

Further Observations

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As Michael Lipton seems to have missed the basic thrust of my argument, I believe it is necessary to reiterate the underlying points on which my observations rest.

The central theme is that knowledge is to a large extent socially determined. No-one in these days of Kuhn will deny this proposition in the case of even the physical sciences, let alone the social. Secondly, in the case of the dependent peripheral countries, legitimated knowledge is determined by the **particular** socio-economic relationships between the centre and the dependent periphery. This means that, with some notable exceptions which we will discuss later, legitimated knowledge of a fundamental nature has continued to develop in the centre and spread to the periphery. (I use the word legitimated because there is a strong undercurrent of social comment which is not represented in the scholarly literature in Sri Lanka). There are bureaucratic aspects to knowledge both in the centre and the periphery, but knowledge in the periphery under the dominant socio-economic relationship has historically remained more bureaucratized, more routinized and more dependent than in the centre. Also, in cases where the centre does not generate knowledge, it acts as a clearing house, transmitter and legitimizer of knowledge in the periphery.

This is the broad thrust of my argument and I would hasten to add that it is not *per se* a "call to a return to a cultural encapsulation", or for an end to exchange of ideas between the developed and developing countries, or for evolving an individual social science for every developing country, as Michael implies. On the contrary, I desire a really free exchange, but because of the structural dependent relationship there is in actuality no free exchange of ideas: a relationship of unequal exchange exists, paralleling that in the economic sphere. This unequal exchange of ideas is upheld by a set of socio-economic relationships that can only be described as imperialistic.

Some of these relationships I had touched upon in the original article but I wish to give two further examples. One is the unfair situation where Western researchers have formal and informal access to resources and information in

Third World countries because of the weight of their countries of origin, which no Third World researcher is ever reciprocally afforded in the Western world—or for that matter in his own country. There is also the almost ludicrous example of visiting economists advising Third World countries about solving problems of unemployed graduates including unemployed economists: the graduate unemployment largely solved thereby is that of the visiting foreign experts.

Further, what I am complaining about is not that there has been no emergence of a Marx or a Keynes in the Third World generally, as Lipton believes my position to be, but that there has been no appearance of an Andre Gunder Frank, a Santos, a Stavenhagen or a Furtado in certain Third World countries in South Asia. It is my contention that it is not smallness of size of a country (as implied by Lipton) that prevents such emergence but the dependent structural relationships with external reference groups etc. There are in Sri Lanka a large number of unemployed and under-employed economic graduates, yet we have sought much foreign economic expertise. I would guess that there are more social scientists in Sri Lanka today than in Great Britain at the time of Marx; and a number comparable to that in Sweden in the 1940s when a Myrdal was produced.

Why the Latin Americans were able to produce a vigorous body of development knowledge (which is now being legitimized and re-transmitted by centres like the IDS to the rest of the Third World) is because in the 1960s they critically confronted the analyses and solutions propagated by the metropolitan centre.

Gamini Corea, whom Michael cites as an example of a successful Sri Lankan economist, has reached eminence partly by filling positions created initially by the work of these Latin Americans. I believe Corea (or Lal Jayawardena, the other Sri Lankan economist whom Lipton cites) would be the last to identify himself as an original contributor to serious socio-economic thought in the manner of some Latin Americans.

Michael cites the first ten-year plan of Sri Lanka which was fathered by Corea and legitimized by foreign economists. It was also similarly acknowledged by Lipton's former colleague, Myrdal, as a good technical exercise—but not a fundamental intellectual breakthrough. But the latter drew attention to the crucial fact that the Plan had

* Because of space limitations, this reply is brief and touches only the main points of Lipton's article.

very little effect on development in the country because it had no organic interaction with the social, economic and political reality. (As illustrative of this lack of inter-action, compare for instance the very healthy relationship at an institute like the IDS where students and staff can confront each other as at least nominal equals with the situation existing in Sri Lanka where **Sri Lankan** visiting economists have almost no contact with the local university community). Similarly, Lipton's admired Indian economists, who (according to him) cannot carry through their excellent suggestions because of the perfidy of politicians, also belong to this genre of unrealistic economic technocrats.

What has prevented South Asian social scientists breaking new ground is perhaps their inability to recognize the conceptual inadequacy of their handed-down sciences to match the social reality in their countries. They are, in Naipaul's term, 'Mimic Men'.

I believe Lipton's cry for what may be called a free trade policy for academic exchange is unrealistic and unfair; due to the present structural limitations, such exchanges would inevitably be unequal and would benefit only those at the resource-rich end. (This tendency to wish away reality is perhaps the neo-colonial economist's constant blind spot). Yet a degree of social scientific self-reliance has been successful in development strategies, as witness the cases of the USSR, China, North Korea or even Japan ('Wakon Yasai'). Moreover, countries in the Middle East, by purely political decisions, have set themselves on firm development paths. (Western development experts in cases of conflict of interest as arise in the Middle East would have a natural tendency not to recommend policies that would ultimately go against their own interests).

The points I have made are being increasingly realized by social scientists in dependent countries. Several pronouncements on academic colonialism have been coming through loud and clear from all three continents (Santiago—a signatory here was Gamini Corea—Abidjan, New Delhi etc.). The future relationship in the development scene is to be at least one between equals. We are entering a phase of selective discrimination against western academics (either formally or informally). To prevent projects like Camelot, foreign researchers will increasingly be put under the direct supervision of local academics. The academic proletariat and the colonized are about to break their chains, and if the erstwhile colonizers do not heed the warning signs in time, they will soon find themselves without their jobs.