Development through Liberation

Development through Liberation

Third World Problems and Solutions

Gerald J. Kruijer

Translated by Arnold Pomerans

M
MACMILLAN
EDUCATION

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Foreword

It is not uncommon for sociologists to write about the poor and the oppressed. I sometimes think that our profession makes a good living out of it. But is rare to find us writing *for* the poor. To be sure, many of us write with a genuine sympathy and a concern to better the lot of the wretched of the earth. But such concern is often made subservient to the overriding need to stay within the rigorous parameters of scientific discourse. But how can a social science that is committed to value freedom and objectivity serve the needs of those who are oppressed by prevailing values and truths? How can the language of academia acquired through university education be used by those who never even finish school?

This dilemma is the key to Gerald Kruijer's lifelong work and this, his final, contribution to the struggle for liberation. The dilemma is not new, but the conviction and the passion with which it is resolved is.

Social science, Kruijer believed, will only serve the liberation of the poor if it liberates itself. It must liberate itself from the fruitless search for abstract concepts and timeless generalisations; from the neutering quest for unbiased objectivity and from its self-imposed sterile jargon.

Kruijer's science of liberation is about taking sides: that is, taking sides with the poor. Its starting-point is the real-life experiences of the poor, and it then proceeds to uncover, layer by layer, the debilitating structures of inequality and power which oppress the poor. The objective is to point to organizational, institutional and practical steps that can be taken – and indeed to point to those that frequently have been taken – to free the oppressed from their bondage.

Some readers may find the emotive language of this book an irritant. But the language is chosen to be a language that will reflect the experience of pain and struggle. For example, Kruijer argues that it is wrong to seek unemotional terms like 'unequal exchange' when laden terms like 'exploitation' convey so much better the experience

of an indebted peasant suffering at the hands of a ruthless landowner or middleman. He argues that the liberation scientist should purposefully select a term or description that makes his/her viewpoint of anger or disapproval abundantly clear. This is the reason why the author shuns Marxist terminology with the same determination as with which he rejects the academic language of the bourgeois liberal tradition. Throughout he prefers the commonsense language of daily practice. The excellent translation from the Dutch by Arnold Pomerans has ensured that this objective has been wholly achieved.

Not everyone, not even some of those who share Kruijer's commitment and political conviction in broad outline, will agree with every detail of the substance of this work. Some, myself included, will recoil at the uncritical treatment of state socialist societies, particularly, for instance, the case of North Korea. Also, Kruijer's ahistorical and generalising perspective of the Third World, as a rather homogeneous group of nations in which economic and social development cannot take place as long as the umbilical cord with international capitalism has not been broken, is a perspective which I along with many others no longer regard as adequate in the restructured global political economy of the 1980s. Nevertheless the excellent descriptions of life in the Third World, covering all continents and gathered through personal travel and study, will deepen our understanding of the structures and processes that still dominate the lives of the *masses* of the population of the Third World, in whatever country, be it Brazil, South Korea or Ethiopia.

Kruijer died on 13 March 1986. He had only just put the finishing touches to this revised English version of *Bevrijdingswetenschap. Een partijdige visie op de Derde Wereld*, first published in the Netherlands in 1983.

From his student days in the war-torn city of Amsterdam, where he was actively involved in the resistance to German occupation, to his polemical and strident work as writer and speaker for Third World campaign groups in retirement – as well as during his long and prolific career as an 'academic' professor in between – Kruijer has always consistently and passionately fought alongside and for the oppressed. A stimulating debater, a generous and encouraging friend, he will be missed by all who knew him well and whose lives and ideas he enriched.

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ANKIE M.M. HOOGVELT