• Frances Moore Lappé, Rachel Schurman and Kevin Danaher, *Betraying the National Interest,* New York: Grove Press/ Food First Books

BOOK REVIEW By NAN BRAMAN

Stranger than fiction

"The greatest threat to the United States is not change in the Third World. It is a government in Washington that fears such change and is willing to sacrifice democratic principles at home and abroad in order to block change."

ACCORDING to the authors there is a plot (with undertones of Dr. Strangelove) to keep the Third World in its place, and the billions of dollars in foreign aid that congress pours into impoverished countries is increasing dependency and misery.

This is a well documented book that does not leave much doubt that the people in Washington are not running our foreign aid programs the way you or I would.

As Phoenix businessman Saul Diskin responded when he learned that Salvadoreans linked to the death squads were being trained by his city's police:

> **"I keep asking why do people need training to refrain from murdering and raping nuns and campesinos and committing massacres....That's not something they are going to learn not to do by riding around in Phoenix police cars....Training these people in modern intelligence techniques will only make them more efficient killers."**

Probably the most acute observation in this book comes at the end. In discussing the decline of Soviet influence and Washington's resistance to admitting this, the authors ask:

"But what if an emerging society were to question such a dogmatic approach to the market and private control, putting peoples' need for land, jobs and food first....and such policies were pursued with broad popular support....so that people felt their freedom expanded?

"Might not U.S. citizens observing these developments abroad be encouraged to challenge the control of concentrated wealth here at home, as well as the assumption that those monolithic corporations so determining our well-being are best left beyond democratic control?

"It should be noted that the concentration of wealth in the United States is no less than in many Third World countries. Here, the richest 1% own more wealth than the bottom 90%."

If the authors had included a discussion of the part that land monopoly plays in allowing concentration of wealth, their book would be even more potent.

While U.S. development assistance should be more effective than security assistance in addressing poverty, if it does not challenge the structure of control over resources - which caused impoverishment in the first place - what is the point?

The "trickle-down" theory of the Sixties was a fraud. A study by Irma Adelman and Cynthia Morris demonstrated that "the absolute position of the poor tends to deteriorate as a consequence of economic growth."*

The John Wayne Grade "B" western mentality operating in Washington plays out the fantasy that we are the good guys and any country with the temerity to want to run things themselves without outside interference from either East or West is where you will find the bad guys.

In other words, he who rocks the boat for American interests in his country is going to get squashed, and "we're just the guys who can do it!"

The authors emphasize that they did not write their book merely to elicit outrage. They want Americans to see behind the reassuring rhetoric and official rationale to understand why U.S. foreign aid programs are not working despite the billions of dollars we have shelled out.

CLINGING stubbornly to the idea that Vietnam did not prove the inadequacy of counter-insurgency warfare because *it was never fully tested*, the Reagan administration resuscitated it and developed it into a full-blown, coordinated strategy.

But aware of the American people's aversion to the experience in Vietnam, this operation has been kept secret, with covert operations substituted for foreign policy.

Called "low intensity conflict", these "non-wars" are directed at any Third World government whose agenda Washington does

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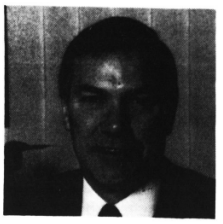
* Irma Adelman and Cynthia Taft Morris, *Economic Growth and Social Equity in Developing Countries* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1973), 189.



• Alan Cherry

Quality Chaos

• Nicholas Ridley

BRITAIN'S builders are in conflict with the government over the supply and price of land.

The House-Builders Federation wrote to Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley to tell him that insufficient land was being zoned for residential development.

The letter was published by the angry builders, which stung the minister into a reply which barely concealed his annoyance. He told the builders that opposition to new developments in the countryside was the result of poor quality construction work.

"Your members could do more to reconcile people to the need for more housing by taking care to produce schemes that have greater regard to the local environment," said Mr Ridley to federation president Alan Cherry. This was an unfair accusation:

IAN BARRON reports on a row between the British government and house builders who say they are starved of affordable land.

• Builders are resorting to high-density developments because prices are now £1m an acre.

• Mr Cherry is not alone among builders in advocating that part of the value of land ought to be spent on improving the living environment – to the benefit of the local community.

• Most people now agree that there is a housing problem. At the beginning of this year, prices increased at an annualised rate of 40%. Rising house prices are the main cause of a staggering increase in credit, which has led the Treasury to increase base interest rates. That is hitting exporters (because it forces up the exchange rate), and entrepreneurs who want to invest in new capital equipment. But it is not curbing the supply of cash for mortgages!

That government policy is confused is not surprising, for the government does not appear to understand much about the economics of housing. A letter written by an official in Mr Ridley's department to one major landowner in the south-east contained the statement that an increase in the supply of

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not like. And because it is carried on with no loss of U.S. life it can proceed relatively unseen.

As one military strategist put it, low intensity conflict is "a pseudonym for a war without full political support." If it is successful the American people would not even know they were at war!

If the American people can be made to perceive all Third World insurgents as terrorists they will surely condone compromises to America's basic values, the authors observe. So the administration must shape citizens' perceptions of the governments which the U.S. supports.

Thus, after Marcos won a rigged presidential election in 1981, George Bush toasted him: "We stand with you, sir, ...We love your adherence to democratic principles and democratic processes."

Apparently killing the opposition, abducting their troublesome civilians, controlling dissent and blocking any substantive change to meet majority needs does not disqualify you from being a democrat.

Our programs continue to deny access to land or decently-paid jobs because we prop up right wing governments which prop up multi-national corporations which exploit the natural resources and cheap labour of these countries. The multi-national corporations have replaced the colonial powers, using their methods of exploitation, and with the American taxpayer footing the bill.

It is crucial for Americans and the people in Washington who run our foreign aid programs to see that if the Third World does not make it, we are not going to make it.

This is truly one world, as Wendell Wilkie put it more than forty years ago: "After centuries of ignorance and full compliance, hundreds of millions of people in eastern Europe and Asia have opened the books....they are no longer willing to be Eastern slaves for Western profits.

"They....know that men's welfare throughout the world is interdependent. They are resolved, as we must be, that there is no more place for imperialism within their own society than in the society of nations. The big house on the hill surrounded by mud huts has lost its awesome charm."