

WP3
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The 1980's and Third Quinquennium Strategy

(a submission by Dudley Seers)

1. The third Quinquennium of IDS falls in a new stage in the post-colonial transformation of relations between industrial countries and the rest of the world - a transformation which is now so rapid that institutions which fail to adjust will become professional backwaters, if they survive.
2. The question is therefore what is a viable scenario for IDS in the 1980's. All plans for activities, organisation, size, etc., start from there.
3. The first step is to state what would not be a viable scenario, in my view. The 1980's will be difficult for a European institution which primarily carries out research on the internal problems of the Third World, mounting courses on these problems in Europe and offers advice to overseas governments on how to solve them. Access to research will not be readily available on this basis; few will want to come to Europe to study their own country's problems (except for the touristic spinoff); and advice on central policy issues will be rarely invited. These symptoms are already evident. Dr. Onitiri of Ibadan's NISER recently called on European institutes to "phase out" of development studies. Any European institution that persists in a paternalistic role will find it acquires a bad reputation abroad and faces serious morale difficulties among its staff.
4. This non-viable scenario is relevant, because it is precisely what IDS was set up to do - and still largely attempts. If I am right, the Third Quinquennium should be

considered, not (as the second was) as a period of incremental change, but as one of qualitative restructuring. We need on these problems minds as big as Andrew Cohen's, who saw that the Bridges Committee scenario was not viable for the late 1960's.

5. Lest this seems to open up a vision of endless basic changes, two points should be made. First, we have in fact already been moving away from the non-viable role in various ways (increasing comparative research and attention to British policy). Secondly, we can look at the next decade as the last major stage of the post-colonial transformation: if we find the right role in the 1980's we might be able to strengthen our position by incremental changes thereafter.
6. A viable scenario must be built on the hypothesis that development problems are our problems too - problems of distribution, unemployment, absorption of technology, administrative reform, "tourist pollution", educational relevance, etc., indeed that these are international problems, caused by powerful forces running through the world as a whole. They take different forms in different countries, but we are no longer a very "special case".
7. An important gap in our work has been comparative research and teaching on British experience - not because this is a model: we make a lot of mistakes and the circumstances are different. We would of course point all this out. But the reality is that what is happening in Britain in many fields is interesting, even exciting, to the rest of the world, more so than ever now that we are in the throes of structural tension ourselves. Examples are educational policy, transport planning, the role of unions, health services, broadcasting, structure, regional devolution, social statistics, local absorption of oil investment,

negotiations with international oil companies. These would in fact be candidates for subject specialisation in the fourth quinquennium - and therefore relevant to recruitment in the third. (Though the availability of British material would not be the only criterion for a research project).

8. We should aim to have more exponents of British policy speaking to seminars in particular problem areas. For example, if we run a seminar on health services, we should invite BMA and Department of Health to speak (not only on the NHS, but also on the 'brain drain' of doctors)*¹. It is rather self-indulgent of us to expect overseas visitors to be interested in our own private theories at IDS - especially theories about their problems. (We should also, however, be able to take students to study overseas cases).
9. This would not rule out overseas research in relevant fields - but nearly always as part of a comparative project, including one British (or at least European)^{*2} case study, and within a framework of institutional cooperation. (We

*1 I made a mistake in SS40 in not responding more quickly to the request of participants to hear official views on our energy policy, and oil company representatives on exploration policies - this is what they had come expecting and wanting to hear, quite understandably since these are objective realities with which they have to cope.

*2 Particularly relevant in many fields would be case studies in Southern Europe or Ireland, because their structural characteristics are usually rather closer to those of countries overseas.

also need to cooperate much more frequently with British institutions).

10. A further reason for overseas research lies in the second comparative advantage that a British institution has - it is a good place for those working on world models. World models are necessary to throw light on the context within which technology transfers and adaptations take place, and on the population - resource balance; their national dimensions need to be studied and understood. London is still a leading market (especially for commodities) and centre for contacts.
11. The third area in which we have a comparative advantage is of course British overseas policy - in fields such as trade, migration, private investment, aid, etc. Special attention should be directed towards identifying where interests of Britain and overseas countries are compatible (instead of assuming that they are never - or always - compatible).
12. In these three areas there could well still be study seminars (or better, study groups) - and work on world models would provide material for the M.Phil. But the study would be more like conferences, and could well be shorter. (There is a rather irrational gap between the typical week's length of a conference and the 5 - 6 weeks of a study seminar). And we should have British participants in all - perhaps mainly or only British participants in seminars on British policy.
13. This approach implies that we would not attempt to tailor most research to the policies of overseas governments. Much research

would not be directly orientated to particular policy questions at all; however, much of it would be found relevant by policy makers in all types of country.

14. This scenario does not imply many overseas study seminars - they would still require exceptional justification, perhaps more so with this new orientation. We would however make an effort to strengthen overseas courses by loans of staff etc., where invited to do so.
15. Our functions as a base for visiting fellows would increase. We would try to integrate them more completely into research groups - and to see that they had ample opportunity to work on our problems.
16. We would do little work, if any, for foreign governments on internal matters of policy, though hopefully we might be involved on issues of international policy as we would with some international agencies, national research and training institutions on research methodology, teaching syllabuses, etc.
17. One use of consultancy to us would be to make our own work less parochial. Another way of achieving the same end, necessary on any scenario, would be to restructure the Governing Body, so as to make it largely international, meeting annually (or to create an international advisory body).
18. This scenario would not need a much bigger staff, though additional Fellows would be needed for the new types of work - several if we give a form of tenure to existing Fellows.

19. My hunch is that many existing fellows would welcome this new orientations. It would be compatible with Emanuel de Kadt's "own backyard" memorandum, and would relieve the intolerable tensions arising when the rich preach redistribution to others. In any case the change of direction would not be sudden.

20. We would, however, need rather more funds for the flexibility required by this scenario - travel funds and research funds (the types of research proposed would be more difficult to finance). We need to be able to enter on cooperative ventures with some resources to offer.

21. We can hope that ODM will be far-sighted enough to see the necessity of adjusting our functions to changes in the outside world that are evident for all to see. Indeed there are some aspects of this change of direction that would appeal to them. While it does not have resource implications very different from those of other scenarios, it would be useful to get a new emphasis endorsed by the Third Quinquennium Working Party and the Governing Body.

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