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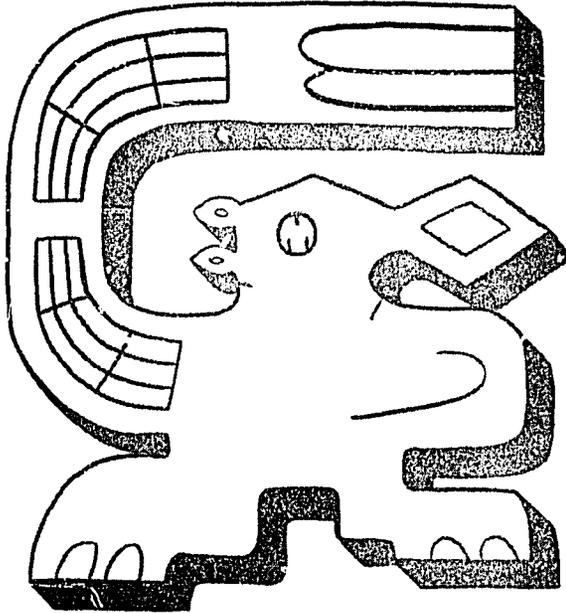
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# Difficulties and Prospects for Community Development in Northeast Brazil

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## Difficulties and Prospects for Community Development in Northeast Brazil

*By Belden Paulson \**

This paper stems from a background of six years of overseas work on the level of the local community, mostly in South Italy. The last two summers I have been in Northeast Brazil, this past summer leading an interdisciplinary team under the auspices of the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin, to do preliminary research for a later project which could be called community development.

This statement is divided into four sections: notes on the situation in Northeast Brazil, short defining comments on the concept of community development, some difficulties facing community development in Northeast Brazil, and some prospects for its feasibility in that area.

I. *Notes on Situation in Northeast Brazil.* Northeast Brazil is an area of approximately 1.5 million square kilometers, encompassing nine of Brazil's 25 states and territories. Its population of nearly 25 million is one-third the national population. Sudene, Brazil's most important development agency, which since 1959 has been charged with coordinating and supervising all

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federal government projects related to the development of the Northeast, has concluded that "the Northeast is the most extensive and populated area in the whole Western Hemisphere with an income level below U. S. \$100 per inhabitant,"<sup>1</sup> calling it "the major underdevelopment problem of the Western Hemisphere . . . similar to that of South-East Asia and Africa."<sup>2</sup> There are the accompanying characteristics of many very low income areas:

1. *Concentrated wealth.* There are reports, for example, that the relatively few families of big sugarmen in Pernambuco, one of the region's richest States, own 50% of the State's wealth. Until now there has been very little action to redistribute wealth through progressive taxation or agrarian reform.

2. *Extreme land tenure patterns.* While land tenure varies greatly in the Region, the latifundia-minifundia dichotomy is sharpest in the most densely populated areas on the East coast, such as the States of Pernambuco and Paraiba. In Paraiba, for example, 61.74% of the farms have less than 10 hectares and account for only 6.26% of total land, while at the other end 0.37% of the farms have 1000 Hectares or more and account for 25.26% of total land.<sup>3</sup> The larger farms also tend to be bunched in the humid fertile area near the coast.

3. *Heavy rural population.* While statistics on the rural-urban relationship are inaccurate due to rapid change and depending on definition of terms, the 1960 census reported that 66.2% of the Northeast population was rural and 33.8% urban.<sup>4</sup> This has

<sup>1</sup> Presidencia da Republica, Superintendencia do Desenvolvimento do Nordeste, *The Brazilian Northeast, Sudene and Its First Guiding Plan*, Recife, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Presidencia da Republica, SUDENE, *The Bases of Development Policy for the Northeast of Brazil and Scheme of Sudene's Five-Year Plan*, Recife, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> IBGE, *Estado do Paraiba, Sinopse Preliminar do Censo Agricola*, 1960, Rio de Janeiro, 1963, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> IBGE, *Anuario Estatistico do Brasil*, 1962, Rio de Janeiro, 1962, p. 27.

particular significance in view of extremely depressed rural economic and social conditions.

4. *Rapid growth of poor cities.* There is an accelerating urbanization process. The urban population increased from 22.8% in 1940 to 26.3% in 1950 and 33.8% in 1960.<sup>5</sup> The greatest influx has been in the Northeast's three major cities, Recife from 350,000 people in 1940 to 800,000 in 1960, Salvador from 290,000 to 655,000, and Fortaleza from 180,000 to 515,000.<sup>6</sup> Recife has come to be known as one of the world's poorest cities, with probably at least 50% of its population in slums. The people come in from the country with little vocational or cultural preparation for city life, and the city has very limited facilities to accommodate the influx.

5. *Limited private investment and industrialization.* Southern Brazil, with its greater political stability, skilled labor force, mass purchasing power, and alert entrepreneurial class, has attracted most new private investment from inside or outside the country. This investment has been concentrated in the industrial field, leaving the Northeast primarily a producer of raw materials which tend to sell at low and unstable world prices. There is indication that much of the profits made in the Northeast are channelled out of the area to more attractive investments, or into conspicuous consumption or hoarding.

6. *High infant mortality, malnutrition, minimal educational facilities.* Reportedly, infant mortality reaches 60% of total births in some slum sections of Recife. In a representative rural area of the Northeast a community study indicated it to be around 20% of births (compared to 2.5% in the U.S.).<sup>7</sup> This same study indicated that some ten pounds of meat per person were consumed in the community per year, and that malnutrition is a major cause of death, (presumably also of low production).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> IBGE, Brasil, *Sinopse Preliminar do Censo Demografico 1960*, Rio de Janeiro 1962, pp. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Unpublished survey conducted by the University of Wisconsin and University of Ceara Team, Summer 1963.

It is estimated that in the Northeast there are 4.5 million children of primary school age although only 1.4 million, or 30%, are in school. Very few of the 2.5 million youth between the ages of ten and fifteen, who are about to enter the labor force, have completed primary school of 3 to 5 years.<sup>8</sup> The mentioned community study revealed that the average preparation of the school teachers in the community was two years of primary school, indicating that the teachers themselves were barely literate.

7. *Lack of political consciousness.* The eligible voting electorate in all of Brazil (illiterates cannot vote) is approximately 18 million people or a quarter of the population, and in the Northeast the proportion is less, especially in the rural areas. Single politicians or small cliques dominate large areas. The mentioned community study indicated that many local people cannot identify the President of the Republic or the State Governor, not to mention the Brazilian agencies responsible for Northeast development. Very few had heard of the Alliance for Progress. Relatively few listen to the radio, read the newspaper, participate in political parties or any other association. Many indicated that the most important problems facing the community were lack of a maternity clinic and poor schools; few mentioned economic development or the need for wider participation in political decisions. Political consciousness is today increasing in some areas, such as Pernambuco and Paraiba, pressing anew the importance of a competent, responsible leadership class genuinely interested in improving conditions.

Apart from these factors, it must be recalled that part of the Northeast is located in the so-called drought polygon, an area of 950,000 square kilometers whose special curse is not so much no rainfall as that the scourge of drought is entirely unpredictable. It may occur every 5 or every 20 years.<sup>9</sup> A major drought threat-

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<sup>8</sup> U. S. Agency for International Development, *Northeast Brazil Survey Team Report*, February 1962, pp. 67-71.

<sup>9</sup> The drought problem and remedial solutions are analyzed in Albert Hirschman, *Journeys Toward Progress, Studies of Economic Policy-Making in Latin America*, New York, The Twentieth Century Fund, 1963, pp. 13-91.

ens mass starvation in an environment already suffering from chronic poverty. The effect is especially disastrous because most of the best land in the humid areas outside the drought's perimeter is used for specialized commercial crops such as sugar, cotton and pineapple. Much of the region's population therefore depends for subsistence on food production raised in the semi-arid areas where the drought strikes. At the same time the cost of importing over long distances from the South is prohibitive cost-wise. This failure to assure an adequate food supply is another reason why potential investors hesitate to plant new industries in the Northeast.

Statistics are unreliable but it has been estimated that perhaps sixteen of the Northeast's 25 million people are on the land, and some 10 million of those in the semi-arid backlands, called the *sertao*. Most of the rural population either are landless workers or have uneconomic plots. The depth of their depression is more fully appreciated when it is made clear that today the larger land holders, too, have an air of crisis. A combination of low commodity prices, minimal production due to backward technology and an ill-prepared labor force, plus growing social tension due to low wages and archaic land tenure structure, is forcing some large owners to sell out. Because of this agricultural crisis they may not be in financial position to increase wages even were they so inclined.

On top of all else is inflation. In 1962 living costs went up 52% and during 1963 they probably will have increased by considerably more. In some parts of the economy profits and incomes can more or less rise to keep pace with soaring prices. In the Northeast the relatively few workers who are members of industrial labor unions have generated heavy pressure for wage hikes. Public employees also have received dramatic increases from the government. But inflation has been disastrous for city slum-dwellers and workers on the land.

The average wage of the landless worker has hovered around 150 cruzieros a day (present rate about 1000 CR to U. S. \$1), although the legal minimum wage for rural workers is 400 CR.

Although things are now beginning to change, most of the rural population have been unorganized. With neither group pressures nor skills to use for bargaining, their wages have changed little despite inflation. Since 1948 prices in the Recife area have increased fifteen-fold, but few wages have changed comparably. In the spring of 1962, the price of manioc—the common people's staple food—rose by about 400%. Although it later went down, it wrought havoc. Manufactured goods imported from the South have regularly increased in price, placing them even more out of reach.

In this environment, social tensions have been mounting. Even though there is no systematic national legislation allowing for rural workers to organize, rural associations are developing. In Paraiba, for example, reportedly there are now eight Peasant Leagues, with 12,000 members. In Pernambuco there are about 70,000 Peasant League members. It is difficult to understand the the orientation of the Leagues, but basically they want change in the land tenure and political structure so the mass on the land is more favored.<sup>10</sup>

The League leadership is turning more and more to mass demonstrations, and the taking of the law into their own hands. Just before I left Recife at the end of August, for example, there were press items that 1500 peasants were occupying lands around some sugar mills near Recife; elsewhere 600 families were encamped thirty miles outside the city. A student of the University of Recife had been talking to some peasants about their grievances near a certain town, Vitorio Santo Antao, which led to the people arming and picketing three sugar mills, asking for food. They gave a petition to the mill administrator that read:

Our men have the hunger of the damned. We need some decent food.

The 1500 peasants who demonstrate for agrarian reform on the fallow lands of Senhor Constancio Maranhao de-

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<sup>10</sup> "Rise of Peasant Leagues Arouses Concern as Violence Flares in Brazil's Northeast Area," *New York Times*, April 10, 1962.

mand: 66 pounds of flour, of beans, of sugar, of meat.

If this petition of the people is not granted, these same people with their troubled spirit will have to apply the 'hammer,' because our aim is: the land should be for him who works.<sup>11</sup>

The peasants received the food, and soon the Governor of Pernambuco, Miguel Arraes, met with them. He publicly said:

I have sought to make contact with the President of the Republic with the view of taking the lands which have been abandoned during all this time and give them to the peasants.<sup>12</sup>

While Francisco Juliao, the founder of the Peasant Leagues and their State President in Pernambuco, is best known, leadership is beginning to form at many points, the above incident having parallels elsewhere in the Northeast.

Equally energetic at organizing the rural masses are the Workers' Syndicates of the Catholic Church. The guiding spirit is Bishop Eugenio Sales, the leader of the progressive Catholic clergy in the Northeast. Reportedly, the Workers' Syndicates already have expanded membership to 40,000 in the Bishop's home base, the State of Rio Grande do Norte. While the Syndicates are not advocating violence, they are placing increasing pressure on the manipulators of the old structure of power. Their main weapons are the bringing of legal grievances to court, and the organizing of strikes. Apparently the Bishop is trying to have one or two Syndicate organizers in each rural community.

Undoubtedly the most significant ferment in the Northeast is in the Universities. The President of the State Federation of Peasant Leagues in Paraiba, for example, is an economics professor at the University of Paraiba. Students from the University go out to the communities, where militant local leadership has never developed, and seek to organize the landless. Most of the faculty are part-time, many also holding key positions in all

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in "Brazil Peasants want Property Reforms," *Chicago Daily News*, October 3, 1962.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

phases of planning in the Governors' State administrations. They tend to draw up sweeping economic and social plans which may reflect their idealism and dedication to help the Northeast, but which sometimes have more of a political and ideological orientation than step by step development emphasis.

Many of the students, in particular, are ultra-nationalistic, opposing all international intervention in Brazil in the field of social policy. They have little or no interest in American dollars, and consider the Alliance for Progress simply another American government program to promote U. S. political objectives, to bring in U. S. capital under favorable conditions, and to hold in power reactionary forces advocating no fundamental changes in the social structure.

The Governor of Pernambuco, Miguel Arraes, is considered the most important political figure in the Northeast. He was elected in the State elections of autumn 1962 by a close margin over his sugar planter opponent. In recent months he has sprung national headlines through pushing for "peace in the fields":— a reconciliation between landless workers in the sugar areas and land and mill owners;<sup>13</sup> and through vocal position of fervent nationalism. On this point he has taken a strong position against the Alliance for Progress, complaining that U. S. aid is concentrated in states where the Governors are pro-American (for example, in Lacerda's Guanabara and Alves' Rio Grande do Norte). He stimulated a heavy public outcry over the "IBAD issue," (IBAD presumably being a "Leaders for Democratic Action" organization), pushing the thesis that this organization was trying to elect right wing political candidates with financial aid from foreign banks and industries.<sup>14</sup> Some observers say Arraes is attempting to build a grand coalition based around radical reform and ultra-nationalism, emanating from the masses in Northeast Brazil but drawing in the Left throughout the coun-

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<sup>13</sup> "Todo Apoio a Arraes Para Resolver Crise do Campo," *Ultima Hora*, 11 August 1963.

<sup>14</sup> "Arraes Ácusa na CPI do IBAD—Cheque de 5 Milhoes a Lael," *Ultima Hora*, August 23, 1963.

try, and that this bloc would have a pivotal position in the Brazilian presidential election of October, 1965.

II. *Concept of Community Development.* In order to analyze difficulties and prospects of community development in Northeast Brazil, it is necessary to summarize briefly the term's meaning. During the last decade community development has come to encompass more and more subject matter, to include so many aspects of the development process that it has lost much of any meaning it may once have had. The term was used by an official agency, the British Colonial Office, in 1948 to describe:

" a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation (of), and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement."<sup>15</sup>

Following establishment of national programs in India and Pakistan in 1952 the term came into international usage. In 1956 the UN used it to depict the processes by which:

"the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress."<sup>16</sup>

In subsequent years there have been refinements by the U. S. aid program, the United Nations, and countries which have laid special emphasis on community development programs, such as India, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Colombia.

A capsule portrayal of community development would in-

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<sup>15</sup> *Community Development: A Handbook* prepared by a study conference on Community Development held at Hartwell House, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, September, 1957; Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1958; p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> UN-Economic and Social Council Document E/2931 of 18 October 1956, Twentieth Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-Ordination of the Economic and Social Council, Annex III.

clude the following general values, principles, and basic assumptions:<sup>17</sup>

1. *The greatest resource of any developing country is its people, as distinct from solely material resources. Stress is placed on human capital, the "human factor"—attitudes and values, energy and imagination, initiative and leadership.*

The argument is that people, after all, determine development. Whether material resources are used maximally or minimally depends on human ability and human organization; the human factor must be a point for special focus.

2. *The basic unit of development is the local community.*<sup>18</sup> This implies the organization of "small projects" in thousands of communities, which involve the people in the process of development, mobilizing their ideas and energies in local decision making through government, cooperatives, schools, economic organization, etc. The focus of this approach is considered in contrast to, although it may be complementary with national development programs which "start from the top" using grandiose plans, may use statistical calculations based on national or international data, and may presuppose that the local community will contribute to national results without its being considered a unit of special importance.

3. *The local community, along with the family, is the most basic and universal social group in society.* The people actually live and work in the local community, and all structures—economic, social, political—must begin at this level. The quality and vitality that is generated here greatly determines everything

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<sup>17</sup> This list is adapted from William J. Cousins, cited in Louis Miniclier, "Values and Principles of Community Development," in Background Paper (I. Community Development: Concept and Description) prepared for the 1961 Inter-regional Community Development Conference, Seoul, Korea, May 6-12, 1961.

<sup>18</sup> "Community" can be defined in many senses. For simplicity we refer here to the residential community: a population living in a specified area which has some political autonomy and some institutions of its own.

that is fundamental (as distinct from mere forms) at higher levels of organization.

4. *Methods for development should aim to stimulate self-help.* It is assumed that all communities have latent resources—human and material—which are idle or poorly used. These must be mobilized for economic and social production rather than the community's waiting for "someone else" to give help. Substantial capital and other resources may be needed from the outside, but the initiative, plans and much of the decision making should originate locally as, in final analysis, most of the job must be done locally if it is to succeed.

5. *Any development program must be related to the needs people feel.* The assumption is that people will get involved and use latent resources only if they understand and want the program. Presumably most people want improved conditions of life, but the people themselves will make a maximum personal contribution to the extent that they feel a personal commitment because of the program's close relationship to their own needs and interests. Presumably they will accept the results (if positive) of any development programs laid out by planners in the nation's capital and carried out and paid for by someone else. But they are unlikely to contribute very much themselves. As national and international resources are infinitesimal in relationship to even the minimal needs of most local communities, the failure to mobilize local resources tends to condition almost any plan either to outright failure or only partial results.

6. *Community development must be an integrated process, concerning all dimensions of the community.* An economic plan, for example, cannot materialize without due attention to malnutrition and physical maladies which may be primary determinants (as well as results) of low productivity. Nor can it be effected with non-existent or poorly developed skills which the plan presupposes, or if certain leaders in the community oppose the plan and seek to manipulate the power structure to assure its failure. The program must deal with all of these problems more or less simultaneously.

III. *Some Difficulties for Community Development in Northeast Brazil.* Given conditions in Northeast Brazil and the basic approach of community development, what are some of the problems facing an international community development program? These difficulties would be somewhat but not entirely different from a wholly Brazilian program.

This analysis is limited to five major difficulties:

1. *Lack of knowledge.* Brazil has never mounted a systematic community development program as a national policy along lines, for example, of those of some other countries. This is one reason why there is little information on the local community. Large and articulate economic development plans, which have all kinds of ramifications for local communities in the Northeast, are being formulated by such Brazilian agencies as Sudene, DNOCS, Brazilian State Government Administrations and U. S. AID. But there is little comprehensive data on what actually is happening on the level of the local community. Relatively few studies have been undertaken. University curricula provide for little field research. Thus there is little specific knowledge other than some sweeping conclusions, on what really are the concrete priority needs in a given community and where are realistic break-through points. ANCAR, the semi-private agricultural extension program, is the only Brazilian organization in the rural areas which approaches working on this level of data-gathering and community programming. In most communities there are no reliable maps, little accurate information on land tenure (including clear property confines, land-use), little knowledge on attitudes of local leadership toward development. Little is known about nutrition, although there is the reasonable assumption that much of the population is suffering from low caloric intake and that this could be a major break-through sector to economic development. Few political studies have been made on who runs the community, on the relationship between local leaders and outside authorities, and the degree of popular participation in decision making. Little is known on the urbanization process: on who is moving from the rural areas to cities (for example,

are persons with technical know-how staying or leaving?). At this time when the agricultural economy is under siege due to falling prices and inability to compete with advanced technology from outside the region, little is known about the attitudes of land-holders and producers on major technological innovation, on agrarian reform, on cooperation with development agencies, on ways and means for reconciliation with the landless rural proletariat. In sum, there is so little knowledge that it is difficult to know where to begin.

2. *Social structural problems.* One basic problem is that the gross economic product of Northeast Brazil is very small for the population; greatly increased regional production and income are essential. Another basic problem is that the existing product, and all of the means of production, and political and social power, are heavily concentrated in a few hands. Some say that redistribution of this concentrated economic and political power is a precondition for increased production. Whatever the merit of this argument, on the local level it is clear that there is a fairly rigid framework, given the realities of who controls property and power, within which any development program must initially work. Simple economic development may benefit, at least over the short run, only a small minority of the community and actually widen the "haves"—"have-nots" gap. Thus an effective development program cannot overlook the need for changing the structure of society in the area, which inevitably involves it with potentially volatile political factors. The fear of these political dimensions associated with structural change is a main reason for the marginal impact of many development programs on the community.

3. *The inside-outside relationship.* It is evident that an effective community development project must have a base inside the community: a nucleus of local leadership which has or can win some local confidence and which wants to improve conditions. At the same time usually there is need for an initiator and sustainer from outside the community. The very fact that local development has not taken place to date indicates that an essential

ingredient is the catalyst from outside. His job is to work with the nucleus inside the community to mobilize idle or partly used resources and to present the community's needs for additional assistance to appropriate agencies outside the community. The assumption that there may be no such qualified catalyst in the region, or even in the country, is justification for international assistance. Presumably the function of the international specialist is to help build up a cadre of experts and a program framework in the region, these persons in turn developing cadres and programs on the level of the local community. But we have seen that if the program seeks to strike at the substance of the community's problems, rather than what may be stop gap relief and welfare needs, there are strong political overtones associated with the work of the outside catalyst. In view of the highly nationalistic temper in Northeast Brazil, not so much on the level of the local community itself but among the intellectual groups in the universities and in some government agencies, the outside catalyst walks a most difficult road.

4. *A Philosophy to Guide Action.* There are few if any people in Northeast Brazil, whatever their place in the political spectrum, who do not admit that radical change is inevitable. In prevailing conditions of mass misery and semi-feudal social structure, some form of revolution is necessary. The question concerning the revolution: will it be peaceful or violent, collectivist or individualistic, stress central planning or local organization, favor assistance from international sources or designate "Brazil for the Brazilians" with "no foreign capital and experts and ideas."?

Celso Furtado, Director of the preeminent Brazilian agency in the Northeast and the leading economic development theorist in the region, with countless disciples among intellectuals, has pointed out the appeal of Marxism as a possible philosophy in this environment:

If we go deep into the core of this philosophy, we shall find on the one hand the wish to liberate man from all chains that socially enslave him, allowing him to fulfill his

potentialities; and on the other hand an optimistic attitude concerning the capacity of human communities for self-determination. In the last analysis, what we find is a higher stage of humanism, for while it places man in the center of its concerns, it recognizes that full individual development can be attained only through a rational guidance of social relations.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, he has pointed out the "historical fact that Marxist-Leninist techniques have proved ineffective in dealing with open societies."

Since Marxism-Leninism is based on the substitution of the dictatorship of one class for that of another class, it would be politically retrogressive to apply it to societies which have attained more complex social forms—that is, modern open societies.<sup>20</sup>

He goes on to say that Brazil has an open society in the urban areas, especially in the South. There revolution seems attainable through gradualism. However, in the rural areas there is rigidity, a rather closed society. As this is most typically the situation in the Northeast, this raises the question of the kind of revolution there.

A typical argument one hears from some economic planners and university people in the Northeast is that Brazilians want no "foreign interference" in the realm of ideas and plans. So one asks: "Then what you want is foreign money?" "No," is the reply, "money is no good if the Brazilian politicians do not utilize it well, and they do not because they are mostly of poor quality, inexperienced, often corrupt, sometimes semi-literate." Then one asks, "In that event, is there perhaps need for international assistance to help you in preparing leaders who could make plans to develop the country." The reply: "But we want no outside interference in so delicate an area as training of leaders." A community development program needs an articulate, locally relevant philosophy to galvanize a local area into action. But such a philosophy involves questions of policy, of educating

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<sup>19</sup> Celso Furtado, "What Kind of Revolution?", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 41, April, 1963, p. 528.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 532.

future leadership, which must be decided by the Brazilians themselves.

5. *Centralization.* At present most programs that have anything to do with development in the Northeast are planned and executed from the top. The Sudene approach is to hold a rather tight rein on all activities in the region rather than shifting initiative and authority to the local level. It is argued that the local community is incapable of exercising substantial authority, given its inexperience and tradition of dependence. Experts are scarce and these are already serving with such agencies as Sudene. The Northeast is so vast that a centralized authority is essential to prevent the anarchy of many overlapping local programs. The problems are so complex, also involving such factors as inflation, international trade, drought, and regional infra-structure, that overall plans must be centrally formulated into which the community will of necessity fit. Starting from this assumption that the local community lacks leadership or initiative, it follows that what is done must largely come from centralized offices which presumably possess the needed qualities. Whatever the merits of these arguments, the prevailing psychology of most Brazilian government agencies is not conducive to developing new local centers of initiative and leadership which, among other results, might also constitute new centers of power.

IV. *Some Prospects for Community Development in Northeast Brazil.* For the researcher or planner interested not only in nationwide economic and social development and modernization, but especially in the role of the local community, there is a fundamental question. What is the capacity of a community in a region which has a low level of per capita income; has backward or non-existent educational, health and welfare facilities; has property, power and social privilege concentrated in a small segment of the population—to mobilize its own human and material resources for rapid improvement of community conditions? Presumably, "improvement" would include increased economic productivity and increased participation of the total community in the fruits of this productivity.

In light of this proposition, five prospects for community development in this Region are summarized below:

1. *The Community an Untapped Resource.* Whatever one has to say about community development, certain facts must be recognized about the situation in Northeast Brazil. The Alliance for Progress is in serious trouble because it is not producing the results expected. While expectations doubtless were greatly exaggerated, the Alliance also has had something missing. One recognized failing has been the lack of a dynamic philosophy which could elevate the diverse partners above their often petty squabbling and politicking to work together as true allies in a challenging task along the lines of a war-time military operation. Another deficiency has been inability to get down to the people so that Alliance benefits can be widely seen and felt, and the general run of the population becomes directly involved. Indications are that the broad mass of people know virtually nothing about the Alliance, although they supposedly are the main beneficiaries. If they do not assert enthusiasm, who will? An AID official in the Northeast said:

The Alliance has never become an Alliance but is considered by the Brazilians as a U. S. Government organization. There is not yet a feeling here of partnership. This will be an Alliance only when we go to a village and the people themselves do most of the work and make most of the financial contribution for a particular project rather than waiting for us as though this were a U. S. operation and simply a government program.<sup>21</sup>

From the practical standpoint of U. S. aid, it can be said that the Alliance will face increasing trouble not only in Brazil but in the U. S. Congress unless the local populations move behind it, financially and emotionally.

Another practical point is that given Brazil's huge area, all international or Brazilian Government money can make only a bare beginning. The \$130 million AID allocation to the Northeast, which is considered a sizable U. S. commitment to the Alli-

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<sup>21</sup> From an interview at the AID Mission in Recife, August, 1962.

ance, comes to about five dollars a head for the Region's 25 million people, still less when spread over three years. Yet in almost every local community in the Northeast there is idle land, land under production which reaps only a fraction of its potential, a labor force in chronic unemployment and under employment. There are water resources in this drought area which have been little used.

One community, recently studied, illustrates the point. Twelve years ago the federal government built a dam on its perimeter, making possible irrigation of some 30,000 acres according to experts. In this period water has been used on only 5,000 acres, although income per acre in this irrigated area reportedly has multiplied tenfold. Why does the community not organize itself to utilize its resources more fully? What is the community's real productive capacity? In purely monetary terms, apart from the human factors involved, resources are being wasted on a gigantic scale due to lack of effective action to mobilize community leadership and energies.

2. *Involving Interest of Intellectuals and Business Community.* Perhaps the persons most hostile to the Alliance for Progress and to North Americans are some intellectuals, such as faculty and students in the universities. Their arguments are mostly theoretical, and their stock-in-trade is speaking, writing, and arm-chair planning. Apart from those engaged in political organizing, few of them have actually worked in the community to apply their skills and energies to concrete development problems. While conducting research in the Northeast last summer, our group worked closely with two Brazilian universities. Several times we heard the comment that this was one of the few times the faculty member and student had made close direct contact not only with North Americans but also with the rural people in the Northeast, we having arranged for a number of students to do research work for two weeks in a rural community. The local faculty and students expressed much interest in organizing seminars of Brazilian and U. S. specialists, which would draw in leaders from the university and public agencies to discuss policy

questions involved in local development of the municipios under study. As the project proceeded, ideology became somewhat subordinated to the desire to find answers to problems, wherever the answers might come from. It would seem that a continuing cooperation between universities in the context of concrete community problems could not only commit qualified local and international skills to a gigantic task but lead to the beginnings of a formulation of a locally relevant philosophical framework for community development.

The business community is another prospect for community development. Despite popular stereotypes, it is evident that there are a number of landholders and business leaders who are interested in transforming the region and in committing their resources and talents to this challenge. In the above mentioned rural municipio there were a number of substantial landholders willing to help form an association for development of the irrigation area described. One of them volunteered to provide 200 hectares for an experimental project to test methods for preparing landless laborers for eventual management of a small plot. They were also interested in building up a revolving capital fund which would be collected in part from such business associations as Rotary, Lions and Chambers of Commerce. In sum, the "community" is not only the local community but the larger intellectual and business communities which through creative inter-relationships could assist the local community to realize its potential and at the same time fulfill their own.

3. *Capital Available in Area.* In the course of the summer it became clear that shortage of capital is not necessarily the priority break-through problem even in capital scarce Northeast Brazil. Officials of the Northeast Brazil Bank, for example, made known that billions of cruzieros were available for investment but that few sound investment proposals had been presented. The Administrations of two State Governments, while emphasizing their small budgets, noted that their most significant problem was lack of carefully thought through projects and qualified specialists to implement them. The business community, as mentioned above,

was receptive to investment of some of its resources in local community projects. In that a number of billions of dollars had been exported from Latin America by Latins themselves during the last several years, the stimulation of local capital investment in the area would appear at least as important as the importation of outside capital. Clearly, at the beginning the money needed on the community level must be risk capital, in view of the lack of knowledge on likely results and lack of confidence in present local leadership and know-how. But the greatest bottleneck appears to be the catalysts to stimulate community development. If solid plans are formulated, there is evidence that some capital is available at the present time.

4. *Opportunity for creative federal relationships.* Brazil, like the U. S., is a federal state, with national, state and municipal political and administrative authorities. There are the same kinds of inter-level jealousies as in the U. S. However, the U. S. governmental structure developed its first vitality on the level of local government, with strong centralized government a phenomenon primarily of the twentieth century. In much of Spanish Latin America, roughly the reverse took place, with central governments emerging in the colonial period. But in Brazil, due to its vastness of area and lack of communications, there was and still is much local autonomy. This, however, was not based on local self-governing units involving a considerable amount of popular participation, but on the domination of a plantation family or a relatively small group of local elite which controlled the area. Actual participation of the local people in decision making was and still is very limited. As the local government usually does not have enough revenue even to maintain satisfactory public services, not to mention embark on a development plan, it greatly depends on state and federal assistance. This lack of self-governing tradition and of material capacity is cited by the central authorities today who are reluctant to shift interest and power to the community. The twofold effect is that central agencies are planning for communities about which they may know very little, and the communities depend on higher bodies and wait for the initiative from the outside because they have

never formed the habit of asserting their own initiative and independence or of managing finances.<sup>22</sup> The need is to work out an arrangement whereby the local government and newly created local organizations seeking to mobilize community resources, can tie in with appropriate authorities and agencies on the state and federal levels outside. A reasonable approach is to assume that neither the local community nor any outside agency is capable of doing everything. The significant question is to assess a community's capacity and to identify particular points where outside assistance can initiate or buttress local efforts.

5. *Twofold Goal of Community Development: Increased Productivity and Viable Institutions.* A common criticism leveled at community development programs, which the evidence frequently supports, is that some "good community spirit" may have been generated but there is little impact on production. A road, some latrines, a schoolhouse will have been built, or a marketing cooperative or adult education classes set up, but the over-all economic organization and income level of the community is little changed. Clearly, one aim must be actual economic development: new industries and businesses, increased agricultural productivity, new jobs, higher income. For this task, existing resources must be identified and analyzed, realistic technical plans laid, specialized training established, persuasive approaches made outside the community for capital and know-how to supplement those locally available. The essence of community development is to prepare people for these jobs.

Increased gross product and income, however, are insufficient goals in themselves. At the same time institutions must be established or strengthened so that the economic result has widespread social benefits for the local population. Otherwise the gains become concentrated, the socio-economic class gap widens, and tension and political instability deepen. Local institutions

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<sup>22</sup> Some weaknesses of Brazilian local government are summarized in Carr Donald, "Brazilian Local Self-Government: Myth or Reality," *Western Political Quarterly*, Volume XIII, December, 1960, pp. 1043-1055.

are needed which will have the effect of involving the maximum number of people in both the productive process and in sharing the benefits. Local government, for example, could move from the minimal functions of law and order and public utilities, to a catalytic role and itself be a promoter of development. Voluntary associations could be established around a variety of specialized needs so that all significant interests in the community can have a vehicle for presenting their views in decision making. The school could become a center for civic education, cultivating understanding of local problems; and for preparation of specialists who can begin to tackle concrete development functions. A small health center could be established to analyze nutrition problems and provide medical facilities. As different interests in the community articulate their needs, each with their spokesmen, this leadership must be schooled in the importance of diversity due to different interests, and at the same time of consensus—that there are some basic things on which everyone must agree if the community is to prosper, and that the community's maximum potential can be attained when these differences are channeled through commonly endorsed procedures.

The contribution of the international community development specialist is to assist in identifying and training personnel to undertake these functions. The hoped for effect will be a nucleus of leadership in each local community with a sense of social responsibility, initiative and technical skill.