Political Setting And
The Challenge For NGOs

Suthy Prasartset

The expansion since the 1950s of capital on a world scale, and its tendency to integrate the Third World into the new international division of labor, has been closely associated with the rise of an authoritarian regime or what James Petras (1977) calls a "neo-fascist" state. This type of state in the Third World is centrally required to provide a friendly and profitable investment climate for international capital's long-term investment plans, for example, to suppress working class and other people's movements, as well as transform the existing institutional structure into one with a potential to facilitate and support the process of transnationalization.

According to the characterization of James Petras (1979) the "neo-fascist" state has, among others, the following important features.

1. The organization of the neo-fascist state is largely the result of the insertion of a part of the metropolitan state apparatus within Third World politics, and the promotion of an ensemble of state apparatuses — notably the military and police bureaucracies. As a result, the "overdeveloped" features of the neo-fascist state are prime examples of the external alliance which nurtures it.

2. The neo-fascist state is the permeation of society by the forces of order and violence: terror and purges are recurring activities which vary in intensity and scope. The growth of para-military forces out of the "regular" police and military forces complements and attempts to disguise the direct involvement of the highest levels of government in the processes of physical coercion.

3. The neo-fascist state in the initial period is essentially a repressive state: an apparatus geared toward destroying mass mobilization and annihilating militants — in a specific sense, systematic mass demobilization. The formation of the neo-fascist state by "revolution" is the basis for the creation of policies, institutions and conditions for a

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particular type of socio-economic development. The neo-fascist state also creates the conditions for large-scale, long-term economic expansion based on the promotion of transnational capital. And, through the expansion of numerous types of state activity, it becomes a complementary force promoting foreign growth.

4. The ideology of neo-fascism attempts to harness traditional reactionary beliefs and authorities to the dynamics of externally-induced capitalist expansion. Ideological appeals thus vary by strata: for the elite, the doctrine of national security; for the masses, anti-communism and traditional morality. The neo-fascist regime thus produces its own ideological synthesis — importing and combining "modernization" with "traditionalism" as instruments for ideological domination — while applying the doctrines of "national security" and "anti-communism" to legitimate physical repression.

The first feature may be exemplified by the military alliance between several Third World countries and the United States, in which the latter gives military "aid" and trains military and police personnel of the former. (See, for example, Bell, 1978: 58-66; Lobe, 1977.) Thus the coercive apparatus of the Third World states has been greatly enhanced by and patterned after the American system, thereby facilitating the growth of an "ensemble of state apparatus" from the center.

The second and third features of the neo-fascist regime are of particular significance, as most Third World regimes in the fifties and sixties have, to varying degrees, carried out a process of depoliticization through the coercive state apparatus and suppression of human rights and freedom. However, at a later phase, the regime tried to disguise its brute use of force by promoting para-military forces or similar organizations.

Of equal importance is the authoritarian regimes' policies in the promotion of transnational capital, by introducing new legal measures and restructuring the existing institutions, or creating new ones, to implement them. In doing so, they have been closely assisted and guided by the transnational power structure. Various institutions have been established with the assistance and design of the U.S. agencies and international organizations such as the World Bank. The authoritarian regimes have placed themselves at the service of transnational capital by following the advice of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These two organizations have been working in close collaboration with Third World authoritarian regimes in charting transnationalizing development strategies. The World Bank through its missions has been active in proposing a packaged "development program" for several Third World countries. Such a program is basically

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designed to integrate these countries into the new international division of labor through a policy of import-substitution and agricultural diversification. The state is to be active in providing infrastructural services, and legal and institutional support to the private sector. The existing state enterprises are to undergo privatization. Such a strategy depends heavily upon foreign aid and loans. More importantly, countries adopting this strategy actively pursue a policy of foreign investment promotion and set up appropriate institutions to facilitate its implementation.

In sum, the authoritarian regimes which are characterized by political exclusion, mass demobilization and depoliticization have been facilitating the integration of the Third World into the process of the new international division of labor, which is based on the relatively rapid growth of investment in textiles, machine goods, automobile assembly, electrical and electronic parts, irrigation and large thermal projects. It will be argued later that the saturation of investment opportunities in these industries and the shift of investments to new frontiers in the Third World is consistent with a new type of regime, which possesses a more sophisticated mode of social control, and has been in transition in the early 1980s.

The Transition Of Authoritarian Regimes

It is argued here that the transition to democracy now taking place in several Third World countries has its roots in the socio-economic changes that had started since the late 1950s, bringing about new social forces and thereby causing socio-political stresses and tensions in the existing political system. Such tensions and heightened contradictions would necessarily occur as a prelude to a period of reconciliation and compromise for these societies to march on with the transition to democracy. The new challenges facing the ruling regime put to the real test their ability and dynamism to cope with such problems, and this will greatly determine the fate of the regime. With the emergence of new social forces based on a higher level of development of productive forces, the authoritarian regime will be forced to respond in some ways to these new challenges.

Binnendijk (1987) has distinguished between four types of transition from an authoritarian regime, as follows:

1. Uncontrolled revolutionary collapse, in which most institutions of the old society collapse along with the autocrat. The most notable example is the case of Iran after the fall of Shah Palevi.

2. Revolutionary restructuring model, which occurs when the autocrat is overthrown after a sustained period of mass mobilization of such forms as street protests, strikes, etc. In this case, most of the existing economic, social and political institutions remain basically intact. The new leaders often have some experience in government, and are more pragmatic than ideological. This model includes Argentina after the junta, the Philippines after Marcos, and Haiti after Duvalier.

3. Revolution by coup d'etat, which "usually occurs in relatively underdeveloped societies in which the military is the dominant political institution and military coups offer the only possibility for political change." In the aftermath of such a change a series of coups and countercoups may happen until a dominant leader emerges, as in Ethiopia and Afghanistan.

4. The managed transition model, which is "a process through which authoritarian leaders themselves see the need for a peaceful transition of government and plan for it, however different and varied their motives are." Certain patterns of social, economic and political change may rapidly erode the rationale for continued military rule, so that "the military leadership slowly liberalizes society, forms alliances with technocrats, and develops their own political parties." All of these developments will pave the way for relatively successful transition to democracy. Examples of this model include Brazil and El Salvador in recent years.

Of these four types, the restructuring model and the managed transition model are more likely to achieve a higher degree of successful transition. Inspite of different specific features of each type, they share a common denominator, namely, "actions are taken by some groups within the old regime to soften the blow of the transition and prevent a complete collapse of social institutions." It is crucial that key government officials see a transition coming, and take timely steps to modify the impact and steer the course of events to one with a more peaceful and democratic orientation. (Binnendijk, 1987: 159) Of course, among the four types of political transition, super powers like the U.S. would prefer the managed transition. This is evidenced by the advice of a senior U.S. official who has expressed his strategic idea so succinctly: "While a foreign autocrat is in power, the United States should make every effort to support those institutions in his society that can form the basis for a future democracy; develop close ties with leaders of the democratic opposition, if they exist; and gather intelligence necessary to gain early warning of a potential transition." (Ibid., p. 164) The advice continues as follows: "Transition can be managed if the process is started in time by senior members of the old government working with the moderate opposition. The United States should actively encourage such managed transitions once warning signs

indicate that a transition is likely. Failure to manage a transition in time can lead a nation like Iran or Nicaragua down a sad path. But successful management of a transition can bring at least a form of democracy to a nation and can in the process enhance U.S. foreign policy interests." (*Ibid*., p. 164)

Inspite of the fact that external conditions can have substantial impact on the outcome of the struggle, it is the crucial internal conditions that provide the prerequisite for such a regime transformation. It is the people's struggles in various political movements that originally cause the transformation to take place. These sustained activities have forced the ruling regime to respond and preserve its own privileged social position. What generally brings about such sustained activities is the failure of the regime to deliver the promised fruits of development, which actually have benefited only a privileged section of the population. In other words, the development process did not trickle down as expected by the conventional economists. Such a process has resulted in polarization of social classes, widening income gaps and regional inequality, thereby bringing about marginalization and poverty for the majority of the masses, rising indebtedness, malnutrition, unemployment and lack of proper health care.

In such a situation, the social base of the regime tends to become narrower and narrower, especially as the people's movements gather momentum, so that the State is soon faced with a legitimacy crisis in the wake of bouts of fiscal problems and mounting external indebtedness.

Therefore the urgent problem for the elite is how to find a new basis for legitimating its continued privileged rule. They must corrupt the rhetoric of the mass movements, by adopting such terms as "people's participation", "self-reliance", etc., in their official statements. More important, the ruling elite must reconstitute itself by carrying out "political reform", camouflaging themselves under the cloak of democratization.

In sum, both internal and external political environments have converged to produce a new global trend in democratization. Given the long-term global economic crisis, the transnational power structure has been forced to support this trend toward democratization.

The New Global Political Setting

It is interesting to note also that the international situation has now become an important factor in political transitions in the Third World. More important is the situation when a super power has a major stake in it. As a result of the transnationalized development policy pursued by authoritarian regimes of the Third World during the 1960s and 1970s,

these countries by the early 1980s began suffering severely from heavy international debts. The threat of insolvency has always been present. In such a situation, any civil disturbances caused by an authoritarian regime will bring about political turmoil, which, should the regime find itself insolvent, will definitely precipitate an international banking crisis. Such an eventuality will immediately put the creditors or the transnational banks on the brink of disaster. As Cohen (1985:709) explains it, "the international financial communities also fear that they might be landed in financial disruption. U.S. officials expressed concern about the possibility of a 'domino effect' which might lead to a chain reaction of defaults among major debtor countries." In the case of Mexico, the same author writes: "From the moment Mexico's difficulties began, there was never any doubt among policy makers that America's own security, not just Mexico's, was at stake....Nor was there any doubt that the contagion might spread to other Latin American nations as well." (Cohen, 1985: 717) The policy makers, of course, were much concerned about the direct risks to the American banks, whose exposure in Latin America has been quite overwhelming.

In such a situation, it is not surprising that the U.S. has shown strong interest in supporting relatively more liberal regimes during the recent years. In contrast to its covert activities to support the so-called neo-fascist regimes in the 1960s, the U.S. government came out openly to warn any aspiring coup-makers in the Third world that it will cut aid and grants to any such regime. Now, U.S. officials closely watch political events in those countries in transition, to ensure that there will not be another Iran or Nicaragua.

While recognizing the fact that internal factors dominate most transition processes, external pressures and measures at critical moments can be an important determinant of the political outcome. Binnendijk (1978:163) stressed the important role the U.S. can play to bring about the transition of the authoritarian regime to one with sustainable democracy. In his words, "the United States could enhance the long-term prospects for emerging democracies in most cases by making greater use of the National Endowment for Democracy and similar institutions to strengthen these [democracy promoting] criteria." In this regard, the U.S. policy would be shifted more toward supporting strong leadership and institutions in the Third World that can support democracy. The U.S. would be vigilant in not allowing the repetition of the unexpected fall of the Shah of Iran. Binnendijk further proposes that the U.S. maintain a unified policy on the transition of authoritarian regimes, based on good intelligence assessments and willingness to support such a change when necessary. This policy would become a new formula in dealing with political transition in the new global context. It seems that this new formula was applied in the recent events in Haiti and the Philippines,

both of which had caused serious concern for the U.S. It has been claimed that, "in each case reasonably good intelligence assessments based on ties with opposition groups gave policy-makers an adequate appreciation of the deteriorating situation. U.S. policy was more unified, with relative little backbiting and few press leaks." (Binnendijk, 1987: 163)

Hence, the same author proudly declares: "had the United States failed to expedite the departure of either Marcos or Duvalier, a more violent and less successful transition most likely would have taken place." (*Ibid.*, p. 155) Furthermore, "in El Salvador, it took a great deal of pressure from the United States and the courage of Jose Napoleon Duarte to begin the transition to democracy." (*Ibid.*, p. 158) Recent events in the restoration of a more democratic regime in South Korea also served to show American fears of an uncontrolled revolutionary collapse happening there, as can be attested by U.S. pressures on the former President Chun Doo Hwan. Since early June 1987, when sustained protests and demonstrations to demand direct presidential elections and a return to an open and democratic political system began to intensify, U.S. authorities have kept a close monitor of the situation in South Korea. Fearing that Chun Doo Hwan might resort to tough military measures to stem the rising waves of protest against his rule, the U.S. State Department issued an official statement warning against military intervention, which it said would be a disservice to Korea. Instead, advised the U.S. State Department, military commanders should concentrate their efforts on defending the country from foreign aggression, and letting the political process continue along its natural course. The U.S. Government even sent Mr. Gaston Sigur, Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East, to discuss matters with the Korean Government and leaders of the opposition. (*Nation*, 24th June 1987, p. 9) More spectacular was an attempt by the American Senate, which passed a resolution on June 28th with a vote of 74 to 0, supporting a clean and just election in South Korea. (*Matichon*, 29th June 1987, p. 14) This was an amazing plea to a dictatorial ally, to abdicate his role. Of course, the present American concern and its "standpoint" on democracy and respect for human rights clearly reflect its own self-interest and vested stake in South Korea. What is important to note is that the U.S. is compelled to adopt this new formula of compromising policy only if the Third World country in question has undergone a period of sustained popular protest, which cannot easily be quelled by sheer brute force.

It is an objective necessity that the recent phase of dependent development in the Third World requires a new type of political regime in order to institutionalize a renewed legitimacy, particularly when traditional mechanisms for existing social relations of domination, based on the ideology of developmentalism and the doctrine of national security, fail to produce what the regime was originally set out to do. The benefits of development have not trickled down to the masses, and the concentration

of economic and political power in the ruling elite and business groups has produced far greater inequality and marginalization than originally expected. All these clearly prove that all existing "delivery systems" have failed.

Any regime harboring such economic and social trends will be susceptible to social turbulence and disruptions through spontaneous popular uprisings. It is in the interest of the central capitalist states and their transnational banks to maintain strong interest in a relatively more liberal type of regime in the Third world. As Korten (1987:146) emphatically points out, the new policy among the donors is that "the transfer of capital is seen as less central. A high priority is placed on a process of democratization." (Ibid., 146) Such is the trend in the international environment for the ruling regimes of the Third World.

New Waves of Economic Squeeze On The Third World

At this moment of history, Third World countries are suffering a new round of an economic squeeze from the rich industrial countries or the North. This squeeze tends to be increasingly ruthless and sinister. It has its roots in the logic of capital accumulation which manifests itself in long wave economic cycles of upswing and downswing.

It is during the long wave of economic downswing that the Northern squeeze is more intense and brutal, as witnessed by the ruthless squeeze and exploitation on the colonial empires of the North in the last quarter of the 19th century. The same pattern of Northern squeeze is again recurring, although in different forms, since the mid-1970s when the world economic recession was gathering its full momentum and its impact grew more tangible and widespread. Since then, the world has witnessed rising and sustained waves of protectionism and rivalry among leading industrial countries. These trends have severely affected the Third World, especially the rising tide of protectionism which the North has adopted to solve its own economic problems in a narrow and nationalistic fashion.

In order to protect their interests, Northern countries have pressured for strong and full protection of intellectual property, especially patents, and to force the Third World to liberalize trade in services such as banking, trading, transport, etc. Another important point is the North's pressure to open up the hinterlands of the Third World as a new field of investment. This issue of trade in services has been successfully brought into the new round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), inspite of strong protests from India and Brazil. Of course, the North is using all its might to dominate and control the Third World by any means, no matter how fair or foul, moral or immoral the measures.

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The North wants to privatize and acquire as private property for the transnational corporations, almost everything that is in the public domain or the common heritage of mankind. This lack of regard for humanity is being practised by the North under the guise of protection of intellectual property and respect for freedom of enterprise.

An inherent squeeze on the majority of the rural people in the Third World is the devastating damage done by "monoculture" as a result of Third World states' transnationalized strategy of development. An outcome of this land utilization combined with the damaging cropping patterns was that their land and forests have been eroded and have deteriorated to an irreparable degree. Their natural economic base or life support system has been in jeopardy. Recently, the expansion of agribusiness with modern technology is in the process of turning the peasants into rural proletariats through a system of contract farming or other corporate farming arrangements.

The opening up of remote islands and hill areas under some arrangements which allow transnational tourist firms to carry on their business freely, has also caused dislocation for people of Third World countries, destruction of the natural environment and disruption of sound ecological balance in the region.

Such is the fate of an area subjected to an attempt to privatize communal property and public lands in the countryside. In India, for example, it was reported that direct corporate take-overs of the commons and public lands have been rampant and have been done with the support of the state machinery. Even NGOs have played an instrumental role in this process. It is on this new move that the genuine NGOs must keep careful watch of those organizations that pose themselves as NGOs, for example, the Society for the Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD), created in India in 1982. It will be seen that by assuming the name "NGO", it was a "far more convenient vehicle for simultaneously defusing mobilization for the rights of forest dwellers and opening up the forests to the corporate sector and facilitating their control over lands that had so far been people's commons." (Kothari, 1988:83) In fact, the SPWD was founded directly after a major mobilization by grassroots groups against the State Forest Bill in the early 1980s.

The NGOs must not allow themselves to be pawns or showcases in the State's attempt to renew its legitimacy.

The Challenge For The NGOs

The increasing involvement of certain kinds of NGOs in the development assistance process has attracted much attention among

international organizations to the role of NGOs as an alternative "delivery system" where the existing channels have failed. Anne Drabek has pointed out that there are basically three major reasons for this rapidly rising trend: (1) the perceived failure of official aid agencies and recipient governments in the Third World to bring to the world's poor an expected rise in their standard of living; (2) the capability of NGOs to "deliver the goods" effectively, as shown especially by the recent African famine relief efforts; and (3) "donor country governments' ideological preference for 'private sector' development and for the encouragement of pluralistic political systems." (Drabek, 1988: vii) The international organizations which have shown keen interest in the role of the NGOs are the World Bank, UNICEF, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Office, USAID, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan), the Gatby Trust (UK), the Overseas Development Institute (London), Overseas Development Council (Washington), and the North-South Institute (Ottawa). These organizations include those most powerful in pushing for the so-called transnationalized strategy of development in partnership with the authoritarian ruling elites of the Third World. They can, in large part, be responsible for such a state of maldevelopment that has been imposed on the vast majority of the world's population. The performance of these globally powerful organizations only serves to show that they had acted in the interest of transnational capital rather than to facilitate the process of development for the Third World people. Thus their recent active involvement in monitoring NGO activities must be closely watched by all concerned.

It is important to note that these organizations will try to liken the activities of the voluntary sector with those of the private sector. In fact, the distinction is clear that the former is strictly based on the philosophy of people-centered and self-reliant development in which the poor and weak are empowered, while the latter is based on corporate control and sheer profit opportunities, inspite of their expressed statements in support of NGO activities. However, the distinction will definitely be blurred when NGOs are set up with the support of the government and corporations. Camouflaged by the NGO profile, they are similar to the Trojan horse in the genuine voluntary sector.

Thus the key question for us to discuss is what is the meaning of the new role as perceived by the international agencies. Are NGOs now being promoted as a new delivery system, or are they perceived as a new mode of legitimation for a state that suffers from unceasing systemic crisis?

As mentioned above, presently, transnational capital and its key global agencies consisting of various UN bodies and foreign aid and credit organizations, "have discovered in the NGO sector a most effective

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instrument of promoting their cause and all that was necessary to do was to 'liberate' them from the normal constraints of a Third World State so that the new global thrust of liberalization and privatization and integration of the Third World into a homogeneous world economy can be effectively accomplished." (Kothari, 1988: 74) The emerging view in global corporate sectors is that the NGOs, along with the private sector, are able to "provide the new frontier of dynamic technological integration of the world economy." And, unlike the earlier development effort in which the State played a key role, this is to be achieved through a wide diffusion of liberalized and privatized efforts. In this connection it is important to stress that in the minds of the USAID and the World Bank, now the NGOs, not the bureaucracy, are being promoted as "a new delivery system".

It has now been argued by most international organizations that the voluntary agency has superiority over the regular bureaucracy and government departments for providing effective institutional framework for development. This constitutes what Kothari (1988: 79) designated as an "institutional shift" from the governments to NGOs. "Building on the growing criticism of the State in 'delivering' development as well as on the distrust of governments among United Nations and donor agencies in

reaching 'target populations', there has been emerging over the last several years a preference for non-governmental development agencies (NGOs) which operate both internationally and nationally (as well as in local spaces). Several new projects such as waste land development, rural technology are planned to be set up on the basis of voluntary agencies with their own autonomous boards and no accountability to the

- Population and Health IV, Bangladesh (NGOs to "undertake motivational and suppply activities");
- Arun 3 Access Road, Nepal (NGOs to "assist in resettlement");
- Poverty Alleviation and Employment, Sri Lanka (NGOs to "contribute to data gathering & investigation, design and implementation of project");
- Education Sector, Philippines ("Support nonformal education and vocational and skills training activities");
- Population V, India ("Implement family welfare activities in Bombay area. Project includes grants-in-aid to NGOs to manage selected health clinics.").

Some of the reasons for growing World Bank interest in the voluntary sector are the expansion and growth of NGOs, whose support of the disadvantaged sectors of society has brought them close to the people; the efficiency with which NGOs implement programmes and deliver social services to the poor, services which the government has neglected or failed to provide; the close links between Third World NGOs and Western NGOs/sympathizers, who are increasingly becoming critical of World Bank programmes — and openly so; and perhaps the most important, their close link with the people who are directly affected by World Bank-assisted projects and are increasingly resisting them.

Not all NGOs, however, are content with the role the Bank wishes them to play. Some NGOs see this role as nothing but "inconsequential attempts to plug major leaks in the faltering dams of a flawed development paradigm." And while the use of NGOs "may put a human face on adjustment lending, ...they do little to address the contradictions and narrow self-interest within the ruling development paradigm." Many are questioning the adjustment programs prescribed by the Bank supposedly for a country's development, but which have had harmful effects on the environment and on the poor. How well the Bank will listen remains to be seen.

SOURCES: Report of the "Meeting of the World Bank-NGO Committee" (SecM88-93), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 28 January 1988; Moeen A. Qureshi, "The World Bank and NGOs: New Approaches", Remarks delivered before the conference on "Learning from the Grassroots", Sponsored by the Washington Chapter of the Society for International Development, Washington, D.C., 22 April 1988; Alexander Shakow, "The World Bank and NGOs", Dialogue, No. 4, July-August 1988, p.1. (Mr. Shakow is Director of the Strategic Planning and Review Department of the World Bank, and as such, is co-chairman of the World Bank-NGO Committee.); "Short History of the World Bank/NGO Committee", Dialogue, No. 4, July-August 1988, pp. 8-9 (author unknown); "List of World Bank-Financed Projects with Potential for NGO Involvement", World Bank International Economic Relations Division of the Strategic Planning and Review Department, Washington, D.C., 30 November 1988; Doug Hellinger, "The World Bank's Diminishing Credibility", Dialogue, No. 4, July-August 1988, p. 5. (Mr. Hellinger, as co-director of the Development GAP in Washington, D.C., is a member of the World Bank-NGO Committee.)

governments. Now the concept of voluntary and NGO effort has become a preferred mode of organizing the socio-economic terrains as against the State bureaucracy." (*Ibid.*) In sum, this is the most sophisticated strategic move of the State and the corporate sectors that will enhance the new capitalist thrust in an attempt to struggle out of the present phase of long economic downswing.

Given such a trend and the reverse policy in support of the democratization process, it is interesting to see the role of the NGOs in this process. According to these new ideals, it is necessary that such a process of democratization must promote networks of inter-linked local organizations where people are able to effectively articulate their needs and aspirations. For this to be feasible, they must be supported by institutional structures and policies providing necessary socio-political spaces. It is further argued that to fulfill this role, the NGOs need new types and levels of competence, what Kothari has designated as "Third Generation strategies" associated with the task of restructuring social institutions. Staff of the NGOs must not only be equipped with technical competence, but also with appropriate social, political, alternative management skills and values, or what he calls the new development professionalism. According to this new concept, "the preferred organizational forms and management methods of the new development professionalism that fit the needs of development-oriented NGOs are *post-bureaucratic*, or *strategic*, in nature. Rather than supporting central control they support self-assessment and self-correction driven by a strong orientation to client service and a well-defined sense of mission. Highly developed management systems provide rich flows of information to facilitate these self-management processes."

While the proponent of such a strategy cites a radical agenda including structural changes towards a democratic and pluralistic society, there is danger of shifting issues toward internal organizational and technical matters, such as strategic management. Whereas the Third Generation Strategy aims to bring about alternative development programs and effect structural changes to benefit the poor and powerless, there is little discussion about how to promote people's own organic intellectuals, or people's own organizations; mostly this strategy concentrates on the role of NGOs which is basically a middle class organization with its own internal weakness.

Such an attempt may be self-serving and may run the risk of bureaucratization. (*cf.* Korten) The point is to empower the people's organizations rather than to strengthen and proliferate the activities of the NGOs *per se*.

In sum, the Third Generation Strategy is cast within the general framework of the new international political economy which requires a more pluralistic and less authoritarian social system in the Third World. The international "supporters" of the NGOs are now saying things that are too radical to be feasible in the socio-political context of several Third World countries. Third World states are becoming too difficult to control by the First World super power, so that they need allies from within such a system to put pressure to bear on the State. For better or for worse, they found the coalition partner in an institutional form called "NGO".

Whereas formerly, the international donor circles had been forceful in imposing "development policies" on Third World governments, now they have found it to their advantage to support "local spokesmen" to articulate their policies. However, to be fair, the international circles also address the real issues facing Third World societies, but the problem is how and in whose interests the NGOs will be operating. However, at the present historical conjuncture, given the socio-political space available, it would be difficult for the NGOs to adjust to this abrupt reversal of international circle's policies towards the NGOs.

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Comparative Experience of Non-Governmental Organizations in ASEAN

Syed Husin Ali

The aim of this paper is to discuss generally the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and to compare their experiences in four countries of the ASEAN region, namely, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. It must be noted at the outset that differences and similarities exist among the NGOs not only between countries but also within each country.

The non-governmental organizations are also referred to, especially by Americans, as private voluntary organisations (PVOs), and by some Southeast Asians, particularly Malaysians, as public interest organizations (only occasionally referred to by the acronym PIO). All these three names clearly suggest that they are organizations which operate outside the framework of governments, and concern themselves mainly with voluntary activities that serve the general interest of the public.

If governmental organizations are usually sponsored from the top, the NGOs inevitably grow from below — from among the people themselves. They are part of what may be called the people's movement. The people's movement represents various forms of collective action initiated and led by the people themselves for the purpose of promoting or stimulating change and development, and probably even transformation of the existing social order.

Emergence of NGOs

NGOs have already had their antecedents in Western Europe and North America in the nineteenth century, in the form of cooperative, consumer, worker and women's groups. (Lim, 1985) In Southeast Asia,

such groups have already existed in the early part of this century. For example, in Indonesia, there was an active movement known as *Taman Siswa* (Students' Garden), which provided education and later contributed quite substantially towards the growth of national consciousness among the people there. Some of the early seeds of Indonesian independence were in fact sown here.

But the striking development and rapid proliferation of NGOs in Southeast Asia, as well as in other parts of Asia and the Pacific, occurred during the last two decades. It is interesting that this occurred at a time when the environment for group organization was rather difficult in the countries under discussion. Several political, economic and social factors may be offered to explain why this occurred.

There have been strong elements of authoritarianism, albeit in different forms and degrees of intensity, in the governments of the above-mentioned four countries. In Indonesia, after the fall of Sukarno in 1966, and the subsequent dismantling of political parties and assassination or detention of thousands of people suspected of associating with the communists, the army under Suharto became the dominant force in government. In the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in 1972 with the support of the army, subsequently curbing activities of opposition parties and politicians, and resulting in human rights violations.

In Thailand the army has for a long time been in control, although as in Indonesia and the Philippines, some semblance of democracy is retained by occasionally holding elections to Parliament. In Malaysia, on the other hand, following the racial riots on 13 May 1969, Parliament was suspended for a couple of years, and several regulations and acts were passed to curb activities of the political opposition, as well as of workers and students. Of course, there is the ever-threatening Internal Security Act (ISA) which can be and has often been used by government to detain people without trial.

Under all these circumstances, activities of legal opposition parties were constrained in the various countries, though not totally obliterated. Operating within the framework of political parties was thought by many, especially those from the middle classes, to be dangerous or counterproductive. The parties became factious and ineffective. As for the existing underground organizations (most of them communist parties), they had been weakened or were in disarray. Their role as the vanguard in the political struggle of their respective countries has been questioned; in most cases, they lack legitimacy. In Indonesia, they have been almost decimated. In Thailand, they have been greatly shattered. In Malaysia,

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they have been stunted. Only in the Philippines are there signs of expansion.

Under those circumstances, the NGOs were seen as an organizational form that could serve as a vehicle for expressing political dissent and socio-economic grievances. Unlike political parties, they were considered to be relatively safe and free from the repressive arm of government. Furthermore, unlike the political parties, the NGOs do not bind members to any "party line" or discipline. It seems ironical that in Indonesia and the Philippines, for instance, military rule appeared to have been the stimulus for the growth of NGOs in the sixties and seventies. This was quite true of Thailand, too, although the fastest rate of growth of Thai NGOs occurred during the short period of democracy in the early seventies. In Malaysia, many NGOs had been formed before the seventies, but they became most active and vocal during the late seventies and eighties.

The past two decades have also witnessed the four governments carrying out intensive development programmes. These programmes are often bureaucratically centralised and depend strongly on the government machinery for their implementation. Not much regard has been paid to the needs of the rural communities, which were supposed to be the main targets of their programmes. In view of the fast population growth, whatever was gained in terms of development in the four countries became relatively insignificant. Furthermore, because the development programmes did not alter, but in some cases actually strengthened further the structure of dependence and inequality in the socio-economic spheres, poverty and deprivation continued and remain most serious for the bottom 25%-30% of the population, the majority of whom are concentrated in the rural areas.

The sixties and seventies also coincided with the decades for development, as declared by the United Nations. Not only was development stimulated and encouraged, especially in the Third World, a lot of debate was also carried out by theoreticians and practitioners of development. Aspects of dependency and inequality, among others, were often emphasized in these debates as causes of underdevelopment and poverty.

Concerns were often expressed on the plight of the poorest of the poor. The NGOs, to a certain extent, emerged not only in response to these debates, but also to what appeared to be objectionable consequences of the respective government development programmes. In the case of Indonesia, they "emerged as response to debates about the nature of development and as an effort to identify and implement roles in development activity which were not the roles of government or business". (Hadad, 1983; p.3)

Structure and Leadership

It seems that in some countries the NGOs were easy to set up and found no difficulty in carrying out their activities. This was not the case in other countries. In the Philippines, for example, there appears to be no need to seek government permission to set up an NGO, and so it has been quite easy for NGOs to mushroom. On the other hand, in Malaysia, all forms of organizations have to be registered with the Registrar of Societies. It takes a long time before any society's application is approved; a list of pro-tem committee members has to be submitted to the Registrar, and each member is subjected to security screening by the police. So in some cases, as it is normally easier to register a company than a society, application is made to establish a company under the Registrar of Companies, with members as shareholders.

In Thailand, while NGOs are required to register, some of them operate without legal status. According to one count, only about 41% of NGOs were legally formed, and the rest had no legal status. Included in the latter are: those which have not been granted any legal standing, foreign NGOs based in Thailand, bodies set up only for the life span of a specific project, and those who refuse to register. (See article of Surichai Wun'gaeo, pp. 59-77.) In Indonesia, the legal process has to be observed, too, and here, as in other countries, foundations and companies have also been formed aside from associations.

Some NGOs operate on the national scale, while others are only at the community level, in both urban and rural areas. In Indonesia, for example, they have been typified as primary or secondary groups. (Hadad, 1985) The former are often small non-grassroots communities within a village and they are often known as Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat (LSM) or self-help organizations. The latter are bigger organizations for the promotion of the LSM and are referred to as Lembaga Pembina Swadaya Masyarakat (LPSM), which may include labour and farmer associations and other voluntary organizations or institutions. In Thailand, besides organizations, there are also two types of movement, identified as grassroots and middle strata movement, with the former involving the people directly affected by particular problems, and the latter consisting of those who may not be directly affected by the problems, but are sensitised to and conscientised by them. Both organizations and movements at local and national levels, grassroots and middle strata, exist in large number in the Philippines.

In Malaysia, the NGOs are mainly of the middle strata type, which are based in the urban areas; the rural areas, which are populated preponderantly by Malays, are almost monopolised by the biggest

political party in the government coalition as well as a Muslim opposition party. Of course, in the urban areas, there are strong government as well as opposition parties which have almost exclusive Chinese membership. But there still remains a large number from the middle class who prefer to join the NGOs. It appears that the policy of the Malaysian government is not to allow NGOs to open up branches so that they can operate only at a national level. But a number of organizations of the same type, such as consumer associations, have been allowed to group themselves in a loosely-knit federation.

Although movements normally enjoy membership and support from all sectors of society, including those from the lower stratum, the NGOs, especially the middle strata type, are often dominated by middle class membership and led by intellectuals. In all four countries, the leadership consists of university graduates, who were active during their student days and critical, in various ways and to different degrees, of government policies or even the government itself. They are mostly young people who are pursuing their ideals, and often very committed to the cause that they have taken up. The leaders are generally full-time workers, but the majority of the members have their own occupations and do only part-time work in their organizations.

At the grassroots level, both the leaders and members are often drawn from those who do not have university qualifications, but there are also rare cases of graduates who have immersed themselves almost completely in grassroots community work. Unlike those in the government bureaucracy, members and leaders of the NGOs tend not to be officious; they are also usually not status conscious. So, more often than not, they are democratic in their method of work and friendly in their attitude towards the "common folk". But there are also some leaders who, owing to the charismatic following that they enjoy, can or have been domineering and dominating in their organizations, both in the realm of ideas and action.

Types of Activities

There are several types of activities carried out by the NGOs: community services; education and training; research and publication; and human rights.

Included under community services are services provided especially to the most deprived or aggrieved groups in society, mainly the rural and urban poor. Hainsworth (1985), in discussing the role of NGOs in Indonesia, suggests that there are at least eight areas related to community services, namely: health care, education, inequality,

employment, small-scale industry, women and youth, transmigration and human rights.

In the category of education and training are such activities as organising literacy classes, arranging talks or providing help related to health and nutrition, in the rural or urban slum communities. In addition, forums, seminars or conventions are held on issues of current concern.

Research is carried out on various social and economic problems, government development programmes and the like, and publications that cover a whole range of topics are produced in the form of books, pamphlets, journals and newspapers.

Human rights appears to be an important subject of concern among many NGOs, especially in view of certain authoritarian tendencies in their respective countries. Activities around this concern include monitoring, publishing and disseminating information on the human rights situation in their countries, opposing violations of these basic rights as well as criticising laws that "legitimise" such violations.

All these activities are closely related to one another. That is why quite often individual organizations tend to carry out all these various activities, although some may concentrate on one aspect more than the other.

In Indonesia, there are hundreds of organizations which carry out community or service-oriented work. Many of them concentrate on "implementing development programmes and projects which are complementary to and supportive of government programmes" (Hadad, 1985; p.4), while a few others do so quite independently of government. Majority of them are the self-help organizations referred to earlier as LSM, which concentrate mainly on providing community services. On the other hand, there are organizations that deal more with legal and human rights matters. The most prominent among them is the Legal Aid Institute (LBH or *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*).

The LBH has a body of lawyers who provide legal services especially to those who cannot afford it, and to victims of one form of injustice or another. It defends squatters from eviction, etc., and also monitors the status of human rights and publishes its findings. Among the NGOs which are most prominent and active in research, publication and training is the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education and Information (LP3ES or *Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial*).

In the Philippines, as observed in one paper, NGOs are the "most numerous, radical and most innovative", compared to their counterparts

in the other three countries. (Lim, 1985) They seem to dominate every sphere of life and have been successful in reaching the grassroots. They operate successfully in urban slum areas as well as in poverty-stricken village communities. They monitor development, carry out research, and publish papers, pamphlets and books on all kinds of subjects and problems affecting the people. They have been concerned with peasant and environmental problems, have campaigned for land and human rights, and have also opposed nuclear testing and plants. In addition, they have mobilized large sections of the people through different types of mass actions in order to make their voices heard, and persuade the authorities to look into the people's problems and grievances.

In Thailand, many among the 200-odd NGOs that are active concentrate mainly on service-oriented activities, very much like in Indonesia. (Surichai, 1988) In the rural areas many groups focus their attention on problems of children, youth, women, education and health care. Some of them have been most effective in promoting family planning and opposing child labour and exploitation of prostitutes. At the same time, most of these NGOs, while carrying out community work, also try to raise social awareness or consciousness. In the urban areas, many of them focus their attention on problems that have arisen as a result of rapid urbanization, particularly of Bangkok, such as lack of housing security and public services, poverty and unemployment.

Perhaps it is in Malaysia that the NGOs are the fewest and least active, thanks to the strict registration processes, the generally unsympathetic attitude of the State and the efficiency of government in setting up or sponsoring its own organizations. Nevertheless, a number of them are very active, in particular, the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP), Aliran Reform Movement (ALIRAN), and the Institute for Social Analysis (INSAN). CAP does not confine its activities only to consumer issues, as would be suggested by its name. It also provides community services, organizes conferences, and carries out research and publication with the objective of raising social consciousness among the people it attempts to reach.

Aliran, on the other hand, concentrates mainly on publishing its monthly newsletter, as well as various books and pamphlets that expound its philosophy and alternative views and visions for the country's future. It discusses a whole range of subjects, from development, culture, education and national unity rights, to militarization and corruption. Together with well-attended talks and conventions that it often organizes, these publications are used not only to criticize government policies, but also to explain its alternative programmes. As for INSAN, its main activities are in the field of publication — particularly books on various subjects, and very often making pointed comments on government

policies and programmes. It also carries out, but to a limited extent, community work particularly in cases of maltreatment of children (as child labour), estate workers and slum dwellers.

In activities and approaches, the various NGOs exhibit differences as well as similarities. Most are involved in community development work, but not just for its own sake. As has been pointed out in the case of Indonesia, which may apply in the other countries, too, the "NGOs see development not only as an activity geared towards producing a certain output but a process of developing community motivation and awareness, of promoting people's abilities so that they can help themselves, and in turn, create a self-reliant community and nation". (Hadad, 1985: p. 10) Further to this, most of the NGOs also actively promote what they often term as "conscientization". Education, publication, stage shows and protests, for example, are all part of this. In some cases, they are aimed towards some kind of movement that can stimulate changes in some government policies, but in others they are targeted towards changes in government or even the entire structure of society itself.

Relation With Government

As stated earlier, the NGOs face a delicate situation in operating within countries which show tendencies of authoritarianism. They have to steer very carefully between cooperation with government, which is necessary for their continued existence, and maintaining some kind of critical independence so that they enjoy credibility among the people. In some cases they tend to be ultimately absorbed by the government machinery, while in others they may become critical or even completely opposed to government. These reflect the different attitudes NGOs have about their roles. Some feel they should be partners, not competitors, in development as defined and planned by government. Others find it well-nigh impossible to do so, especially when they cannot agree with the underlying philosophy and policies of the government, whose programmes and projects, in their eyes, have resulted only in continuing poverty and increasing inequality and maldevelopment. Thus they feel the need to criticise government policies and efforts, or even work further towards the overthrow of what they perceive to be authoritarian regimes.

In Indonesia, most of the NGOs tried to avoid competition or confrontation with the New Order government. The government relies heavily on the bureaucracy for its development efforts, but more often than not, this structure cannot reach the bottom 20%-30% who ought to be the main target of development. There are three kinds of roles or functions the NGOs could perform in relation to government development efforts, namely:

a. carry out development activities not included in government programmes;
b. play a supporting role in implementing national or local level programmes; and
c. serve as middlemen or go-betweens for the bureaucracy.

The government has allowed NGOs to participate in the process of development, health services, environmental protection, etc. By doing so, it hopes to finally make these organizations an arm of the bureaucracy. But most of them have not permitted themselves to become such. They are usually able to do so by taking advantage of the presence of factions within the ruling elite, and differences among ministries and governments. Some NGOs may seek patronage from certain powerful figures among the elite, or cooperate with a particular ministry or department, while at the same time maintain a critical stance vis-a-vis other public figures, ministries or departments, as well as their policies and performance. At times, what they do may be considered as "going beyond limits", in which case they are exposed and their actions curbed by the government. This was what happened to some lawyers in the LBH; their activities and movements were circumscribed by the authorities on account of being regarded as too vocal or over-critical.

In Thailand the NGOs seem to be quite independent of government or its interference. In their community development work most of them seem to carry out activities not within the sphere of government programmes, although these activities often respond to the social and political problems of the country.

It was in the Philippines during the Marcos regime that most of the NGOs there had an almost antagonistic relationship with the government. In fact, during that time, many of them operated rather openly against the martial law regime, its pro-American policies, public mismanagement and failure to promote equitable development. The NGOs participated actively in the people's movement which finally overthrew Marcos and brought Corazon Aquino to power. They were initially enthusiastic of the new president, but are now slowly growing disenchanted with her. They are already criticising her government of perpetrating some of the old policies, and not effectively initiating progressive changes that they were looking forward to earlier. On the other hand, those which are still supportive of the present government and retain close links with it, do not seem able to provide alternative ideas for development. Or, if they are able to do so, they fail to persuade the government to adopt them.

To a much lesser degree, the relationship of NGOs in Malaysia with the government is quite similar to that in the Philippines. In Malaysia, organizations that have good links with and enjoy the support of

government are those under its aegis or influence. The NGOs here are considered to be outside the existing political framework, and are even accused quite often of trying to undermine it. This is due to their constant critical comments and various activities which tend to put the government leaders and their actions in poor light among the people. For some time the government has been critical of the NGOs. Finally, at the end of 1987 it used the draconian Internal Security Act (ISA) to arrest over 100 men and women, some of them, leading activists in the better-known NGOs.

The arrests were claimed at the beginning to be necessary in order to avoid inter-ethnic collision to which the country seemed to be heading at that time. But the irony of it is that many of the NGO activists were not the ones guilty of ethnic incitements. After being in police custody for two months, 35 of those arrested were served with a two-year detention order without trial. About a third of these 35 detention order recipients have been involved directly or indirectly with grassroots community activities, as well as in defending basic human rights. Some of them have now been accused by their captors of trying to disseminate communist or Marxist ideology, and at the same time of maintaining links with allegedly communist groups or individuals in the Philippines. Certainly the Malaysian government is not as tolerant of NGOs as its Philippine counterpart.

Links With The Masses

It is clear that some NGOs are very politically oriented, while others are not at all. Although the politically oriented ones are quite open about their political comments and actions, they often try to avoid being associated

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NGOs in the Post-

...The unpopularity, at times, of their causes and the extreme popularity of President Aquino, have led many NGOs, in an attempt to generate public sympathy and support, to distinguish between government agencies, branches and policies on the one hand, and the President on the other. There are attempts by some NGOs to direct all their criticisms not against the President, but against government agencies, branches and policies, and thus absolve her of any responsibility for both the problems facing Philippine society and the failure to effect meaningful solutions to the present crises.

In the field of human rights, for instance, conscious efforts were made to differentiate between the military and the civilian government when discussing the human rights situation in the country. Many NGOs continue to blame only the military establishment for the deteriorating conditions of human rights in the country, forgetting that the President, not only as commander-in-chief of the armed forces but more importantly as the leader of the Philippine Republic, has the power and also the duty to work for the eradication of human rights violations in the Philippines. The coup attempts in the past two years helped fuel the use of this so-called distinction. Needless to say, this resulted in negating the concept of

or identified directly with any political party. Indeed some NGOs guard very jealously their independence. Many of them in Malaysia and Indonesia will not even admit into its membership any person with a party affiliation. In this manner NGOs are distinct from political parties or movements. Some of them do not require any mass support and can exist without it; they can, for instance, go on with carrying out limited projects on publications or education. But of course, in some limited ways, such projects directly or indirectly link them up with some sections of the people, too. After all, publications are aimed at disseminating the NGO ideas to these people.

As pointed out earlier, many of the NGOs are made up of middle class membership and intellectual leadership, and they are urban-based. They can sometimes be quite isolated from the masses. But, on the other hand, a large number of these members and leaders have been sensitized to the social and political problems within their communities. Some of them feel almost duty-bound to champion the cause of democracy and the plight of the most disadvantaged and discriminated groups in the urban and rural areas. They display a high degree of commitment. Thus they not only participate in protests against human rights violations, but also do welfare work among detainees' families; they not only take part in demonstrations to oppose eviction of urban squatters or rural farmers, but also try to provide different types of services in poverty-stricken areas. Because of their middle class background some of them find it difficult to relate completely with the masses, but some of them have been successful in integrating with and gaining complete acceptance from the local communities.

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civilian supremacy over the military, even lending more power and credibility to the military establishment, thus assisting in the building up of the military as the second power center in the country.

NGOs in the Philippines today are also increasingly subjected to violence....Many organizations are currently under surveillance; harassments occur with alarming frequency. Several individuals have already been killed....I expect a more sophisticated approach towards the NGO community [being adopted by the government and all its agents]. This subtle approach to discredit all Philippine NGOs and thus render us ineffective would include black propaganda, media manipulation, communist-labeling, red-baiting, harassment and threats, and psychological operations. I would not be surprised if there mushroomed counter and/or pseudo NGOs, much like the false prophets in the Gospel.... I also foresee greater manipulation of religious beliefs and political biases, and the manipulation of church leaders, government officials, and even leaders of the NGO community.

Among the ones who have been most successful in integrating with the masses are those working amidst the depressed local level communities, both in the urban and rural areas. Some of them do their work almost voluntarily and depend on community support for their day to day survival, while others are paid (or more appropriately, underpaid) workers of the NGOs. Although a few of them come from the circle of urban-based middle class activists, the majority are from the local communities themselves, or at least from among the lower social strata. Unlike the officials responsible for implementing government development programmes, they are often more sympathetic with the local people, partly because of their committed attitude to provide help. They are also less formal. Their method of work is participatory, and therefore they relate very well with the people. By stimulating participation and raising consciousness among the people, these members of the NGOs can be said to be involved with the process of development from the bottom upwards.

It was indicated earlier that in Malaysia there is hardly any NGO which can be said to have successfully linked itself up with the masses, especially in the rural areas, through participatory community activities. But many of them are known to have taken up issues or grievances of the urban squatters or urban poor, through information dissemination and support or participation in their protest actions. In Indonesia and Thailand, there are many NGOs which are involved with work among squatters and peasants, and so have been quite successful in forging links with them. In the process they do create awareness, but they have not been very successful in mobilising the masses.

It can be said that it is in the Philippines that the NGOs have been most effective in linking themselves with the masses. There are many groups and individuals working at the grassroots level. So successful have they been in integrating themselves, that they have succeeded in mobilising large sections of the people. Initially, the mobilization exercises were aimed at improving or alleviating the plight of the poor and aggrieved groups. But later, as confidence in the NGOs grew, they were able to mobilize the people for political action. This was what happened before the fall of Marcos. The NGOs in the Philippines, then, had become part of a massive people's movement, which succeeded in asserting people's power to topple a corrupt dictator.

Probably, under oppressive political conditions, when opposition politics is not very viable, the NGO can provide an avenue for the masses to express their discontent and will. But it is possible that when the people's movement or power has grown, and the masses become the dominant force, the NGO as such may be submerged. Nevertheless,

because of the potentiality that certain NGOs have to raise consciousness and mobilize the masses, some governments are very wary of them and have therefore resorted to strong repressive measures against them. In fact, it is only when the state is more democratic and the leadership more liberal, that the NGOs can be assured of some political space to contribute towards economic, political and social development. When the state tends to be authoritarian and the leaders quite intolerant of dissent, then the NGOs, which are initially stimulated to grow in response to the peoples' demand for some vehicle other than political parties, for expressing their grievances and discontentment, will have to tread on dangerous ground and face the possibility of government repression, especially when they are considered to constitute a serious threat or challenge to the status quo.

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The Non-Governmental Development Movement in Thailand

Surichai Wun'Gaeo

Historically, Thailand has been able to retain its independence, with political power and institutions relatively centralized over several cultural traditions. There is a close and strong association between monarchy, state and *Sangha* (the bureaucratized Buddhist monks' hierarchy). Socio-politically, Thailand is an authoritarian and hierarchical state. The "bureaucratic polity", though not monolithic, had been nearly able to monopolize the governing and development process. Due to the monopoly of legitimacy, there has persisted a general mistrust towards popular initiatives and organizations.

Since the introduction of economic development planning in 1960, Thailand has been in the midst of maldevelopment processes. This phenomenon could be seen in at least four related aspects: firstly, concentration of economic power and increasing gaps in rural-urban incomes, and among classes and strata; secondly, relatively high economic growth rates with increasing external dependence; thirdly, modernization (of the most concrete aspects of daily life) but without real development (with respect to the people's capability to control and develop themselves); and fourthly, centralizing power, monopolizing legitimacy and authoritarian and militarizing tendencies. It is to be noted here that this situation has been produced and maintained by specific structures and processes.

This article focuses on one form of social movement — the non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) — as middle strata responses to the maldevelopment problems. Although we are interested in historical development, most of our attention will be given to the present situation of NGDOs and the socio-political conditions that gave rise to them. Based on some empirical studies, we cite their overall characteristics. The rather detailed examples of rural, urban and health NGDOs were selected for further elaboration. Finally, we conclude with

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the emerging processes and the prospects of this movement with regard to alternative development.

State Responses to Maldevelopment

It was in the context of maldevelopment that the October 1973 uprising, which brought about the fall of a military dictatorship, came about. The parliamentary period which followed lasted for only three years, ending in a well-orchestrated massacre at Thammasat University on October 6, 1976.

The incidents and the coup put an end to open democracy. It was a reaction of the established elites against the rising forces of democratic change. The Thanin Government which emerged represented these efforts to retain the status quo. It, however, proved to be an overreaction, as it was unable to accommodate the changing social and economic realities. The Kriangsak government, which emerged after the coup in 1977, adopted a kind of "liberalization" policy of restricted democracy. It was later succeeded by Prem Tinsulanond, a junior retired General, who remained as Premier until 1988.

After it became apparent that there was a failure to bring about genuine improvement in people's livelihood, the Government started calling for a shift to a basic needs development strategy, and for people to participate in development. The Prem Government began propagating such slogans as, "Make the people understand, participate, and benefit for themselves", and "Leave the knowledge to the people", etc., to his bureaucrats. There have also been efforts among some government departments to invent and use, as widely as possible, basic needs indicators in measuring development needs of the people, and in designing projects to be implemented. In December 1984, upon recognising the lack of consideration for indigenous culture, the government through the Ministry of Interior issued an emergency order calling on all provincial bureaucrats to revive and implement the traditional labor exchange (long khaek or ao range) in all villages throughout the country. But this was already too late for many villages where commercialized economy has been in full swing for a long time. These instances are expressions of the government bureaucracy's responses to the pressing development problems in the country.

In spite of this new advocacy, such efforts, in essence, represent a depoliticization strategy. On the one hand, there is a paternalistic emphasis on the role of bureaucracy and of the private sector business circles, to initiate development. The people are expected to merely cooperate with such initiatives. At best, these attitudes and measures become patronizing, if not often dominating. State administrators find it

difficult to rid themselves of the so-called donor-beneficiary syndrome, that is, "I give you this to develop you. If you cannot develop, it is your own fault."

Because of their confidence in professional training and experience obtained from the advanced countries, technocrats disregard the indigenous knowledge systems of local people. They perceive the centralized bureaucracy as the main vehicle for development, and thus tend to look for *one right answer*. When they call for people's participation and bottom-up planning, what they actually mean is people's cooperation with government initiatives. They regard standardization and control as utmost necessity. It is no exaggeration to say that technocrats view their work as planning from the top-down so that the people can plan from the bottom-up.

In addition to technocratic approach, there are also efforts of depoliticizing the development process. For example, the Task Force on Basic Needs Indicators produced a long list of basic minimum needs indicators of the rural folks, and also detailed procedures to achieve them. The emphasis on ready-made formal political procedures is another example. The role of political parties is mainly plebiscitary and manipulative on the part of the elite. Along with this, corporatism has emerged, whereby key economic, social and political decisions are increasingly being made by corporate groups and the state, often under close supervision of the latter, which actively organises and controls "people's organizations" in various important sectors.

Furthermore, militarisation is increasingly showing itself in politics and development. It is to be noted that the defense budget has grown from 2.8% of Gross Domestic Product in 1975 to 4.1% in 1984. Furthermore, the role of the Thai Armed Forces in national development has been broadly spelled out under the Constitution, and more clearly with the promulgation by the Office of the Prime Minister of the well-known Order No. 66/2523 (1980), and Order No. 65/2525 (1982). The streamlining and expansion of paramilitary organizations and their role in development is another tendency.

NGDOs -- Some Basic Concepts

People's movements are various forms of collective action directed towards the demand for change in some aspects of the social order. People's movements are based on popular initiatives and responses. In this sense, they are not state-created nor state-led movements, but rather those actions among people hitherto excluded from decision-making processes in society. These movements are taking place in various political spaces. Some may be within government-sponsored or created

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organizations, others within religious, voluntary or cultural organizations. The point is that the collective action itself is the collective identity and creativity of the people.

We here identify two types of people's movements, according to the people with whom they are directly involved: the grassroots movement and the middle-strata non-governmental movement.

Grassroots movements are social movements of the marginalised people, who are excluded from decision-making but are most affected by it, that is, villagers protesting against the construction of a dam which will result in their dislocation, farmers' movement for self-owned rice mills, slum dwellers' movements against eviction, etc. These movements are often intimidated, maltreated and oppressed by dominant social groups, for example, bureaucrats, landlords, money lenders or merchants.

Middle-strata non-governmental movements are social movements involving the middle strata, such as professionals, monks, teachers, volunteers, etc.

The major distinction between the two is that those who are in the latter movement are not directly affected by the problems facing the people concerned. They are, in fact, sensitised and conscientized by social injustices and apparent maldevelopment symptoms. This article will mainly focus on the middle-strata non-governmental organizations, especially those related to development activities.

Non-governmental organizations in Thailand, as in elsewhere, have developed out of a close relationship with social and historical conditions. Although government through its departments has the duty to secure the good livelihood and welfare of the people, there are always needs being met outside the state bureaucracy. Most often such non-governmental responses come from religious organizations and well-to-do philanthropic organizations. Over time these non-governmental organizations become more development-oriented and diversified.

In viewing non-governmental organizations within contemporary Thai social and political history, we could divide it into four phases: pre-14 October 1973; from 14 October 1973 to October 1976; from 6 October 1976 to 1979; and from 1979 to 1984.

In the first phase, non-governmental organizations were mostly voluntary welfare-oriented, while some were independent intellectual circles. This period ends with the Great October 14 event (The Democratic Insurrection). In the second phase, that is, under parliamentary democracy after the overthrow of the military government, there had been

many non-governmental movements responding to the newly "discovered" social and political problems of the people throughout the country. Later the authorities mobilized citizens to form organizations to fight communism. This phase ends with the suppression and repression that concluded with the 6 October 1976 massacre at Thammasat University.

The emergence of a staunch anti-communist "civilian" dictatorship, which later succumbed to another coup from within, marks the third phase. Thereafter, the socio-political atmosphere became more "liberalized". There had been active non-governmental development work by Buddhist, Christian and interreligious groups, besides the non-religious ones working in rural and urban areas.

The fourth phase, from 1979 to 1984, will be the focus of this study.

The Situation of NGDOs in Thailand

In 1983 and 1984, the Thai Volunteer Service (TVS), initially created as a practice-oriented arm of the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute (CUSRI), published the *Directory of Development NGOs in Thailand*, a complete and systematic directory of development NGOs in Thailand. Employing four criteria for selection from the long lists of private, non-profit voluntary organizations compiled by several other agencies, namely the National Youth Bureau (1980), the Department of Public Welfare and the National Council on Social Welfare of Thailand (1983), the World Vision Foundation of Thailand (1982), and the Social Studies and Planning Division of the Department of Public Welfare (1983), the TVS came up with 113 non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) which are involved in development activities. The 113 include both Thai NGDOs, that is, the organizations run by committees wholly or mostly composed of Thai citizens, and foreign NGOs actively based in Thailand. The four criteria employed were:

a) non-governmental organizations run independently by their own committees, but not necessarily registered as foundations or associations;

b) NGOs whose objectives and approaches stress the role of the people in development;

c) those presently engaged in activities concerning community development, the betterment of specific target groups, or social development as a whole; or which provide supportive services to other NGDOs; and

d) those whose motivation to work is for social benefit and not private gain.

In this context, community-level organizations (such as village development committees), special-interest groups (such as trade unions and farmers' organizations), and student clubs involved with social development work are not classified as development NGOs, and are thus excluded from the list. Organizations whose main activities are welfare and relief activities are not considered to be development organizations, except when these organizations carry out some projects with a community development and social development approach.

An overview of the 113 NGDOs, the approaches they use and their types of activities, gives the following salient features. There are three approaches to development: the comprehensive or integrated community development approach; the sectoral approach; and the supportive service and coordination approach. The first approach accounts for about two-fifths (40.3%) of all NGDO activities. Of this, rural community development activities account for more than twice those in urban areas.

Table 1.	Non-Governmental Development Organizations Classified by Activities	
Type of Activity	Number	Percentage
1. community development in rural areas	54	28.3
2. children and youth development	32	16.7
3. women development	7	3.7
4. community development in urban areas	23	12.0
5. primary health care	18	9.4
6. education	17	8.9
7. consumer protection	6	3.1
8. human rights	7	3.7
9. technical and support organisations	4	2.1
10. coordinating and service for NGDOs	23	12.0
Total	191	100.0

Source: Based on the Directory of NGDOs in Thailand by Thai Volunteer Service, 1984. (There is some double counting due to the fact that some organizations carry out more than one activity.)

Secondly, the sectoral approach accounts for nearly half of all the activities (47.6%). Of this, six areas could be identified, namely, child and youth (16.7%), women (3.7%), primary health care (9.4%), education (8.9%), consumer' protection (3.1%), and human rights (3.7%).

Thirdly, the coordination and supportive service approach accounts for 14.1% of all NGDO activities. They include technical support, training

of personnel, information and visitation exchange, seminars, media service, as well as coordination among NGDOs, with government and with donor agencies.

Concerning the legal status of non-governmental organizations in Thailand, there are two types of legal status provided by law: an NGO can register either as a foundation or as an association. It is interesting to note that only 46 out of the total of 113 NGDOs, that is, 40.7% have been registered as such. The other 67 NGDOs (59.3%), did not have such legal status.

There are a few reasons for this phenomenon, according to a study by Maniemai Tongsawate (1985). She divides the non-registered NGDOs into four groups.

1. The first group includes those which, for five years or more, have been seeking registration but have not yet been granted such by the government. In some cases, after delays, their application was refused for undisclosed reasons. It was noted that these NGDOs are those related to public or human rights issues.

2. The second group of unregistered NGDOs are the foreign ones, which function as branches of headquarters registered abroad.

3. The third group are NGDOs which have a lifespan equivalent to that of their development projects.

4. The last group of NGDOs are those which see official registration as a means for further control by government, or those who do not see any benefits from registration. Besides, they find themselves still able to survive and conduct their work well even without registration.

Concerning the geographical distribution of NGDO activities in the country, NGDOs that work in the northeastern part account for about two-fifths (39.9%), in the northern part, 21.5%, in the central part, 20.8%, in the southern part, 9.2%, and in the eastern part, 8.6%. With regard to their age, out of 103 NGDOs, 82 or 72.6% were formed during 1974-1984. The remaining quarter were established before 1974 (5.3% in 1937-58 period; another 5.3% between 1959-68; and 8% during 1969-73). Furthermore, more than half of the total (54%) have been established rather recently, that is, during 1979-1984.

NGDOs in Rural Development

In a press conference at the end of 1974, after his extensive trip to the provinces, Professor Sanya Thammasak, then the newly appointed Prime

Minister after the sudden fall of the military government, said, "I never thought that our rural people would suffer such levels of poverty and misery." Despite much talk, livelihood of most of the rural population has not gotten better. This fact is further supported by the authoritative Rural Development Policy Study Commission led by Professor Saneh Chamarik a few years later, in 1980. One of the offshoots of this study was that, for the first time, the national economic and social development plan was to have a special section dealing with rural poverty and "poverty-stricken areas".

Government efforts towards rural development have, in the earlier phases, been almost exclusively devoted to infrastructural projects such as roads, dams, etc. These have been useful and accessible to mainly the rural upper classes. So that instead of benefiting the rural poor, rural development activities have led to the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor.

More importantly, rural development as conceptualized so far, involves exogenous activities. The projects as such are the product of a cultural and social context that is alien to the rural community concerned. People in the rural areas are seen as backward and lacking all necessary conditions and qualities to development, thus needing external inputs, both material and non-material. These exogenous thrusts, in their preference for a "modern" form, have knowingly or unknowingly destroyed the traditional community system and livelihood security of the people.

In addition, as rural communities were "modernized", the poor classes appear to be much weakened politically vis-a-vis external market forces. The bargaining power of rural communities and farmers has in no way been promoted proportionately with that of the external forces.

In such contexts, more and more middle strata professionals or semi-professionals, both urban and rural-based, started rural organizing efforts largely during the three-year parliamentary period (1973-1976). But not one of them could survive the repressive times that followed. It is during the 1974-1984 period that a new wave of non-governmental efforts in the rural areas has been on the rise again, and many NGDO workers find themselves well related to the grassroots. These organizations vary in their social base. Some are mainly led by local Buddhist monks, some by Catholics, some by craftsmen and engineers, some by traditional curing doctors and volunteers, and some by local teachers.

The emphasis on approach has been spelled out more clearly in terms of the cultural context of development action. According to this emerging line of thinking, local culture and indigenous development efforts are of

prime importance for any meaningful development process. All other efforts are to be geared towards strengthening the rural indigenous organizations to develop greater self-reliance vis-a-vis external market and technological forces.

NGDOs in rural development engage in various types of activities. One type is integrated community development, including the religious and spiritual path toward integrated development. Several organizations started off as integrated or "package" development projects. The major examples are Nong-Noi Integrated Rural Development Project in Chainat, Chiangmai Diocese, Redd Barna-Thailand, CUSO Rural Development of Self-Reliance in Northeastern Thailand. Some other organizations started off by emphasizing the non-material aspects of development, the neglected focus along modernization decades; in practice, village rice banks were one instrument. In this relation, there are organizations emphasizing the unity of peace and development, of human worth and justice in the world, and of the oneness of security of the mind and livelihood. Examples of these groups are the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD), Coordinating Group on Religion for Society (CGRS), Justice and Peace Commission (JP), and Catholic Council for Development of Thailand (CCTD).

Development problems related to children, youth and women in rural areas might not look as striking as those in urban areas. But as more than 80% of youth and children are in rural areas, the problem of malnutrition among preschool children (0-6 years old) and school children has been one major target of rural development activities. The NGDOs that work in this problem area are Primary Health Care Groups in various districts, Foundation of Health and Development, and Project for the Little Hungry Children Development Foundation.

Other important problems of rural youth are lack of educational and training opportunities which are rural-based rather than city-biased. There are some organizations aiming at specific target groups with counter-activities against the urban-biased components and process.

As for women's issues, there are a few NGDOs that relate part of their activities to this sector. Few of them started off as directly involved with this specific target group. The examples of the former are community development NGDOs, while that of the latter is Friends of Women.

Other NGDOS engage primarily in education and vocational training activities. Rural economy since decades ago has been designed to produce cash crops, and now has become more externally-oriented. Rural folks, when selling their cash crops, usually must adapt themselves and their way of life to the uncertainties of unknown market forces. In

addition, formal education tends to serve as a major social ladder for the energetic youth to leave the village. The problem with the hill-tribes is more serious. In responding to this outward-looking "development", there are NGDOs working on the type of training and education that seem most appropriate to work in the villages. These are, for example, Thai Rural Reconstruction Movement (until lately), Nong Kha Yang Foundation for Rural Development, Foundation for Education and Rural Development in Chiangmai, and the like.

There are some NGDOs focusing their activities on technological support. Farmers have to struggle to survive in the face of technological change. Many techniques and instruments are either too advanced and too costly, or too old-fashioned and no longer productive. NGDOs working in this field often emphasize appropriate technology, one which utilizes local resources and which is not too advanced and complicated for farmers' management and control. These organizations are, for example, Appropriate Technology Association, Folk Technology Development Center (PCDA), and SVITA Foundation.

Due to the fact that more and more NGDO activities are related to one another directly or indirectly, and that they have to work in relation to some common government agencies or policies, there is a clear need for coordination and information exchange, both amongst themselves, and between NGDOs and government agencies. Examples of the former are National Council of Social Welfare, Catholic Council for Development in Thailand, and NGOs Conference Follow-up Committee. Examples of the latter are NGO-GO meetings and conferences.

NGDOs in Urban Development

The foreign word "slum" became local currency during the development decades. Yet "congested communities" (*choomchon ae-ad*), a coined phrase approved by the Cabinet in 1982, still needs more time in order to gain acceptability. Urban slums have existed side by side with the urbanization of the cities. As Bangkok becomes one of the most urbanized cities in Southeast Asia, the number of people living in squatter areas and slums grows. In 1984, the National Housing Authority Director, General Yuthasak Klongtuatrok, stated that Bangkok had 448 congested communities, whose population comprised one-fifth of the city's total population. Another more detailed survey (Sopon Pornchokchai, 1985) adds up many more small, unseen and uncounted slums, arriving at a total figure of 1,020, with a population of at least one million.

As slum communities have grown in numbers and population, and have spread not only in the capital city but also in provincial cities, it becomes more and more clear that slums are not social problems in themselves but

rather serve as solutions to problems arising from erratic urbanization and maldevelopment. Nevertheless the problems facing slum communities are many. Firstly, lack of security in housing. Most of the people live in private lands, and about one-third in public lands. According to National Housing Authority statistics, in 1981, 129 of Bangkok's 410 slums -- about 37,000 people -- were facing eviction. Secondly, poverty and unemployment are a major problem. Most slum dwellers go to the cities in the hope of leaving behind economic hardships of rural life. With rather low levels of education and little skill appropriate for modern factories and services, they must seek daily work with very low wages. Thirdly, lack of public services. Their problems are intensified because of lack of household registration, which result in little or no access to public schools for their children, and lack of formal provision of electricity and water, etc. The people must rent or hire these services at a much higher cost.

In such contexts, there have been some individuals and organizations concerned with the inhumane and unfair situation of slum dwellers. They often begin their work with philanthropic aims, which later get shifted to more development-related activities. A major turn was probably the independent school started by Prateep Unsontham, in the style of one-bath-a-day school. Some Christian organizations started slum community centers, and universities began to do more research in the communities. Slum development has been recognized as legitimate by the public -- especially the government, after Ms. Prateep received a Magsaysay award in 1980. General Krangsak, who soon became a Prime Minister, was chairman of Duang Prateep Foundation founded thereafter. The activities of the NGOs have been mainly in health, environmental improvement, education and vocational training, all of which give highest priority to strengthening the self-help efforts of the slum people. There are, however, other activities by government organizations emphasizing slum clearance and building apartment flats. But these have failed because the poor are too many and too poor, so they sell off their rent rights. The First Region Army also has been active in training and forming National Defence Volunteers. Government has encouraged the setting up of elected "community councils", resulting in about one-fourth of Bangkok slums having such councils.

There have been many struggles by the slum people against eviction, most cases failed. For the few success cases, victory is not fully at hand. For example, the Klong Toey victory ensures another 20 years of housing area for about 7,400 families. In the face of this most serious problem, it is expected that more "floating mass" is being created. With respect to self-help organizations, their own legitimate right of organization and to representative democracy has been recognized in the midst of political

cooptation and exploitation. There have also been more independent foundations and organizations formed.

According to a 1985 survey, (Sopon Pornchokchai, 1985), there are altogether 71 outside organizations, big and small, involved in slum improvement activities. Among them are nine government agencies (including the Bangkok Metropolitan Forces, and First Region Army), nine educational institutions, nine student organizations, 40 NGDOs, and four other special agencies.

Health NGDOs

Despite increases in the number of health personnel and medical specialists, of pharmaceutical factories and of all kinds of drugs, the health condition of the majority of the people has not improved commensurately. Serious health problems still prevail.

On the one hand, the majority of the people still suffer from simple preventive ailments, such as infectious diseases of the respiratory and gastro-intestinal systems, parasitic infectious diseases, and skin diseases. Moreover, malnutrition in preschool and school children is high: 52% to 76% of preschool children are malnourished.

On the other hand, health services are concentrated in the capital and cities, while quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate in the rural areas. In urban cities, particularly the capital, the number of physicians per capita is 1:1,200, while the ratio is 1:17,000 on the average for the rest of the country.

In consequence, services from private drug stores have become very important. And problems such as drug abuse and drug induced diseases occur more and more often.

Western modern medicine has become the principal practice from the time of its importation nearly a hundred years ago. Traditional medicine has been abandoned. The people have been led to neglect the traditional method of curing and herbal medication.

On the part of government, primary health care has been designated as the national public health policy. Following the call by the World Health Organization, Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) and Village Health Communicators (VHCs), training programs were started rather hurriedly throughout the country. But as the more official personnel have not been reformed to suit the new demands, these volunteers could not yet effectively act as expected.

The responses of NGOs to the people's health problems vary. For our purpose here, we distinguish between the social welfare-oriented NGOs in health, and social development-oriented, according to the primary emphasis of the organization's activities. The first gives medical services, drug donations in the rural areas, etc. The latter is primarily devoted to a more self-help process of such organizations; service-giving is secondary.

Up to now, the curative emphasis of modern medicine has dominated health activities. People consult doctors for whatever illness they have. Dependence on modern doctors and medicine is the result, while traditional medicine and medication has been neglected and abandoned institutionally.

A growing number of health personnel are realizing the limitations of the bureaucracy, and the over-emphasis on "modern" medication. There have been new groups organized, along two types:

1. *Formation according to profession.* Although there were various professional associations, most of them carried out activities just to protect their own professional benefits,such as promoting and strengthening unity, enjoyment, etc. These acivities were uninteresting to succeeding generations of health professionals, who had been working in local areas or government agencies, and had come face-to-face with the problems of a bureaucratic system. What started as collectivities of friends who understood the problem and exchanged ideas on common interests,and who tried to find solutions while giving each other moral support, gradually expanded in numbers. These organizations are the Rural Doctor Society, Community Pharmacy Group, Rural Dental Health Club and the like. These organizations emphasize activities "to develop professions on the basis of people's benefits", not just for the profession only.

2. *Formation according to common interests.*Groups of this kind started small, usually among close friends participating in some activities and then gradually becoming a more formal organization, and later expanding activities and membership. One example of this type is the Folk Doctor Foundation,which started with the Folk Doctor Magazine in 1978. The magazine was attempting to reach educated people to be self-reliant for their health needs, and to unite health personnel to direct their interest in people's problems by means of "make people be doctors and make doctors be people". In 1981, the organization became the Folk Doctor Foundation.

Another example is the Health and Development Foundation (Drug Study Group). It started as a group of students and lecturers who realized

the problems of drug usage and jointly collected data to study the problems. They gradually expanded activities into other fields, such as campaign for protection of consumers, community development and production of educational media. The study group is not limited to drug problems any longer, but also includes other health and social development problems.

The Community Health Group was started by health personnel from various professions, who would participate in university activities together, combine their ideas, and use their knowledge to contribute to social development.

Other organizations, such as the Social Science of Public Health Group, the Voluntary Group for Consumers, the Thai Consumers' Power Group, the Traditional Medicine in Self-Curing Project, the Songnoern PHC Group, etc., had a common objective: social development by using academic knowledge and skill to benefit the people. Membership to these organizations has been increasing.

Some health NGDOs are organizations within governmental institutions, such as the Chumpuang PHC Group and the Bua-Yai PHC Group. They were formed by the medical staff of government hospitals, starting with non-governmental projects together with volunteer social workers. Their activities were supported by hospital personnel, who realized the need to work in a private (non-governmental) style because of its high efficiency without any constraints from the bureaucratic system.

No matter how these organizations were formed, or how varied their specific objectives might be, they all have the common aim of social development through the strategy of primary health care (PHC).

One important role of the health NGDOs is to call for policy reform so that primary health care can be carried out together with the people. Given the overcentralized bureaucratic administration and the traditional ways of resource allocation, it is impossible to practice PHC without such policy reform. Organizations interested in this line of thought are the Social Science of Public Health Group, the Drug Study Group and the Rural Doctor Society.

Their activities include a follow-up study on policy, governmental health projects and policies, to support beneficial policy and projects; to criticize and object to those which must be reformed; seminars, group discussions, campaigns on policy proposals such as PHC, national drug policy, pricing policy, national essential drug lists, basic minimum needs, and the like.

A call for people to be self-reliant must make maximum use of local resources by applying appropriate technology. This must be managed in a practicable way. Some health organizations have collected and researched knowledge on herbs and traditional medicine so as to be used for treatment, improvement and then for community application.

Some health NGDOs work with specific communities — farmers in the northeastern rural areas, for instance — and make use of PHC as a starting point for development. They put special emphasis on community organization to enable the group to overcome their own problems, which adds to their sense of power and solidarity, and which is a step closer to solving other community problems. The role of these NGDOs in the community is just to motivate people to be alert by using health problems as the starting point; to transfer knowledge and appropriate technology to promote hygiene; to awaken the consciousness so that the community has a "tool" to develop and realize the need for self-reliance in problem-solving; to coordinate the exchange of ideas within the community so that the people cooperate in problem-solving and development; and to assist in analysis and evaluation of the work performance. Examples of these organizations are the Drug Study Group, and the PHC Groups in Chumpuang, Sungnoern, Bua-Yai and Pratai.

Due to the free trade system which allows producers to control production, markets and advertisements, many consumers are not properly informed about the properties of the medicines and even food they are buying. People are misled to spend money, ruin their health and some risk their lives innocently. Therefore the health organization, as consumers, plays the role of surveying, checking up and lodging objections to protect the consumers' interest and motivate people to realize the problems and to be alerted to protect their self-interest. This is done in various forms, such as campaigning for consumers' problems — solving both at the policy and practical levels, by following the principle of "consumers protect consumers". Organizations which carry on this type of activities are the Voluntary Group for Consumers, the Thai Consumers' Power Group, the Consumers' Group of Siam, the Drug Study Group, the Community Pharmacy Group and the Folk Doctor Foundation. The examples of their activities include campaign for "drug-set" problems, APC combined drugs, promotion of breast feeding, and drug pricing regulation.

Training is an important strategy in the learning process. It strengthens perceptions and motivates the people's alertness. This is a method of preparing the people or the target group to broaden their capability. The training activities not only provide academic knowledge and techniques, but are also aimed at awakening the people's consciousness about their own problems and look for their own means of solving these. The target

groups for training are monks, teachers, youth, village leaders and health volunteers. Organizations which carry out these activities are the Folk Doctor Foundation, the Community Health Group, and the PHC Groups in Sungnoern, Bua-Yai and Chumpuang. In addition, they give training services to educate the public on health and consumers' protection issues.

NGOs — Product of Socio-Political Conditions

The NGOs as a people's movement have emerged within the last two decades. Their emergence and development is strongly related to the following socio-political conditions.

Firstly, the adverse political consequences of authoritarianism, especially due to the harsh political repression in the year before and after the 1976 coup d'etat, have closed off traditional political channels of expression. At the same time, this has made many people look for more livelihood-centered issues and appropriate "spaces" for social and political rights.

Secondly, the maldevelopment realities — increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and between urban and rural populations — created directly or indirectly by the highly centralized socio-political structure, have long been there, and have become a very basic and important condition for concerned persons belonging to the middle strata who feel they must respond to them. The tendency of government technocrats — those of the National Economic and Social Development Board, for example, to acknowledge rather belatedly that these problems exist, has also given some legitimacy to efforts for alternative development thinking and action.

Thirdly, the crisis of vanguardist underground parties is another factor to consider. The political situation in the late 1970s, triggered by war among socialist states in Southeast Asia, and political and military failures of underground parties, resulted in the outflow of thousands of intellectuals and people from the base areas. These events have no doubt led to the shakening of "conventional" paradigms of revolution, and more attention and interests towards a commitment to social transformation and development by non-military means. Some even appear to be apolitical.

Fourthly, international retrospective review of the past development decades, particularly those carried by World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization, World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD, 1979), International Labour Office, and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, has been very

important in emphasizing the institutional factors such as the centralized bureaucracy, impeding all development efforts. The place of people's participation and the role of non-state actors have been much more clearly spelled out as curative measures to the worsening development situation on the world scale.

Fifthly, the growing middle strata, professionals and semi-professionals have meant further relationships to non-state sectors, that is private, non-governmental or voluntary sectors in their employment and in effect their wider social life. Those involved in non-governmental development activities have continued the dialogue both among themselves and with the grassroots people, thus resulting in more cooperation with one another.

The above-mentioned five conditions — existing development gaps and problems, adverse effects of authoritarianism, limitation of centralized bureaucracy and development set-ups, crisis of vanguardist parties and ideologies, and growing consciousness of middle strata — have contributed to the recent upsurge of non-governmental development organizations.

Changing Themes and Emerging Processes

The main question is what are non-governmental development social movements and what do they signal with respect to major changes in our social relations. In a very genuine sense, the recent emergence of NGDOs is an extension of the democratization movement a decade or so earlier.

In comparison with the previous decades' normative sense of what is just and what is unjust, the just-unjust focus is brought together with development of and for the people in a multi-faceted sense, and by the people through participation.

1. The last decade and a half witnessed the encounter between conscientizing middle strata individuals and organizations and the counterpoints in indigenous forms and systems of knowledge which is rooted in non-establishment academic, non-governmental, often religious or independent research circles. There are series of "new discoveries", one after another. It is this contextualization of development thinking that is now being pursued in many local settings.

2. Development problems are not seen as simply those of efficiency and management of resources, but as the struggle of the under privileged and exploited that first of all need institutional guarantees for their right to development, which includes rights to organization and participation.

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3. These non-governmental organizations insist on the legitimate independence of social groups, whether formally registered or not, and in their peaceful pursuit of their goals. They further resist cooptation and manipulation by the already powerful structure.

4. They see themselves as movements within the structure aiming for some structural change. Their aim then is not to direct attention to the seizure of centralized power, but to work for decentralized and participatory development processes and structures. The focus of attention is not in one-power center statocracy but rather on countervailing power. Therefore the strategy is how to survive, grow and be effective within the larger structural context.

The contributions of non-governmental development organizations to development processes in an authoritarian situation like Thailand, are many and varied. It is important to mention the following:

1. Innovative approach to development. Development, that is, increasing the capacity of the people to liberate themselves from their sufferings, cannot come from any kind of "one right answer". Innovative approaches come out of a variety of local social and cultural contexts.

2. Highlighting social issues, especially those neglected by the existing policy, for example, child labour, women's rights, malnutrition, and then pressuring for action towards their solution.

3. Through a larger constituency of support and sustained activities, further institutionalization of NGOs could be strengthened.

4. Pressure for reform of legal framework. Under the present legal and political system, there are always some unjust laws or inappropriate regulations that need reform.

5. The challenge for this movement is whether an alternative development strategy or strategies could be generated, formulated and implemented in a longer and larger context.

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Voluntarism In Bangladesh

Mohiuddin Ahmad

Voluntarism was almost synonymous with charity work during the colonial period. Groups of people, particularly the youth, used to help the victims of flood, famine and epidemic. Resources were mobilised from amongst themselves or from the landed elite living in the neighbourhood. Such voluntary groups emerged spontaneously in emergency situations and became non-functional when the situation improved. It was only during the post-independence (1971) period that "voluntary" activities became increasingly institutionalised, with the emergence of formal bodies and a host of professional workers.

The nine-month war of independence against Pakistan was devastating. About three million lives were lost; millions more became homeless. The economic and social infrastructure was almost entirely ruined. The need of the hour was massive relief and rehabilitation. Fortunately, the response of the international community was favourable. Along with many international and foreign government aid agencies, a host of foreign non-government organisations (NGOs) came to help the distressed. Also, many local groups enthusiastically emerged to share the heavy task of providing succour and rehabilitation, a responsibility rather impossible for the government to perform single-handedly. the context from which NGOs emerged.

The evolution of NGO activities in Bangladesh has been in accordance with the need of the time, and can broadly be grouped into three phases. The first phase was purely relief oriented, primarily for those affected by the war for independence. This phase, which began in 1971, continued for about two years. The second phase of activities started centering around development work, including, among others, building economic infrastructure for development and giving support to vulnerable groups for livelihood. The third phase of activities started with the "target group approach" and had its momentum in the late seventies. The approach is skewed in favour of the backward sections of the population where programmes are aimed at the landless, marginal farmers, and women in

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particular. Although NGO activities corresponding to all these categories have been running concurrently, they can be identified by the "camp" to which they belong. At present, NGOs are mostly engaged in the second and third categories, and many of them seem to be undergoing a process of radicalisation, in response to the deteriorating socio-economic situation and the continuing pauperisation of the masses.

In another context, NGOs can be classified into two broad groups: material or service-oriented, and catalytic. Activities of the first group are complementary to those of the government agencies or corporate bodies concerned. They function in the fields of adult literacy, health care, population control, credit, employment generation, vocational training and other extension services. Many are also involved in building or developing the general economic and social infrastructure. The second group of NGOs is engaged in the much-publicised process of "conscientising" the backward sections of the population, particularly the rural proletariat.

Although these two groups differ in perspective and methodology, they claim to possess the same objective, i.e., reaching the same target audience, however, with different tools. Capacity building among the poorest sections is an explicit slogan of both groups. However, each one views the other with reservation. The first group's main argument is that the material well-being of the people living below the poverty line should first be emphasised. For it is utopian to think that doctrines can be swallowed on an empty stomach. The second group counters with the argument that the other group is nothing but a broker of services which are supposed to be provided by certain government agencies. Instead of making government accountable to the citizens, it is being spared from this responsibility and is being "rescued" from obligatory services paid for by the people through taxes. The debate is old and persists to this day.

The Department of Social Services registers, regulates and controls the activities of NGOs in Bangladesh, under the 1961 Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration & Control) Ordinance. Foreign NGOs working in Bangladesh, as well as local NGOs receiving foreign donations, are required to be registered under the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Agencies) Regulation Ordinance of 1978. The Social Services Department has grown into a sizeable organisation, owing to the vast development projects carried in successive five-year plan periods. In turn, it provides annual grants-in-aid to many NGOs through the Bangladesh National Council of Social Welfare. Official records show that as of May 1986, a total of 9,092 voluntary agencies have been registered as local agencies by this Department. According to one source, there are 81 foreign NGOs working in Bangladesh, and 300 local NGOs operating with foreign funds.

As in other spheres of society, the NGO community consists of the "plebeian" and the "patrician". Numerically, the overwhelming majority belong to the former, operating with meager resources in small pockets scattered all over the country. The latter class possesses a somewhat "national" identity. Almost all of the NGOs belonging to this class operate exclusively with foreign funds. Nearly all of them have set up administrative headquarters in the capital, Dhaka, and usually run their programmes through one or more field offices. A few "patricians" initiated various community development programmes with foreign funds soon after independence. Liberal registration policy, easy access to foreign funds and, above all, the "demonstration effect", ultimately led to a mushrooming of NGOs.

NGOs in Bangladesh have become very much a part of the establishment. Their modus operandi requires them to work within the framework and terms of reference unilaterally decided by the government. In several fields, government-NGO collaboration exists, and has been gradually increasing day by day.

It is no exaggeration to say that the donor community exercises a lot of influence and power in policy decisions of the government, taking advantage of the precarious economic situation and consequently low level of bargaining capacity of the latter. It is already evident that a section of these donor agencies is responsible for the trend of involving NGOs in mainstream development activities of the government. One way donors have concretised this concept is by channeling a particular proportion of their aid money through NGOs.

The Planning Commission of Bangladesh, in a policy paper, has recognised the significant and positive potential of NGOs. The same paper views bureaucratic delays, a rigid policy framework, corrupt practices at the implementation level and exploitative social power structures, as mainly responsible for the failure of many development programmes initiated by the government. In contrast, some NGOs are found to succeed in fields where the government has failed. Such successes are attributed to the structure and mode of operation of these NGOs. It has been observed that NGOs, in general, are non-formal, less bureaucratic, more flexible, possess a high degree of mobility, and are manned by hard-working and dedicated personnel. The "donor bias" towards NGOs and the apparent success of some NGOs in certain areas of development activities have already earned a negative response from a section of the bureaucracy, which strongly opposes the so-called "privatisation of development".

A common rhetoric uttered by many NGOs following the "conscientisation" method is as follows: "The political parties have failed.

Now we have come to rescue the people." This sort of understanding or realisation seems motivated and conspicuous. For their part, a section of political parties, particularly the Left, smell the ghost of the "CIA" in NGOs. As a result, instead of coming to each other's support and playing complementary roles in many areas, these NGOs and political parties find themselves virtually in opposite and antagonistic camps, treating each other as enemies.

Allegations and counter-allegations are not totally unfounded. The reign of pseudo-radicals in both fronts is quite evident. Failures are seldom acknowledged. Hence one treats the other as a scapegoat. As a result, their target audience, the vast reservoir of the rural poor to whom both groups espouse the same ideals, end up confused.

Large scale "defections" from Left political parties to NGOs in the past years, have made the former more hostile to the latter, who the parties claim are local agents of the neo-imperialist finance capital. Political parties often argue that NGO workers can afford to talk about "emancipation of the people" as they are part of a regular payroll. This puts them in an advantaged position: "doing politics and at the same time drawing a salary". NGO workers are further accused of forming a new comprador stratum in Bangladesh's poverty-stricken society.

It is true that fine words butter no parsnips. While politicians have gotten used to giving sermons to the people from the rostrum, NGO workers must work hard to confront local power structures in remote rural areas. There have been incidents when NGO workers have been harassed, physically assaulted and even killed by the henchmen of the power elite. For no doubt, they have been able to make inroads in many areas.

While there are success stories, there are abuses, too. To many people, the NGO is a good source of employment. This has led to a new generation of career social workers with name, fame and global linkage. This has its own demonstration effect. Social work along with a "good living" has attracted many, thus leading to the rapid growth of NGOs in recent years, many of them working in the same area on similar programmes funded by the same donor. As big money plays an increasingly important role, genuine voluntarism seems to wither away.

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The Role of People's Participation In Rural Development: The Organic Farming Movement in Japan

Benja Phothaporn

Development is a process involving a large number of political, economic, ecological and social factors. Unfortunately, in most countries, developed as well as developing, governments have emphasized the economic factors. The major goal of most development efforts has been increasing GNP. This has usually resulted in increasing inequalities in income (Adelman & Morris 1973) and ecological imbalance. (Farver & Melton, 1972) Furthermore, many development projects, where real local participation in the development process has not taken place, have failed to achieve their objectives. Many have also faltered once the aid donors and professional project designers have departed, leaving the ill-informed and perhaps reluctant local people to continue project implementation. Experience suggests that there is a greater chance of success if the people to be affected by a project participate in its design, implementation and monitoring. (Redclift, 1987)

The goals and values of development should embrace not only material ones such as high production, high consumption and high per capita income growth rate, but also abstract moral ideals such as freedom, dignity, self-fulfillment, self-determination and creativity. The material goals can be described as "lower-order goals", and the non-material or abstract goals as "higher-order goals". The former can be viewed as a means of achieving the latter, for example, the redistribution of income – a lower-order goal – is actually a way of achieving self-fulfillment – a higher-order goal. (Goldsworthy, 1977)

Participation is a social experience shared by individuals and groups who engage in particular economic and social relations with each other. As a social aspiration and a basic human need, participation is an end in itself. But it may also be conceived as a means for the attainment of other social and economic objectives. (Bhaduri & Rahman, 1982) People's

participation can take place in both rural and urban communities, but may vary because of different economic and social contexts. In this paper, we will focus on the participation of people living in rural communities.

People's participation is regarded as essential in rural development. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, for example, has submitted the following statement of common goals and means for rural development:[1] "A primary objective [of rural development] should be to improve the quality of life of the rural poor." This implies the participation of the rural poor in decisions affecting them. It presupposes that the rural poor will be given more opportunities for productive and remunerative employment, better access to resources, and more equitable distribution of income and wealth. The mobilization of the energies and resources of the rural poor itself becomes a key factor in increasing both productivity and self-reliance. Such mobilization requires the foundation, adaptation and strengthening of community structures, which includes organizations of the rural poor. Special attention should be given to the situation of women who should be allowed to contribute their full potential to improving the quality of life of the rural poor for the present and future generations.

In the process of rural development, technology also plays an important role. Nevertheless, human beings should be the master, not the slaves of technology (Galtung et al., 1980). Experience suggests that for development to be sustainable, technology should be in harmony with nature, thus preserving the essential ecological balance. It should be able to produce for the satisfaction of basic material and non-material needs of all. Technology, therefore, should be a tool selected by rural people who will find it compatible with their socio-cultural conditions and values. Table 1 tries to lay down the concept of demands on technology and people's participation. (*Ibid.*, 223)

Table 1.	The demands on technology
The purpose of technology is to satisfy basic human needs:	
› material: food, clothes, shelter, medical care, schooling, means of transportation/communication	⇒ECONOMIC
› non-material: creativity, identity, autonomy, togetherness, participation, self-fulfillment, meaning	
There are necessary conditions:	
› structural: equity, autonomy, solidarity, participation, integration	⇒SOCIAL
› environmental: ecological balance	⇒ENVIRONMENTAL

As formulated in Table 1, the demands on technology are concrete and inseparable from sustainable rural development. Moreover, they are ethical in that the needs of future generations are taken into consideration. Consequently, the success of rural development relies heavily on people's participation particularly with regard to technological selection.

Japan is among several countries where people's participation has played an important role in transforming rural development to meet not only material but also non-material needs. One such example, the Organic Farming Movement, is a non-governmental popular movement with the special objective of providing organic agricultural produce directly from producers to consumers. In the Japanese language this direct transaction is called *sanchi chokusetsu* or *san-choku*, which means direct from the rural area. The Organic Farming Movement is sometimes referred to simply as *San-choku*.

This article is an attempt to analyze the role of the Organic Farming Movement in rural development. Field visits were carried out between mid-March and early April in 1987. During this period, discussions were held with people from various groups involved in the movement, including the Society for Reflecting on the Throwaway Age in Kyoto, the Shitara Agricultural School in Nagoya, and the Chikuren in Fukuoka.[2]

We begin with a description of the movement, especially its historical context, followed by a few case studies. The achievements of the movement are then assessed and evaluated. The last section summarises major observations and findings.

Evolution of the Organic Farming Movement

Organic farming is a production system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives. It relies, as far as possible, on crop rotation, crop residue, animal manure, legume, green manure, off-farm organic waste, mechanical cultivation, mineral-bearing rock and some kinds of biological pest control, to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients, and to control insects, weeds and other pests.[3]

These practices had been used by Japanese farmers in ancient times but were gradually discarded in the 1960s, as a result of Japan's rapid industrialisation, which was accompanied by the new agricultural practice of large-scale farming. In 1970, organic farming was revived by organic farming movements. Since then, it has prevailed almost all over Japan, including Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Fukuoka and other big cities. It is hoped that the organic farming movement, with a social philosophy based

on ecological principles, can serve as the basis for the revitalization of farming in Japan. (Koyu Furusawa: p. 1)

The organic farming movement has accumulated almost two decades of participatory experience. An analysis of this movement essentially requires a study of how its development at each stage necessitates a corresponding change in economic and social relations of production. These in turn create tensions and throw up contradictions, which then require some resolution – a process which continuously evolves over time. So a critique of both industrial and agricultural development and of changes in the Japanese social environment, is necessary for a thorough understanding of the organic farming movement.

1. Impact of Industrial Development on Agricultural Sector

Industrialization was promoted and financed in the early Meiji Restoration period by imposing extremely heavy taxes on the agricultural sector. As a result, the rural people, especially tenants, were pushed out of their villages into the cities, only to find poor working conditions there, with long hours and low wages. Growing militarism and preparations for war in the post World War I period prompted the expansion of the heavy and chemical industries. These thrived on a supply of cheap labor from the agricultural sector. By the final year of World War II, the urban population constituted over 40% of the total population, compared to less than 10% at the initial stage of industrial development. (Fukutake, 1981: 6)

After World War II, cheap rural labour was mobilized for rapid rebuilding of the war-ravaged cities and for rapid economic development, which centered on the heavy and chemical industries. This pattern continued from the early 1960s until the present time.

Industrialization and the rush of rural migrants to the cities for jobs, inundated the already crowded industrial belt along the western Pacific side of the country. Consequently, the population in the agricultural sector decreased rapidly: from 30.6% of the total population in 1965, to 18.1% in 1982. During this 18-year period, there was an actual fall in the agricultural population, from 30.1 million in 1965 to 21.1 million. Over the same period, the ratio of those engaged in farming also decreased from 10.1% of the total population, to 5.6%. Meanwhile, the number of farm-households decreased only slightly, from 5.5 million to 4.5 million.[4] This is perhaps best explained by the decrease in family size, as well as by the preference of those working in urban areas to still reside in the villages.

Industrial development has affected not only the urban-rural population, but also the ratio of agricultural to non-agricultural income. The number and proportion of full-time farm-households are much less than those of part-time households. The bulk of the latter earn a bigger

share of their incomes from non-agricultural activities. Between 1960 and 1981, the contribution of agriculture to the income of farm households fell from 50.2% to 16.3%.[5] Rural depopulation and a decrease of agricultural incomes are some of the results of the pattern of Japanese industrialization and urbanization.

2. Agricultural Development

Before World War I, Japanese agriculture was rooted in a system of small farming units worked by hand and by using organic farming techniques. Half of the cultivated land was controlled by landlords whose tenants did the actual farming. (*Ibid.*, p. 48) Between the Meiji Restoration period and World War II, the agricultural sector was drawn into the market economy, primarily as a source of food and labour for an urban-biased economy. As a result, when the Great Depression of the U.S. found its way to Japan in 1930, the farm economy was pushed into an extremely difficult situation.

Despite the land reform that was implemented by the American occupation authorities after World War II, the out-migration of low-wage rural labour persisted due to the low rice price, the compulsory delivery system and heavy taxation. Furthermore, the massive reconstruction programme to rebuild war-devastated areas was a pull factor as it created a huge demand for cheap labour, that was largely met by the rural population.

Meanwhile, the search for improved productivity paved the way for new agriculture practices. Individual farm-households began examining improved organic farming techniques, such as those developed by Fukuoka Masanobu and Okada Mokichi, and the Yamagashi-style poultry farming. The setting up of agricultural cooperative associations with the promulgation in 1947 of the Agricultural Cooperative Society Law, also had a huge impact on farm owners who got their lands through land reform. However, these advances did little to narrow the widening gap between industrial and agricultural incomes.

In the 1960s, the tremendous growth in Japan's national economy raised the demand for agricultural produce. At the same time, the pattern of food consumption shifted to processed food, owing to an increase in incomes, the imitation of westernized food consumption habits, and the advent of the nuclear family. These changes are a direct result of urbanization, changing lifestyle, and more active female participation in social and economic activities. By 1960, sales revenues of the food processing industry were equal to the total value of agricultural production. (Koichi Endo, 1986: 5) Unfortunately, the large processing industries were greatly dependent on imported materials which were cheaper, more abundant and of more uniform quality than domestic

materials. The lower demand for domestic materials reduced the demand for domestic agricultural products.

The agrarian structure based on small-size family-farms is deeply rooted in Japanese society. Even though the ratio of the agricultural population to the total population has decreased dramatically, the number of farm-households decreased only slightly.[6] Given the low possibility of expanding the land area for cultivation, this means that farm sizes are small. Hence, nearly 70% of farm households worked on land of one hectare or less; over one-third of farms had a size of half a hectare or less. (Fukutake, 1981: 49)

In order to increase their incomes, farmers aimed to improve productivity and increase yields by using more chemical fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and machinery. However, the concomitant increase in expenditure has kept net farm incomes low. Furthermore, farmers who engaged in organic farming could not keep up with changes in consumer preferences, such as for perfectly shaped produce of uniform colour.

In 1961, large-scale farming was promoted under the Amalgamation Assistance for Agricultural Cooperatives Law. The multi-purpose agricultural cooperative societies, engaged in the marketing of various agricultural products, input procurement, credit, mutual insurance, utilization, processing, etc., were the target of this law. Amalgamation meant that land and agricultural resources would be brought closer together, through large-scale farming, mechanization and the intensive use of chemicals. To encourage amalgamation, the government offered such incentives as price guarantee and discount on inputs. At the same time, however, the government imposed restriction such that only those with large plots of land, or land of superior quality, could actually benefit from amalgamation. Thus the participatory rates of societies in amalgamation were very low: 4.7% in 1961/62, 2.7% in 1970/71 and 3.8% in 1981/82.[7]

Another reason for the low participation rate is the heavy burden placed on the societies by the high cost of fertilizers, farm chemicals and feeds. On two surveys of the multi-purpose cooperatives, it was found that expenditures on fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and feeds represented 50.8% and 47.4% of the total expenditure on production goods in 1977 and 1983, respectively.[8]

Agricultural cooperative societies have to compete with merchants, adjusting swiftly and flexibly to fast changing external circumstances. The failure to respond to this competitive environment has left the agricultural cooperative business stagnant, and farm-household incomes sluggish. In

1955, the gross national agricultural product accounted for 20% of the national income. However, during the era of economic growth, it dropped to below 10% and presently is a meager 3.5%. (Fukutake, p. 50)

3. Change in Social Environment

The quest for the well-being of the people (which cannot be measured only in economic terms) is a challenge to highly industrialized countries such as Japan. Although Japan has the third highest GNP in the world, the fact remains that it occupies only the fifteenth place in terms of per capita national income. (Fukutake, 1981) For many people, the industrial development has led to decreased quality of life and increased environmental pollution. If situations like these are taken into account, the well-being of the Japanese people would be far lower than fifteenth place.

Industrialization and urbanization have affected all communities and classes of society. Overpopulation in the cities has created severe urban problems of every kind. Japan has one of the world's greatest industrial capacities, but which is rooted in a system that permits inadequate wages (though nominal wages are steadily rising), and inadequate public housing. (*Ibid.*, p. 10) Values toward "my home-ism" have sharply changed, especially amongst people at the lower wage levels. They seek temporary escape from the realities of life in gambling, or in other often socially harmful amusements.

The increase in individuals' alienation is caused by a production process of increasingly specialized division of labour. People feel isolated and lonely, and see themselves as just part of a nameless mass. This tendency is not only seen among white-collar workers but is reflected in the breakdown of local relations in working class communities.

Family ties have been weakened especially in the local community. Part-time farmers have to use a lot of time for commuting to industrial jobs. Long stays away from home for such work have become common. In many mountain regions, entire families have been known to have left the village because of this.

Relationships between farmers and consumers have changed from one of mutual care to one based on profit maximization. Farmers have to maximize output and profit in order to maintain their standard of living, while consumers have neither knowledge nor concern about the farmers' condition.

Environmental pollution has increased because the heavy and chemical industries have taken little or no provision for pollution control. These changes have led to the formation of a number of grassroots movements with the aim of finding a more ecologically sound and socially

harmonious lifestyle and economic system. The most powerful and effective of these grassroots movements emerged from people organizing themselves to fight pollution and destructive development at Minamata during the latter part of the 1960s. In 1956, the Minamata Disease was discovered to be caused by the presence of organic mercury in the food chain. This poison, a by-product in the processing of nitrogenous fertilizers, had been dumped by manufacturers into the sea. Residents who ate fish and other marine products from this polluted sea began suffering from mercury poisoning, later known as the Minamata disease. Other victims of pollution, especially among the small-scale fisher-people, rose up in large numbers to support the Minamata victims. Together they formed a horizontal network. Since then, local people began to rise up against large-scale polluting industrial development, and this movement spread gradually during the 1970s.

However, the form of the people's movement changed as cultural and ideological considerations began to take hold. Sharp criticism of the rapid growth and industrial development came from farmers and fisher-people living far from the metropolis. Their social basis was being destroyed by the very success of economic growth, which they did not share. The fundamental goals and objectives of the grassroots movements were transformed as they recognized the need to create an alternative society.

They strongly criticized the fetishism of economic growth, which regarded a high GNP as all important. In contrast they took the view that all forms of life, including human life and the natural ecosystem, were in equal need of protection. Under the banner of this philosophy, various groups of people organized themselves into producer-consumer cooperatives, and other solidarity groups.

4. Emergence of the Organic Farming Movement

The organic farming movement has emerged as a movement concerned with the revitalization of farming in Japan under a new social philosophy based on ecological principles. Apart from minimizing dependence on agricultural chemicals and chemical fertilizers, the movement also tries to make the most out of the subtle designs of nature.

Although organic farming has its roots in ancient times, it could hardly survive within the modern marketing system, which determines the value of agricultural products by a grading system based on weight, shape, etc. If a product deviates even slightly from the standard, its value drops very steeply. The only way farmers could meet the demands of this system was through the intensive use of agricultural chemicals and chemical fertilizers.

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Alternative Japanese Social Movements for an Alternative Japan

As a result of the rapid economic growth in the 1960s, the problems of environmental pollution and industrial waste became a source of serious social conflict between local residents and industrial establishments in many parts of Japan. Fishermen, peasants and small factory workers in areas around and within industrial production became victims of hazardous and wasteful technology. The large national labour centres, which were affiliated with and guided largely by the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and the Japanese Democratic Socialist Party (JDSP), ignored these problems. Voluntary groups were thus formed to respond to these issues. These groups were organised by the local residents themselves, as well as by outsiders who had been involved in the student movement in the past. Capturing political power was not the goal of these groups. Rather, they concentrated on the actual struggle against the source of industrial pollution and waste. Such action groups emerged independently in Minamata, Yokkaichi, Mishima, Shibushi, etc., in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This trend is not limited to environmental concerns. Parallel action groups have been formed in response to different social concerns. These movements share some common features. In addition to their non-affiliation with political parties, they do not bring a hierarchical structure into their movement. And they build networks among themselves for the interchange and coordination of their activities. Their networks are more concerned with local issues than movements at a national level. Some of them even take part in local politics to realize their goals. For instance, the network of ecological groups in Zushi City mobilized against the U.S. Military Housing Scheme in their city, and succeeded in recalling, in March 1986, the elected members of the city council who had approved the project.

In terms of weight and volume, Japan imports ten times more than she exports to the rest of the world. Trade expansion has not only increased Japan's production, but has also yielded vast amounts of industrial waste within Japan. At the same time, the rich environments of the Third World countries that supply Japan's imports are plundered and destroyed. Thus one focus of the new social movements is a change in the Japanese lifestyle so as to conserve ecosystems both at home and abroad.

Another focus is increasing linkages between urban and rural communities. This is reinforced by the de-linking of the commodity exchange between agriculture and industry within the modern market structure. According to the Study Group on Agriculture for Survival, industries needed by the people in the region must be integrated in a broad sense with agriculture, in order to equitably share the same local resources. A venture of this nature, though very small in terms of the number of participants, will hopefully start a process of de-linking the unequal material relations between Japan and the rest of Asia.

However, the abandonment of organic farming in favour of chemical-intensive agriculture, created new problems. Farmers found themselves faced with higher production and packaging costs, which reduced rather than raised their income. Some of them later reconsidered these problems, including the use of harmful chemicals, and turned to farming organic agricultural products. By the early 1960s, Dr. Yanose organized *San-choku*, a coalition of farmers groups in Nara (east of Osaka) which produced organic agricultural products and distributed them directly to consumers. Without middlemen to extract a trading margin, and with lower production costs, farmers were assured of a better income, while consumers received fresh and safe products.

On the part of consumers, since the early 1970s, housewives had been taking the lead in promoting awareness of the dangers of food contamination, and in taking measures to ensure food safety. Consumer cooperatives were formed at all levels, from small to big organizations, and at the grassroots level. The growing consciousness of both producers and consumers has led to the spread since 1970 of organic farming movements in several parts of Japan. The system of distribution can be divided into the following four approaches:

- Direct cooperation between producers and consumers: Producers and consumers deal directly with each other on the basis of mutual cooperation. This may involve tie-ups between consumer groups and farmers near urban areas, between consumer groups and farmers in distant places, or between producer groups and consumer groups. Or, it may take the form of the traditional face-to-face dealing, where the bazaar or village market serves as the meeting place for producers and consumers, and the market operates under a free and rather primitive mechanism.

- Distribution centers: Producer and consumer groups set up a third party organization to handle distribution. The distribution center differs from the cooperatives for livelihood and the farmers' cooperatives. It can be considered as a new type of cooperative union. Most of the workers in the center are volunteers, and the center is itself a workers' collective.

- Self-sufficient communal farms set up by consumers: Some consumers have established their own communal farms. The aim of this movement is not just to start a farm where members can live and be self-sufficient. They also regard their actions as a relief from the contradictions of the consumer society, and as a challenge to those maintaining an exploitative urban existence.

- Farmers taking it upon themselves to find buyers: Some self-sufficient farmers look for consumers themselves, and then begin to supply these families with their produce. Often a farmer will target ten or more families. The price of farm produce is not fixed. A kind of mutual-care relationship is maintained.

Due to the variety of approaches and forms of distribution, the Nihon Yuki Nogyo Kenkyukai (Japan Organic Farming Study Group), one of the central groups of the movement, suggested ten principles related to the functioning of producer-consumer cooperatives. They are based on the concept of mutual understanding. These principles are as follows (Chanchai, 1985):

1. *Collaboration:* The relationship between producer and consumer is based on companionship instead of business. They should assist each other.

2. *Production Planning:* Plans should be set up to achieve maximum production capacity. This will not only be in terms of quantity, but also by considering the consumers' needs for variety.

3. *Total Products Acceptance:* Consumers have to purchase all the products under the plan formulated along the second principle.

4. *Joint Price Determination:* The price of produce will be determined jointly so that producers will get a reasonable return on their investment, and consumers will get safe, fresh and tasty food.

5. *Close Relationship:* Regular internal discussions should be held to achieve better understanding, and should be the proper way to solve any problems and obstacles which may arise.

6. *Joint Transportation:* Both producers and consumers are responsible for transporting the products. Market mechanism and normal business type of transportation will not be applicable.

7. *Democracy:* Producers and consumers are at full liberty to elect their leaders and members, and have to help solve any problems which arise.

8. *Mutual Perception:* The relationship between producers and consumers should concentrate more on sharing personal experiences gained through their activities rather than only on producing and selling.

9. *Optimum Scale:* To avoid problems associated with large organizations, new groups should be set up rather than expanding existing ones.

10. *Development:* Should any problems arise, members must struggle to solve them effectively.

The activities of the organic farming movement as discussed above clearly demonstrate the concrete participation of producers and consumers in every step of decision-making, implementation and evaluation. In this way, producers and consumers benefit not only in an economic sense, but also in terms of social development. Producers are assured of a certain level of income because consumers agree to purchase all their produce under a production plan based on a jointly set price. The practice of direct dealing with each other liberates both producers and consumers from the modern marketing system. Since farmers employ organic methods, they are unaffected by such exogenous factors as fluctuations in the price of chemical fertilizers. Consumers may have to spend more money for food provided by this movement at times when the market price falls below the jointly set price. But comparing prices may not be wholly useful as the quality of organically grown farm produce is superior.

The relationship between producers and consumers in this movement is quite unique, as they share personal experiences gained through their activities. Consumers go to the production site, get to know the people engaged in production, and find out how they work and live. They organize the distribution on their own, and take part in the weighing and allocating of the products distributed. Producers also feel that they contribute to the overall well-being of consumers with whom they have established personal contact.

Organic Farming Movements in Three Areas

The experiences of three organizations engaged in organic farming are discussed in this section. The groups are the Society for Reflecting on the Throwaway Age, the Shitara Agricultural School and the Chikuren Distribution Network.

1. The Society For Reflecting On The Throwaway Age

This Society was created in 1973, six months before the first oil crisis, by Tsuchida Takashi and several others in Kyoto. Tsuchida was then teaching in the engineering department at Kyoto University, and had become convinced of the unsustainability of the petroleum-based

civilization. His critique was far-reaching in that he related the quick use and disposal of things with the treatment meted out to other human beings and the earth itself. This group coined the phrase "the one trip age", that is, the age of using things only once and then throwing them away. They examined alternative practices of recycling paper and clothing, and included food safety and synthetic detergent pollution among their concerns.

With respect to food safety, the Society considered it insufficient to form a direct link between producers and consumers to insure a supply of uncontaminated food. A change in thinking was also emphasized so that production, distribution and consumption could be viewed as a unitary phenomenon, and the interests of both groups could be mutually satisfied.

In April 1975, the Safe Agricultural Produce Supply Center was set up as a third party organization to handle distribution. This center, made possible by funding from consumers, functions as an agricultural relations center that enables distribution to proceed smoothly.

When the Society was formed, there were twenty members. Now there are 1,450 consumer-households, 60 producers and a full-time staff of 10. It is organized as a non-profit, joint-stock company. The society is funded by members' investments, with a yearly membership fee of ¥2,600, and is run along the lines of a workers' collective.

The Society is not so tightly organized, and tends to adopt a rather flexible approach to organizational issues. Participation in decision-making is open to all members. The Board of Directors is composed of a Secretariat, a Planning Committee and an Editing Committee. Under the Administrative Board are the Exchange House Committee, the Agricultural Products Committee, the Funds Management Committee, the Farm Committee and the Safe Agricultural Produce Supply Center. (Members of the latter include producers, consumers and those engaged in delivery.)

A joint meeting of the Board of Directors and the Administrative Board (excluding members of the Safe Agricultural Produce Supply Center), is held once a month. The Sewanin (unit leader) assembly is also held once a month. The general assembly is a yearly gathering.

Price setting occurs through direct consultation among all parties involved, and provides consumers with an opportunity to better understand the conditions of production. A plan is drawn up twice a year concerning what and how much shall be grown. The standard price is set after consultation among producers, consumers and the distribution

center's full-time staff. The fluctuating market price is largely ignored, except in cases of extreme divergence from the set price. Rather than performing strict cost accounting, the Society adopts the principle of mutual happiness, that is, if producers and consumers make the other's happiness their own, then a reasonable price can be worked out. In general, producers receive the same price for the same products as each other, and consumers bear the cost of transportation because the products come from remote areas.

Distribution areas have been divided into 11 blocks, each composed of 300 units, with no more than six consumer households in each unit. Agricultural products are delivered from production areas to a distribution center. From this center, the products are redistributed once a week to each unit by a delivery member using a small truck. Accounting is taken care of by the Sewanin, and money is paid a week later. Relations among consumers themselves have been restored since they are working together. They have time to talk about the taste of food, ways to prepare it, and share a range of other experiences.

Meetings are held occasionally to pass down clothes from older children to the younger ones. This is not only to save money and prevent waste, but also to encourage awareness and communication among children. Along these lines, the experimental farm also serves as a summer camp and agricultural school for children.

The Society has also initiated the activity of bringing production and consumption together by involving consumers in production through the farm committee. Farmland was rented in the Nara Prefecture, and was managed by some producer members while consumers provided the basic labour. The Society merely took charge of accounting. In the next stage, the Society purchased its own fields, with the consumers managing all the production and distribution activities. By working in the fields themselves, consumers learned that production and consumption are a unity.

Interviews with housewives in one member unit and a delivery man confirmed that the Society can serve their well-being. They appreciate the benefits of consuming according to what is in season. Although they sometimes have to pay a higher than market price, overall food and household expenses are reduced because they have a less wasteful lifestyle. They have also changed their pattern of consumption to eating what is in season. The relationship between housewives has improved through working together. They have held discussion on food preparation, on their children, and sometimes on social issues.

2. Shitara Agricultural School

This school was established in 1985 by Mr. Yomoto, who received a masters degree in engineering. Before shifting to organic agriculture, he worked in Tokyo as an engineer. It was during this time that he became involved with organic farming movements. He viewed their actions as contributing towards the maintenance of the agricultural sector. He quit his job and went to stay in the rural area of Nagoya. His objective was not only to produce organic farm products, but also to share agricultural knowledge with those who are interested in changing their urban lifestyle.

There were four teachers in this school. All of them were also producers. At this writing, six students with different career backgrounds have attended the two-year course. One of them was a 40-year old man who managed a construction company in Tokyo. Each student had to pay ¥150,000 for tuition, and ¥140,000 per annum for admission and accommodation. Two trainees worked at the school without pay, in exchange for free tuition and other fees.

The school owns half a hectare for rice paddies, and rents 1.7 hectares for vegetable cultivation. It also engages in free-range poultry farming which can provide 5,000 eggs per week to consumers. Three cows and a horse are kept for their manure. Products are delivered once a week to 200 consumer households in Nagoya. Weighing and packing are done at the school; teachers take turns to deliver the products to Nagoya. In addition, products are delivered to 25 consumer households through the existing transportation system.

Except for the price of eggs which has been fixed for the past two years, prices are set by producer self-determination, after taking the market price and consumer demand into consideration. In general, they are more expensive than the market price. Each week, consumers receive a package of vegetables containing around 10 varieties. The varieties are changed from week to week.

The mutual-care relationship between producers and consumers has been maintained through a number of ways. The school publishes a weekly newsletter which carries information and knowledge on organic products. Consumers also visit the school regularly so that they become acquainted with the people there, and the experimental work done in the field. The school has a dormitory, which provides cheap meals for those who want to stay overnight.

At present, most of the products distributed to consumers come from the school. Only one producer household in the village has joined the project. It receives the full retail price for its produce, instead of 40% under the conventional market system.

Mr. Yomoto intends to enlarge the project in this village, especially by recruiting the older traditional farming producers, in cooperation with the village council. He plans to work with the Chubu Recycling Association in Nagoya, to expand the consumer base. One purpose of the association's newsletter is to introduce consumers to producers. Mr. Yomoto estimates that each producer has to have ten consumer households in order to be self-sufficient.

For a distribution system more "appropriate" with the future, he would like to experiment with a new system of modern transportation and communication whereby consumers can place their orders by mail, telephone, or through computers. To ensure mutual understanding between consumers and producers, he will organise more activities among them. He also feels that the traditional marketing system should be reactivated by local government authorities, especially for agricultural produce from remote areas.

3. Chikuren

The Chikuren was established in 1977 as a third party organization to handle the distribution and administration for eight consumer cooperatives in Fukuoka. Membership in these cooperatives totals 15,000 consumer households. Apart from the headquarters, Chikuren has set up north and south offices to handle delivery. The former is equipped with five 5-ton trucks and the latter, three. Each office has a modern distribution system using mini- and micro-computers, together with distribution lines.

Chikuren acts as a specialized and rational middleman. Each consumer cooperative has to pay 2% of their total monthly purchases for administrative costs, and 4.5%-5% for transportation costs. Under this system, Chikuren does not collect any margin from producers.

Consumer cooperatives get the produce from the Chikuren at a price set after direct consultation among consumers, producers and Chikuren. Consumer members have to pay their cooperatives 17% higher than the set price, due to administration and transportation costs incurred by Chikuren and the cooperatives. Members also have to pay an admission fee of ¥200,000, and a monthly membership fee of ¥500. If they earn profits, consumer cooperatives pay dividends to their members.

Chikuren is a distribution center for agricultural products such as fruits, vegetables, eggs and processed food. These are distributed to consumer cooperatives and two shops in which they have a small market share. These products are provided by individual farmers, farmers' groups and cooperatives.

Each consumer cooperative is divided into four groups. Each one is composed of several units with five to six consumer households. The north and south offices will deliver products to each group once a week, at each unit center.

There are two ways of price setting. First, supply contracts are signed between Chikuren and producers. Quantity and price are fixed for a year. Producers have to submit cost of production and production planning, including the technology process, to Chikuren. Apart from production cost, incentives for the next growing season and historical connections are used for price negotiation. Twice a year, Chikuren meets with producers. Chikuren will take responsibility for any oversupply. Under this system, there is no corresponding contract with consumers. Fortunately, the center has been able to dispose of any oversupply through orders from individual consumers.

The second system of price setting involves a demand contract with consumer cooperatives, under conditions similar to the first type. Here, consumer cooperatives argue to take all of the products, whatever the amount and however good or adverse the harvest. This system, called the "blue sky market", is used with 20% of consumer members.

The center tries to negotiate the setting of the same farm gate price for each producer. If producers' fields are located far away, they will get transportation compensation.

After negotiation between producers and Chikuren under the two systems, a meeting with consumer cooperatives will be held once a year to set the standard price.

One interviewee, Mr. Watari, a producer who sells his products through both the contract supply system and the blue sky market, expressed his satisfaction with Chikuren since he joined it in 1977. He feels safe to work in his farm using few agricultural chemicals. He can get in touch with consumers during their visits and can get their help in the harvest season. He has benefited especially from "Help Farmer Day" which is organised several times a year. Consumers learn more about the difficulties of farmers, which strengthens producer-consumer relations.

Mr. Watari's experience in organic farming was gained through self-experimentation, and by attending several seminars in Japan and in South Korea. He and his family have been very active in the movement. His mother is a leader of a group of 21 housewives who grow vegetables in their gardens. They sell their produce to Chikuren under the blue sky market system.

Mr. Watari farms 15 hectares of land, of which one hectare is for paddy field, one hectare for vegetables, and the rest for late harvested citrus. He cooperates with three other farmers in selling his vegetables — eggplant, spinach, tomato and sweet corn — under the blue sky market. He gives a lot of care to his crops because he would like to give the best to his consumers. Tomatoes are harvested when the crop is 90% ripe, instead of the common practice of 10%. On some days, he harvests the sweet corn at four o'clock in the morning so that they can reach consumers on the same day. Some vegetables are sold as a "vegetable set": vegetables in season are packed together and sold to consumers who do not know beforehand what the set contains. Packing is done in a small packing house near Mr. Watari's farm. He uses recycled materials for packing.

The gross annual revenue of the Watari family is more than ¥10,000,000, of which 60% is from citrus, 20% from vegetables and 20% from rice. The total production cost is 20% of gross revenue. Mr. Watari recently invested ¥5,000,000 in machines for paddy and barley farming. In order to make more efficient use of them, these machines are also lent to other farmers.

Mr. Watari would like to gain more experience and knowledge on organic farming techniques. He believes that research and development institutes should concentrate on this, which will benefit not only farmers and consumers, but will also contribute to the sustainability of the agricultural sector in the long run.

Observations and Conclusion

Through careful attention to the agricultural ecosystem, organic farming has succeeded in nurturing the self-sustaining capacity of the land. Organic farmers have maintained on the one hand an organic connection between the agricultural mode of life and their personal lifestyle, and on the other, the surrounding environment, the groves, forests and mountains. Organic farmers are not dependent on agricultural chemicals, the price of which is beyond their control. Production costs will also go down as a result of doing away with chemicals.

Productivity generally decreases at the initial stage of organic farming because the soil has already been depleted, and noxious insects have flourished as a consequence of widespread application of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Over time, however, productivity picks up to its former levels.

On the economic sphere, the structural transformation of the distribution system, as outlined in the case studies, leads to a secure

production price for producers. Generally speaking, their income is higher than those who sell their products in the conventional market.

The price of products from the Shitara Agricultural School is higher than market price. The parties of this school give 30% marketing margin to it, which is lower by half than the ordinary marketing margin.

The price of produce from the Society for Reflecting on the Throwaway Age and the Chikuren is determined by negotiation between producers, consumers and distribution centers. The price is fixed for the whole year, and reflects costs of production under uncertain weather and climatic conditions. Producers contracting with these two organizations get a higher farm gate price than those who sell to the conventional market.

Producers for the Society for Reflecting on the Throwaway Age enjoy particularly higher prices for cabbage (1175% more than the conventional market), tomato (672% more), and radish (441% more).[9] (See Table 2.) The differences seem to be due to the physical characteristics of root vegetables, for example, leafy vegetables which are hard to handle have a higher price. The marketing channel for organic farming is not a lengthy one, therefore marketing margins for all vegetables are quite similar at 30%, as shown in Table 3. In contrast, as shown in the same table, margins under the conventional market system range from 53.8% for cucumber to 102.2% for lettuce. Moreover, farmers dealing with the general marketing system, which has a lengthier marketing channel, have to absorb costs of damage while their goods are in transit.

Table 2.	Price of Vegetables in Conventional Market System and in Organic Farming System (unit: ¥ per kg)			
	Price Received by Farmers		Retail Price	
	Conventional	Organic	Conventional	Organic
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Cucumber	132.35	160.00	282.67	230.00
Eggplant	121.62	170.00	310.67	230.00
Chinese Cabbage	15.52	80.00	128.67	130.00
Tomato	118.89	800.00	277.67	1,000.00
Cabbage	8.51	100.00	136.67	150.00
Radish	18.10	80.00	152.67	130.00

Source: Conventional Market System: The Statistical Yearbook of Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries, Japan, 1984-85. Organic Farming Movement: Price Setting Agreement of the Society for Reflecting on the Throwaway Age, 1985.

Consumers of organic products pay a lower price than those in the conventional market system for most vegetables except tomato, cabbage and chinese cabbage (Table 2). In the case of the latter three, organic

farmers have to spend a lot of time caring for them for them to attain good quality. For these kinds of vegetable, organic farmers also receive a higher price than those dealing with the conventional market.

	Organic Farming		Conventional System	
	Producers' Share	Marketing Margin	Producers' Share	Marketing Margin
Radish	61.5	38.5	12.2	87.8
Chinese Cabbage	61.5	38.5	11.6	88.4
Cabbage	66.7	73.3	3.6	96.4
Cucumber	69.6	30.4	46.2	53.8
Tomato	80.0	20.0	45.8	54.2
Lettuce	n.a	n.a.	-2.2	102.2
Sweet Pepper	n.a.	n.a.	37.2	62.8
Onion	n.a.	n.a.	52.7	67.3

However, in some cases, such as of the Shitara Agricultural School, consumers pay a higher than market price for organic products. That is acceptable as long as consumers regarded the quality of the produce to be better for their health.

Since total household expenditures on fresh fruits, fresh vegetables and eggs in Kyoto and Nagoya amount to only 4%-4.5% of total living expenses each year,[10] it appears that consumers can afford organic farming products even though they may be more expensive than chemically grown products marketed in the conventional way.

On the social aspect, producers and consumers have maintained a close relationship because both of them are involved in production planning and price setting. The exact pattern of participation differs from case to case, but the fact is that they always make decisions together on matters affecting them. Participation is both formal and informal. For example, in Kyoto and Fukuoka, a general assembly is held once a year between producers, consumers and administrative staff of the distribution center, to set the standard price and determine crop varieties for the coming year. Discussion also takes place on the choice of technology. In Kyoto, consumers are also involved in implementation. They take turns to

work in the supply center which is run as a workers' collective. Consumers from all the three case studies also help in the distribution of their products.

The main objective of their participation is to express ecological consciousness and social solidarity. They put their ideas into practice by setting up and running their own distribution system based on non-exploitative economic and social relationships between producers and consumers. Mass participation in the central planning process takes place in Kyoto and Fukuoka, but not yet in Nagoya. When the latter grows, it is expected that the element of participation will be strengthened.

Social and economic relations have also been transformed under the new distribution and the central production planning systems. The decision-making process in both systems involves both producers and consumers. It successfully integrates central planning and decentralization. In addition to higher and more secure incomes, the organic farming system gives farmers greater self-fulfillment, more creativity, a pollution-free working environment, and a better relationship with consumers. Meanwhile, consumers will be sure of the quality of products they consume, even though they sometimes have to pay a higher price for them. They understand this is not exploitation because they know the way producers work and live on the land. Besides, economic incentive is not the only motivation for consumers to join the movement: of greater importance is the realization of the moral value of non-exploitative and non-destructive social and ecological relationships.

It is not a coincidence for the organic farming movement to be so widely and quickly accepted by the Japanese people in the last decade. Rapid economic growth has brought with it such evils as urbanization, community breakdown, alienation, increase in economic dependency on the dominant sector and ecological imbalance, which have led many people to have second thoughts on the mode of capitalistic development. This leads to a search for an alternative development which is less exploitative and environmentally sound. Many people have rediscovered organic farming. The organic farming movement however saw the limitation of simply changing the methods of cultivation. They offered a critique on the existing exploitative social and economic relationships, and have found an alternative which is based on people's participation.

The experience of the organic farming movement could be shared with the Third World countries, though the actual policies and technologies have to be adjusted to suit the particular historical circumstance, people's values, culture and natural resource base of each country. In order to retain the dynamism of the organic farming movement, the following recommendations are offered:

1. A popular educational programme should be designed to create mutual understanding between producers and consumers. The programme should aim to heighten consumer awareness of the conditions of production, and impart skills to enable them to become producers themselves. It would be helpful in this respect to arrange visits by consumers to farm sites.

2. A systematic way to organize volunteers and workers' collectives should be adopted. As more housewives are absorbed into part-time employment, the movement, which until now has depended on housewives as volunteers and workers, may be adversely affected. Meanwhile, the booming demand for healthy and safe food has caught the interest of the business people. However, the latter will tend to neglect the kind of social relationships between producers and consumers and ecological concerns that the organic farming movement promotes. Large scale commercial involvement in organic farming may create problems for the type of movements discussed in this article. It is likely that they will have to establish a certain kind of public education campaign to convince people of their philosophy and win their support. Development of the movement should be aimed at broader social involvement. Emphasis on people's participation will not only strengthen the commitment of the existing membership, but will also attract new members, especially from those groups who have become disenchanted with the market economy and are looking for alternatives.

3. It is the responsibility of the organic farming movement to improve the productivity of organic farming. However, the government as facilitator should endorse policy guidelines to promote research and development in organic farming techniques in its agencies and institutes.

4. Government should support the expansion of organic farming by improving fiscal policy. For example, taxes on fuel and chemical inputs should be raised to a level that would reflect the real social costs of using these inputs. Meanwhile, incentives like farm conversion subsidies and conservation grants should be extended to organic farmers.

5. Opportunities should be created for organic farming groups to share their experiences on the national and international levels. However successful or unsuccessful their experiences may be, sharing these would be essential for the strengthening and spreading of the movement. This may pave the way for national and international cooperation. Collective self-reliance on a national and international

level should be promoted on the basis of interdependence among equal partners so as to strengthen solidarity and enable it to prevail over blind capitalist competition.

Footnotes

1. ECOSOC of U.N., E/5809, 28 April 1976.

2. The areas selected for study were recommended by Prof. Nakamura Hisashi, Faculty of Economics, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan, and Associate Professor Hiroshi Tsujii, Farm Accounting Institute, Faculty of Agriculture, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan.

3. Contributions by David Bateman and Nic Lampkin, Howard Newby and Hartmut Vogtmann, "Access to Land", in Paul Ekins, (Ed.), 1986, p. 178.

4. Agricultural, Forestry and Fisheries Finance Corporation, Outline of Agriculture, Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Finance in Japan, 1981, p. 5.

5. Ibid., pp. 5 & 6.

6. Ibid., p. 5.

7. Ibid., p. 18.

8. For the 1977 figure, see Shiro Futaguni, "Country Reports on the Status of Producers' Marketing Associations", in Asian Productivity Organization, 1981, p. 268. For 1983 figures, see the Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, 1984, p. 32.

9. The lack of data in the same year from the government and the Society for Reflecting on the Thowaway Age has made us use data in different years. The price level does not change a lot from year to year, and the ones shown in the table are still used.

10. Annual Report on Family Income and Expenditure Survey, Statistical Bureau Management and Coordination Agency, Japan, 1984, Table 3.

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Development Cooperation:
Contribution of International NGOs (INGOs)
Towards Promoting People's Initiatives in Asia

Discussions and recommendations of the consultation organized by the Asian Cultural Forum
on Development (ACFOD), Bangkok, Thailand, 29-31 March 1988

The consultation was organized in order to explore with a select group of Asian NGOs, new and innovative programming strategies for the Asian region, and in particular, to share successes and failures of current activities undertaken by Asian NGOs, and explore possible alternatives for the future.

After a discussion on realities in the Asian region, the search for an Asian identity and the uniqueness with which the region is endowed, the group proceeded to talk about NGO responses to Asian realities, their strengths as well as constraints and weaknesses. NGOs in Asia were seen to respond in different fields and with varying priorities, ranging from basic needs services, to human resource development activities, solidarity-building activities, and alliance-building in order to face challenges. However, one constraint recognized is that NGOs have no visible impact on the national policy. Added to this constraint are some internal weaknesses, for example, lack of leadership, failure to incorporate cultural values of the communities they work with in their operations, and at times, organizational weaknesses. Nevertheless, the flexibility, creativity and responsiveness of NGOs to the cause of various sectors of society, particularly the poor, must be recognized as their major strengths.

Attention was then focused on networking, which was considered to be one of the most promising roles NGOs could play.

Networking is to be seen as collectively creating space for people's initiatives at the grassroots level, and promoting cooperation with respect to the potential and creativity of people at the base.

Networking is one of the areas where International NGOs (INGOs) are making efforts. It emerges out of the need and desire to interact and to share, to promote principles and values, to gain collective strength and to mobilise resources in response to the needs and challenges of the day. Networking takes away the feeling of remoteness, isolation sometimes felt by individuals, communities and nationalities, and facilitates a process of building understanding based on common concerns and a common vision.

Networking could be effectively used at the grassroots level through the following means:

- Pick up operational models already tried and tested at the village level, and give it respectability. Any idea, approach and method usually discussed and publicized abroad is taken more seriously back home.

- Highlight examples where village knowledge, skills and experience have been used to mobilize and develop people, thus promoting self-reliance to some extent.

- Encourage more indigenous definitions on current buzz words such as professionalism, management, community participation, public cooperation, organizing the poor, etc. It may even vary from country to country. It would be fatal to standardize.

- Make case studies that show innovation, improvisation, flexibility and village self-reliance, as well as the use of informal non-institutional human resources.

Among the NGOs networking must increase the strength of each partner — but not to increase control by the promoters of networking.

Role of Networking in the National Context

1. Strengthening of internal (natural) linkages among NGOs and across sectoral concerns of health, ecology and environment, women, rural issues, etc.

2. Strengthening of national linkages: this should be done on the basis of each NGO's concerns of work in a national context, but not on the basis of externally induced linkages or artificially forced premises of external support. Attempts to build an atmosphere or basis for ethics in NGO work should not be divisive; these should be situated within the context of NGO work and not in terms of external reference points of government or external agencies. The establishment of national linkages and interaction among NGOs would have the aims of enhancing the quality of NGO work and their relationship to the target groups; and ensuring government recognition of NGO work, rather than forcing NGOs to relate to government.

3. National linkages and interaction, through a process of exchange of accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise, can deepen the individual areas of work of NGOs. Such NGO-grassroots linkages can serve as horizontal network building, that allows for sharing of non-conventional knowledge resources that form the strength of

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people-oriented activity. These horizontal processes can be seriously damaged, and destructive vertical relations will emerge, if any of the participating NGOs becomes pontificating or arrogant, due to their closeness to power, the establishment or other symbols of authority. Leaders of NGO activity cannot be oblivious to the fact that their own social background and processes of socialisation can make them bring modes of intervention and action that are alien and external to ongoing processes of learning and interaction. In the long run, rhetorical assertion of the correctness of one's self-knowledge can only cause very deep, divisive and destructive processes in voluntary work.

**Role of Networking in the Regional Context –
Asian Paradigms, Perspectives and Consciousness Context**

1. People's activity and creativity are founded on the strengthening of autonomy. The women's movement is a partial example of the strengthening of autonomy. Autonomy vis-a-vis debilitating systemic forces, can be established at different levels, from local to national. Where then does the extra-national or transnational level come in?

   Transnational processes (through consumerism, investment activity and so on) are becoming more and more powerful. Conscious participation in international activity only reinforces this deculturalisation process vaguely referred to as 'Westernisation'. In such a context, Asian interaction processes are one means of creating a strong, viable intermediate process. Serious, in-depth interaction and building of an autonomous regional space in a highly imbalanced global context, allow for a better understanding of indigenous knowledge systems and sharing of existing rich resources at the national level. Emphasis on and rediscovery of the ecological, cultural and other 'non- economic' dimensions of development result as a process of catalytic regional interaction. This is a very important aspect of strengthening regional interaction and Asian perspectives.

2. Areas of regional interaction as potential for further strengthening of Asian perspectives: ecology/environment; women and children; science and technology; indigenous knowledge systems; critical Asian thinking; information needs of NGO work; and internal NGO processes, structures, ethics, etc.

Role of Networking in the Global Context

1. International NGOs at this particular movement must recognize that globally there is a systematic destruction of multilateral processes. INGOs, particularly those involved in aid and support activity, must make efforts to ensure that they do not strengthen destructive

bilateralism. Attempts to reach grassroots activity directly and to target them as direct beneficiaries, while correct in themselves, should not cause a dichotomy between the important roles INGOs may have in a global and regional context, and their support of local or grassroots activity.

2. Identification of the specific character of different regional processes in the developing world is necessary for any creative interaction even at the national or local level. Globalisation of categories of the concerns of development, while necessary, can be a hindrance in the quest for general perspectives to deal with all of the developing world. Particularities of each developing region must be addressed and regional autonomies must be recognised, too, in order to more creatively address the realities of development.

Dimensions of Networking

1. *Information dissemination.* The fact is that very few people read and so new ways and means have to be found to disseminate information (combination of sight and sound/audio-visual). We have to extract wisdom from our knowledge and knowledge from our information. We should more and more encourage the translation of information in regional languages — not English which reaches very few, besides, there is little point in converting the converted. We must choose areas of strength and concentrate on them (e.g., provision of basic energies on global issues — disarmament, nuclear arms, etc.) if the idea is to interact with village groups in the long run. An attempt must be made to demystify information. For instance, knowledge on technology must be made easy to understand.

2. *Development cooperation*: It is becoming obvious that there is more to a partnership than money. The question of common concerns, common vision, ideology and ethics, mutual trust, human values, are essential components of people-centered development cooperation.

The question of setting an example does influence and condition a relationship between partners. Cooperation must always promote, encourage and support moves that lead to self-sufficiency at the village level and do not result in dependency on foreign funds.

Of course, in this process, there are dilemmas and risks involved. Cooperation should not lead to cooptation either by the government or by the funding partners. At the same time we should not refrain from exploring the possibilities of cooperation to accelerate the process of development.

Areas	Risk	Possibilities
Government-NGO collaboration	Cooptation	Influence in national policy to accelerate the process of development
International cooperation South-South North-South	Less emphasis at the base	Wider alliance and global perspective
Empowerment of the people	Misunderstood as capture of state power	Emergence of autonomous people's organisations
Funding agency-NGO relationship	More money, emphasis on structure and growth	Common understanding, sharing of responsibilities and resources

3. *Human resource development as a new thrust.* It has been experienced by many NGOs that in some cases people at the base are able to raise their income through an economic project. But still, their quality of life did not improve. For example, with NGO intervention a fishing community is able to earn more money but their spending has been more towards modern consumerism; similarly, the sericulturist is spending more money for alcohol than before.

The participants strongly felt that more efforts should be made towards promoting human values, confidence in and respect for own culture. Human resource development, particularly to bring new generation in leadership, remains an important area.

Mobilisation of local resources and participation of the people in determining their own future, and effective communication media are among the challenging areas that need to be strengthened.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The meeting was useful as it allowed a frank exchange of views and perspectives and included useful insights based on the collective experience and wisdom of the participants.

The meeting was successful as it was able to identify possible areas of cooperation based on the perception of the needs, realities and possibilities of the NGOs participating in the consultation.

As the Asian realities demand all-out efforts in fighting poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ill health and injustices prevailing in society, NGOs are becoming more and more essential and vital in the development process so that people can live in peace, and leave behind an enriched Asia for the generations to come.

In order to be able to make that colossal task possible, existing NGOs at all levels should work unitedly, keeping their identity under the diversified national and local situation, through a network which promotes unity in diversity.

Areas For Further Follow-up

1. A process should be initiated towards updating information about International NGOs in Asia, and keeping each other informed possibly by publishing a directory subject to periodical review.

2. One major area of discussion was on the possible government and NGO cooperation in development activities at various levels — local, national and international. It was suggested that a conference be organised and co-sponsored by the various International NGOs in Asia.

3. Alternative policy development was another area where INGOs can work together. This can also be a process to look at legal and institutional constraints which hinder NGO activities. It was suggested that funding partners also work towards a policy which is supportive of people-centered development.

4. It was decided to document alternative development experiences and to continue exchange programmes
   a. at local, national and Asian level
   b. South-South Exchange
   c. North-South sharing.

5. Further efforts should be made in training towards human resource development aiming at preparing new generations to take responsibility. It should particularly stress micro/macro perspectives and organic links as well as training and promotional work on appropriate technology.

6. Interaction at leadership level of various INGOs should be continued.

7. More efforts should be made towards mobilisation of resources as alternatives to grants.

Dictatorship and Revolution
— Roots of People's Power

One of the unusal events that has attracted much attention of Asian scholars and watchers in the last few years is the "February Revolution" of the Philippines in 1986. The people of the Philippines brought down the President whom they elected to office in 1969 by withdrawing their support for the regime. The nature of such non-violent revolution, or "people power" as referred to by Filipinos, has already invited massive studies. But perhaps equally worth studying is how a popularly elected President, who is the first man ever to win a second full term of presidency in Philippine history, subsequently turned himself into a dictator and managed to put the whole country under his mercy.

The book *Dictatorship and Revolution*, edited by A. de Dios et al., will certainly shed light on the above questions. The book consists of two parts. The first part includes six articles and one epilogue written by different authors. These articles are related to one another chronologically, beginning from a discussion of the socio-economic and political situation before the imposition of martial law, up to the downfall of the Marcos regime and the aftermath of Aquino's victory. The second part of this book is a collection of important documents ranging from government and Congressional papers, resolutions of the Church, press statements, to manifestoes of opposition movements.

Written in a journalistic manner, the articles present a historical survey of the past twenty years. As pointed out by the editors in the preface of the book, "underlying the basic approach [of a people's history] is a personalization of the interplay with the larger political and social forces by drawing on contemporary perspectives for viewing them". (p. xi) The authors thus attempt to reconstruct the historical process by focusing on the interaction between the actors and the social condition.

The book offers a critical assessment of the crucial events taken place in the last two decades, focusing on the making of the Marcos autocracy and the erosion of the dictatorship. The analysis of the events is supplemented by primary documents. The epilogue on the other hand assesses the major issues confronting the present Aquino government. It discusses the Marcos legacy and the social forces, both internal and external, which continue to shape the future of the Philippines.

The problem of the book is that it looks at the events too closely in detail so that a macro-interpretation of the historical process is difficult to construct, if not absent. The comprehensive analysis of events has been done at the expense of transcending the events into intelligible trends of historical development. Each chapter is composed of numerous sections (from more than 10 to 30), but which are terribly unorganized. The actors are identified and every crucial event discussed, but their relative significance in this turbulent period is not uncovered. It is left to the reader to sort out an articulated picture from the vast number of incidents.

NGO Tak Wing

Punishing the Poor:
The International Isolation of Kampuchea

Indochina has been engaged in intermittent wars ever since the end of World War II. These conflicts have caught the attention of many writers. A plethora of works has been produced, some of which are nothing short of propaganda serving a particular vested interest. Some others tend to limit themselves to purely academic research and forge their analysis with an aloof and detached attitude. *Punishing the Poor* stands out as a book that voices the concerns of the victimizd people, while at the same time providing an in-depth anlysis of the Kampuchean question.

The book, commissioned by 31 non-governmental organisations working either inside Kampuchea or on the Thai-Kampuchean border, aims to "refocus world attention on the plight of the Khmer people and to create an international consensus for urgent action to end the deadlock over Kampuchea." (p. ix) The book is livened up with plenty of photos, maps, human interest stories, chronologies of events, and highly informative appendices. Recommendations are also made at the revelant sections for resolving the plight of the Kampuchean people.

The crucial issue touched by the book is the international isolation of the Kampuchean people, and the denial by the U.N. and the Western governments of developmental aid to Kampuchea, which is a direct consequence of the political machination and power diplomacy operating at a level beyond the reach of the common Kampuchean people. The land, children and families of the Kampucheans have been destroyed by the successive waves of conflicts, and now they are denied international development aid because they have been invaded.

The author emphasizes the stark contrast between the aid embargo imposed on the people living under the Heng Samrin regime, and the continued granting of aid to those living under the control of the opposition forces in the Thai-Kampuchea border, and who benefit from generous relief programmes. This arrangement is largely a result of political motivation because the aid not only serves to destabilize the Phnom Penh regime, but also helps the opposition coalition government to maintain a population base, from where it gets its soldiers to fight the Vietnamese/PRK forces, and which has also been used as evidence of its legitimacy. In this light, the author criticizes the United Nations of "doing the 'dirty work' for political interests and that the border operation is a misuse and an abuse of the UN system." (p. 115)

The author points out that the United Nations has adopted a double standard on this embargo, because Afghanistan and Uganda continue to receive U.N. development assistance during periods of foreign occupation. The biggest irony, however, is that the invader, Vietnam, has never ceased to be a recipient of U.N. development aid.

The embargo of development aid started in 1981 after the food emergency in Kampuchea was declared over, although humanitarian aid has never been excluded. As exemplified by the author, this has given rise to ridiculous situations, for instance, "...the UN can drill a new well at a village school but it cannot repair a damaged well in the same village. It means that it [UN] cannot help to maintain the fleet of lorries and machinery which it provided during the emergency period between 1979 and 1981." (p. 76)

The embargo was actively promoted by the U.S. Yet if one were to go by the U.S. government's definition of development aid, as "aid designed to begin new enterprises or operate old ones at previously [i.e., before Vietnam War] unattainable levels" (p. 8), one would easily conclude that aid given to Kampuchea to reconstruct itself would not, at the present conjuncture, even fall within this scope. The author argues that at the moment, nothing in Kampuchea has reached "previously unattainable levels", let alone "previously attainable levels". The U.S. has also consistently obstructed the provision of aid to Kampuchea and, according to one American NGO worker whom the author interviewed, "women, children and men in Kampuchea have in effect been declared enemies of the U.S., and U.S. agencies are being used to implement foreign policy." (p. 82)

Without development aid, the suffering of the Kampuchean people is unnecessarily prolonged. Perhaps, if we care to look into the genesis of the series of conflicts, super power and regional power politics have played a very important role. It should be argued that it is a responsibility of the international community and in particular, those countries which have directly or indirectly brought about the wars, to rehabilitate and reconstruct.

The urgency of breaking the current stalemate is no question if we look from the angle of the people. However, this hope of the people has not been a significant consideration on the diplomacy table of the governments, which actually find the current conflict tolerable, if not beneficial. According to the author, "The chronic, low level nature of the protracted war poses no serious threat to the Vietnamese-installed PRK government nor does it involve any heavy costs to the interested protagonists. Too many western governments comfortable with the status

quo, hesitate to jeopardise the advantages it confers on them." (p.122) Given that the major parties (excluding the Kampuchean people) find the cost of maintaining the conflict tolerable, the diplomatic game will continue with no hope of finding a solution.

A possible initial step towards peace settlement is, according to the author, the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from the border area in exchange for the cessation of external material support to the Khmer Rouge. The author also acknowledges that improved relations between the U.S., Vietnam, the U.S.S.R., China and the Asia-Pacific countries is pivotal to the success of the peace settlement.

An integral part of the recommendation is to unseat the opposition coalition government from the U.N. and keep the seat empty until such time that a popularly elected government has been formed after the ceasefire. This way, the U.N. maintains itself as a neutral party, and effectively facilitates a negotiated settlement. The author also advocates bringing the Khmer Rouge leadership before the International Court of Justice, as part of the programme for the destruction of the Khmer Rouge as a force.

The existence of the Khmer Rouge is hinged on three factors: the sanctuaries in Thailand, the legitimacy given it by the international community and the provision of military supplies from China. The deprivation of the latter, according to the author's scheme, may in effect cripple the Khmer Rouge. Therefore, whether it is considered a fair exchange for the partial withdrawal of Vietnam from the border area is questionable.

Perhaps, we should not involve ourselves too far in this kind of speculation. However, the proposal reflects a plea for the total elimination of the Khmer Rouge. This point is stressed in a much stronger sense than the demand for the the withdrawal of the Vietnam troops. The destruction of the Khmer Rouge and the prevention of its return to power is described to be the paramount concern of the Kampuchean people, and under the current situation, such a prevention can only be possible with the presence of Vietnamese troops. That is the bitter pill the Kampuchean people have had to swallow.

Scattered throughout the book are descriptions of the cruelty and violence done by the Khmer Rouge to the Kampuchean people, for which reason the author supports the convening of an international court to hold them responsible for their crimes. Although the author, on a few occasions, has also recognized the roots of the present conflict in the U.S.-Vietnam War (p. 123), and has also acknowledged in a footnote the existence of a "non-standard total view" that widely different situations

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have taken place in different parts of the country during the Khmer Rouge Years (p. 143, fn. 12), she attributes much of the destruction and the present problems faced by the Kampuchean people, to the Khmer Rouge. More or less, the same situation happened in China where the present leadership holds the Gang of Four accountable for all the evils.

With the evidence released by the PRK government and other research that came up after the defeat of the Khmer Rouge, there seems to be no question that the Khmer Rouge was a cruel and authoritarian regime. However, too much emphasis on the role of the Khmer Rouge would bring about an undesirable effect, especially in a book which is supposed to conscientize people outside the country. That is, the localization of the cause of the suffering of the people. As the Khmer Rouge is made up of Khmer people, and with no support from the western government, the blame of the war can comfortably be put on the Khmer Rouge, and that is all. Such localization is not helpful in studying the cause of the present tragedy because many destructions were done in the U.S.-Vietnam War. It is already common knowledge that Indochina has more or less become a testing ground for the U.S. military technology during the war. It could be further argued that the ascendancy of Khmer Rouge could not be separated from the U.S. support for Lon Nol during his coup in 1970. The failure to give enough weight to the exogenous factor would not just be insufficient to appreciate the roots of the cause and subsequently the prospect of solution, but also fails to instill in the readers a sense of responsibility, as citizens of the government which directly or indirectly contributed to the cause of the war, to actively engaged in a solidarity movement for the ending of the present conflict.

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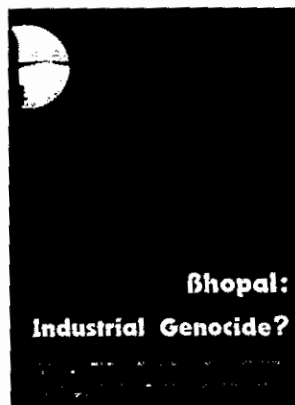
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