"Those who have shall have even more". Some notes on the fall of development aid and the marginalisation of Africa

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Every other child born in Sweden in the year 2000 is expected to live up to the age of 100 years. Whereas a child born in the developing world can expect to live 58 years (or eight years longer than the average life expectancy of his/her parents). In sub-Saharan Africa life expectancy is even much lower. HIV/AIDS epidemic is indeed a major factor but it cannot explain the huge gap of the human condition between the north and the south. Of the 4.6 billion people in developing countries, 2.8 billion lack basic sanitation and live on less than 2 USD a day. And those who attempt to survive on less than $1 a day make up a staggering 1.2 billion people.

Last year, there were more than 100 million Africans dependent on food aid. During the same year, about 500 million Africans attempted to survive on per capita income of less than 1 USD per day. In this context the UN declarations of Human, economic and social rights (1948 and 1966) lose a great deal of their value. Likewise, the World Bank's ritual campaign held every year against world poverty has little value other than rhetoric, since the total number of those who are too poor to feed themselves continues to grow.

Yet the most ironic aspect of this state of affairs is that the more the OECD countries become rich, the less they are prepared to assist the developing

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countries in general and the sub-Saharan region in particular. The 1990s witnessed the decline of total amount of development aid to sub-Saharan Africa. Several reasons have been put forward to explain the continuous reduction of the amount of development aid in the face of growing poverty. Rising financial problems in the donor countries, growing scepticism towards the effectiveness of development aid programs, and the decline in the strategic importance of sub-Saharan Africa are some of the explanations put forward. These reasons, with the exception of the last one, are hardly convincing.

The amount of development aid to Africa made available by the OECD countries is a trifle that can hardly affect the macro-economies of African societies. Moreover, up to 70 percent of the development aid made available, for instance by Sweden to Ethiopia, does not reach Ethiopia but instead remains in Sweden in the form of salaries and equipment. The argument that the decline of the amount of development aid has to do with scepticism does not carry too much weight. Most of the expensive development programs planned under the auspices of the World Bank proved ineffective greatly because the assumptions set by the World Bank were wrong. The World Bank knew that the projects it financed were weak and not sustainable (Susan George and Fabio Sabelli, 1992). While there are hundreds of failed projects (white elephants) there are very few examples of successful development aid projects.

One of the structural factors that might explain the neglect of Africa is the end of the Cold War and the triumph of liberalism. Prior to and during the Cold War era, development aid was institutionalised as a weapon to promote the interest of either one of the super-powers. Africa was the playing field of the major players, namely, the USA, the Soviet Union, France, Great Britain and to some extent China. The super-powers were often engaged in proxy wars. Any African regime that officially sided with one of the super-powers was given sufficient material support to remain in power. Hence dictatorial and authoritarian system of rule was sanctioned in Africa. And in the process

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it was the ordinary Africans who suffered most. The distortions that were introduced into the African political culture by the pervasive presence of the Cold War merits far more attention than the few pioneering scholars have so far accomplished. But it is worthwhile to stress that it was during this era of the cold war that most of the poorly planned projects were forced upon African states and ended up in total failure. The study by Susan George and Fabio Sabelli (1992) on the empire that the World Bank had both created and inherited is an eloquent evidence of the links between development aid and political considerations. With the collapse of communism, the major donor countries have to devise a new purpose for development aid.

The first objective of this paper is to re-examine the reasons why the OECD world lost interest in assisting Africa out of its deep crisis of development. The OECD countries are several times richer now than what they were in 1960. In contrast, for the majority of sub-Saharan Africans, the conditions of life (access to food, health and shelter) are worse now (2002) than what they were around 1960. The second objective of this exploratory paper is to try to grasp the purpose of development aid that is implemented by the OECD countries. Moreover, this paper is based on two premises. First, a sustained development aid could indeed ensure a decent livelihood for the ca one billion people who are daily struggling to survive on less than a dollar a day. Second, the OECD world has both the economic resources and the technological capacity to eliminate poverty and to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor citizens of this world.

I wish to do this through a historical inquiry into the articulation of development aid. How have, for instance, the issues of poverty and development been articulated from the first UN document in the late 1960s to the recent document: UN Millennium Development Goals? I also wish to explore the role of development aid in closing the progressively growing gap between the citizens of the rich and poor countries thus laying down the foundations for a dynamic and sustainable development? Moreover, I find it relevant to examine the interplay between development aid, the explosive

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growth of NGOs and the documented incapacity of the latter to deal with societal problems?

A very clear example of the capacity of the OECD world is the amount of money spent on the pet industry. Pfizer, the world's second-largest supplier of animal medicines, estimates that there are about 120 million cats and 115 million dogs kept as pets around the world. Sweden, alone, with a population of just nine million inhabitants is a home of about 1.2 million cats and 800 000 dogs. A rough extrapolation of the Swedish data appears to suggest that there might be up two million pets for every 10 million inhabitants in the OECD world. It would not be off the mark, therefore, to argue that there could be about 40 million cats and 30 million dogs in the European Union.

According to a conservative estimate the pet owning citizens of the European Union spend about 150 million USD daily or 45 billion USD per annum on pet food. This staggering amount that the citizens of the European Union spent to keep their cats and dogs alive is nearly three times as much as the total amount that Sub-Saharan Africa annually gets from the industrialised countries in terms of official development assistance (Alex de Wall and Timothy Johnson, 1996). The amount of money that the citizens of the OECD countries spend on soft drinks, liquor and gambling is far more greater than those spend on pet animals. The annual consumption of liquor is considerably greater than the total amount of Swedish development aid. Swedes gamble for about 2 billion USD per annum; or nearly twice as much as the total Swedish development aid.

The size of the pet industry vis a vis the volume of funds transferred from the OECD countries to the poorer regions and peoples of the world demonstrates two points. First, it shows the kind of luxury goods disposed by the citizens of the OECD countries. Second, it highlights the sharp contrast between life destinies of individuals. It matters where one is born although an individual is born to parents and nationality without her/his choice. While

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many a person may not wish to swap parents, far too many of us would certainly go a long way in search for a life free of hunger and curable diseases.

I have dwelt on the economy of the pet industry to stress the economic capacity of a great majority of the OECD citizens. But it is not my intention, as Peter Singer has recently done, to link this capacity to moral responsibility. In a brief commentary to the UN Millennium Development Goals, Peter Singer wrote that "those who have enough to spend on luxuries [ca. 900 million of the world's population] yet fail to share even a tiny fraction of their income with the poor, must bear some responsibility for the deaths they could have prevented" (Project Syndicate, June 2002).

The capacity of the OECD citizens to make a substantial contribution to the elimination of hunger cannot be compared with the resources that the OECD states have at their disposal. The defence expenditures of the OECD countries is so vast that a tiny fraction of it would wipe hunger out of the surface of the world. It is, however, worrying that the globalized economy made possible by advances in information technology has created an extremely polarised and conflict ridden world between the minority who bask in luxury and the majority who are daily deprived of basic needs such as clean water, functional food and shelter and thus die at early ages. Unless grounded on an equitable distribution of resources that ensures the basic needs of all individuals, a global system would have to rely on naked force for its survival.

It is, therefore, relevant to review how development aid was articulated in the past and of how the process of disengagement (on the part of the OECD) was set in motion. It is also equally important to assess the role of development aid in the evolution of a truly global world. This paper is organised in the following. The paper first outlines a revisionist interpretation of colonialism as a preamble to the development debate of the late 1960´s and 1970s. Then the paper makes an abrupt jump into the growing role of

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the NGOs and the type of development that we can expect from them. Finally, the paper analyses the UN Millennium Development Goals as a betrayal of the poor, and as example of the absence of meaningful humanitarian concerns on the part of the OECD countries.

Late colonialism as a form of development aid

Ever since the 16th century Europe has dominated Africa. European needs and perceptions formed the basis for the construction and implementation of relations with Africa south of the Sahara. The decision to end the slave trade was taken by European states at a period when it suited them to do so. Even during the period commonly described as the century of legitimate trade (1807-1885) the terms of trade between European and African states were determined in Europe. The philosophical and ideological arguments for the partition of tropical Africa and the eventual colonisation of the continent were debated and eventually decided in Europe. And colonisation took place at a period when the European juridical and epistemological framework considered Africa *res nullius* a landscape without any rightful owners. Colonialism, as long as it lasted, was a highly authoritarian system. Even the timing of decolonization, with the exception of Portugal's possessions was determined by European colonial powers. Yet it could be strongly argued that the ideology of colonialism was based on the logic that the African was also a brother/sister (a human being).

Colonialism has come and gone. Most of the sub-Saharan region has been independent for the last forty years. But the record of independent Africa is dismal. Independent Africa has failed completely to adequately feed its own population. The conditions of life for the majority of sub-Saharan Africans are worse now (2002) than they were in 1960 (UN Millennium Development Goals, 2000). Food production and consumption has declined by more than twenty percent during the last three decades while population grew at the rate of about three percent per annum. As we enter the new millennium, the image of Africa that impinges on us is that of failed experiments and

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unfulfilled expectations. According to recent evidence, the World Bank led structural adjustment policies and the official development aid (ODA) have either failed or so far have proved insufficient to even contain the rapidly deteriorating economic and social infrastructure of Sub-Saharan Africa. This in brief is the record of post colonial Africa (George, Susan 1989; Baratt-Brown, Michael and Pauline Tiffen 1992; O´Connor, Anthony 1991; Davidson, Basil1992; George, Susan and Fabio Sabelli, 1992; Chossudovsky, Michel 1997).

Compared to the post-colonial period, colonialism could indeed be conceptualised as a joint venture of the European political, economical and religious institutions designed to integrate Africa and its inhabitants to the European system. Colonialism could also be seen as an attempt to rectify the damage brought by the European slave trade. Extreme poverty and famine did not exist in most of colonial Africa. Self-sufficiency in food production was encouraged and in actual fact maintained. Peace, albeit unilaterally imposed from above, was nonetheless maintained in colonial Africa, especially after the First World War. The basic infrastructure of roads, railways, harbours and telecommunication network was completed during the colonial period. Paternalism was the norm and development of African colonies was geared to the interests of the colonial power as well as of the colonies. Colonies were reconstructed in the image of the imperial power in the same way as man is conceived in the image of God.

One of the most puzzling aspects of the relations between Europe and Africa was the way colonialism came to an end. The devastating impact of the Second World War on the economies of the major colonial powers, i.e. Great Britain and France was indeed an important factor. The emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as the leading powers and who demanded a share of influence in Africa was also another reason. But I believe the most cogent explanation for the demise of colonialism is that provided by Joseph Schumpeter (1919). The main argument of Schumpeter was that the spirit of European colonialism was not at all capitalist. Although

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Europe was in the second century of its industrial and capitalist phase, its political culture was permeated by that of feudalism. The feudal culture was predominantly non-capitalist and was driven by values such as chivalry and honour. The feudal man was not driven by economic interests alone. Shumpeter further argued that if Europe had been thoroughly capitalist, not only in terms of its mode of production but also in its mode of thought, it would not have gone to the unnecessary business of colonising the world. A mature capitalist system, Schumpeter argued, does not require colonies. The job of extracting resources can be carried out by means other than colonialism. Finally Schumpeter predicted, as early as 1919, that colonialism will wither away with the rise and maturity of capitalism.

It is indeed tempting to argue that events developed in the way envisaged by Joseph Schumpeter. Africa was catapulted into independence in the early 1960s as suddenly as it was suddenly colonised slightly more than a half century earlier. The extraction of African resources could henceforth be done without the medium of colonialism. The colonial project (extensively explained in the memos of colonial governors and the home office) was hardly accomplished when the colonial powers decided to pack their files and leave Africa ostensibly on its own. Pushed and cudgelled by the combined forces of the Soviet Union and the USA, the major colonial powers gave up their privileges as well as their responsibilities in most parts of the world- a world that later came to be designated in many names during the last four decades.

Most of the states in Africa became independent between 1957 and 1965. Decolonisation coincided with the economic boom in the Europe and North America. No sooner had African states gained their independence it became apparent that the gap between the rich countries (the great majority of colonial powers formed part of this group) and the ex-colonies (now described as developing or underdeveloped) was rapidly growing. There was a growing realisation among the former colonial powers as well within the United Nations that unless resources from the rich countries in the form

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of development aid were made available, the gap would continue to grow.

It was roughly in this context that the first United Nations Commission on International Development under the leadership of Lester Pearson was established. In the following paragraphs, I shall outline the findings of the Pearson Commission and the responses the report elicited.

Pearson commission and the debate of Development Aid

The context under which the first UN Commission on International Development that Lestor Pearson headed was very similar to the current context that led to the UN Millennium Development goals. In the mid 1960s, the per capita income of more than half of the world's population was less than 100USD. The world of the 1960s was divided between the rich who were getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

Development in the 1960s, Pearson wrote, was very different from what it was during the great period of Western growth in the last two centuries. Between 1600 and 1900 Europeans occupied virtually all the vacant and semi-vacant temperate lands in the world. Wherever the white man could go, he settled down and took over. In doing so, he developed the new land, opened up new resources, and laid the basis for the economic advances of the industrial revolution and for the technological, post-industrial society of today. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the advances in industrial revolution and the growth of world trade transformed the process of development into a system where the western world stood to gain at the expense of the rest of the world. Parson's lucid summation is apt that it worthwhile quoting it in full:

> This, roughly, is how the cycle worked: From America or Britain would come the capital to open up a mine or establish a settlement or build a plantation. Then the raw materials would be shipped back. Any local development would be to facilitate this movement. Roads, railways, and ports were built, and the

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> financial mechanism for exchange created, all under the control of the Western nations and designed to help drain away the profits to them. Manufactures were sent to pay for the raw materials. These manufactures would be provided by European or American firms and distributed by the large commercial agencies, all under Western control.
>
> Only that limited sector of the colonial or overseas country which was concerned with non-competitive and raw material exports was developed, or allowed to be developed. Very little capital or savings, so necessary for growth, spilled over into the local community. Whatever did, as wages, was then mopped up by the sale of manufactured goods fro overseas, the profits from which went back to the metropolitan power (Pearson, 1971: 13-14).

Such was the pattern of development in the world outside the northern hemisphere. And such pattern was not easy to change. The development situation throughout the colonial period, wrote Pearson, was not much different from that which had existed in the 18th and 19th centuries in the sense that the basic facilities for productive investment and growth were still absent (Pearson, 1971:14)

I do agree with the above description, but writing thirty years later I take exception of Pearson´s analysis of colonialism. Besides the draining of the resources of the colonies, colonialism was saddled with other objectives. The Imperial powers could not continue to disregard the welfare of their colonial subjects. The educational policies that these powers pursued and implemented, albeit contradictory, were designed to create African citizens in the image of the citizens of the imperial nation[1].

The main thrust of Pearson Commission was that the setting in motion of a long-term and self-sustaining development among the developing nations was to the interest of all the citizens of the world. On the basis of such logic and the repeated campaigns from various quarters, the Pearson commission recommended that the volume of development aid should be sufficient to help the less developed countries to a level of growth of at least 6 per cent

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per year (Pearson, 1969:124). Elaborating further the Pearson Commission argued that a growth of 6 per cent per year would transform the economic outlook of any aid recipient country as this would imply that per capita income would increase four times in a half a century. Such a growth rate brought about by foreign aid and the conducive local environment could easily absorb rapid increase of the population (Pearson, 1971: 53).

The report of the Pearson Commission was reviewed by a group of economists who met at Columbia University in 1971. The Columbia Conference, according to Hans Singer and Javed Ansari (1979: 141-42) stressed that, even if a 6 percent growth rate was attained, the gap between the rich and the poor countries would be four times its present size by the year 2000. It was necessary for the whole attitude to the problem of international assistance to be fundamentally altered. The Columbia Conference argued that aid must be targeted to the income per capita in the recipient countries. Specifically, aid must not be less than 400 USD per person per annum in the least developing countries by the year 2000. Aid should be related to specific social targets (e.g. better nutrition for children, health standards, education levels, etc.) and must be concentrated to the group of countries which have a per capita income of less than 300 USD per annum.

Commenting to the report of Lester B. Pearson and the Columbia Conference that reviewed the Pearson Commission, Singer and Ansari (1978: 142-3) wrote:

> A primary objective of aid allocation policy must be the reduction of the ever-widening international gap. Aid must not be seen as a temporary self-liquidating, stop-gap measure. Instead, it must be frankly recognised that aid, as we know it, ought to be the first step that has been taken towards the evolution of a progressive international taxation structure based on the principle “From each according to his ability; to each according to his need“. In

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> other words, the fact must be faced that aid is a permanent feature of the process of international resource allocation. The extent to which it is distributed in accordance with the true principles of equity and efficiency reflects the contribution of the well-to-do members of the international community towards eliminating the imbalances and inequalities within the world economic system. Instead, international assistance that is given without regard to the relative needs of the recipients is self-defeating, in that its contribution to the development of the recipient country is highly unlikely to be very fruitful. The contribution of the rich economies towards the development requirements of the poor nations will thus have to be geared to the development needs of the latter and not to the interests, both political and economic, of the rich countries themselves.

Furthermore Singer and Ansari stressed that there should be no ambiguity in the allocation criteria that should be used for aid distribution. The criteria should provide an index that could be used to measure the contribution of the rich countries towards the effective reduction of the widening gap between the rich and poor countries. The value judgements implied by aid allocation based on such criteria of this sort reflect merely an extension of the concept of the welfare state from the national to the international level (Singer and Ansari, 1978:156)

By the end of the 1980´s the development debate that the Pearson Commission articulated was for all purpose and intent forgotten. As I shall attempt to demonstrate towards the end of this paper, the UN Millennium Document on Development hardly defines the conditions for development and the obligations of the OECD countries. Since the 1980s the OECD countries have successively divested themselves from active engagement in the development of Africa. Since the early 1990s the total amount of Aid to Africa have declined. In 1992 Africa got 18 billion US Dollars. This figure declined since 1995. Aid to Africa is now in the range of 16 billion US Dollars. The continent gets another 14 billion US dollars in the form of loans. There are several reasons for the decline. Rising financial problems

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in the donor countries, the growing scepticism toward the effectiveness of aid programme, decline in the strategic importance of Africa and the emergence of new claimants in eastern Europe are mentioned as some of the reasons. Here it has to be remembered that Africa pays annually more than 30 billion US dollars in terms of rent and mortgage to the World Bank and other commercial lenders (Tiffen and Barat-Brown, 1992).

One of the significant shifts in Official Development Aid to Africa is the decline in agricultural aid. African agriculture is the single victim of this shift (Nicolas van de Valle and Timothy A Johnston, 1996). This is very difficult to explain, first because, donor countries speak about the importance of agriculture; and secondly, it is a well known fact that the majority of Africans still depend on agriculture. Instead some major donors increased funding for environment and conservation at the expense of agriculture. Whereas development aid to economic infrastructure such as roads, energy, and telecommunications has remained stable. About 20 percent of all aid from the OECD countries goes to infrastructure support.

There are strong indications to argue that the OECD have given the entire sub-continent of Africa to the Non-governmental Organisations. Can NGOs replace the role of OECD states as partners of development in Africa? The opinion of this paper is clear. The records that we so far have strongly point out that the NGOs cannot be partners of development in the sense used by the Pearson Commission. Here below I shall point out the critical voices but also dwell on the literature that is sympathetic to the role of the NGOs.

NGOs and Foreign Development Aid: some critical voices.

Foreign aid is primarily allocated to countries who are deemed so poor that they could not generate the funds needed to carry out the tasks themselves. The recipients of foreign aid are in principle all those countries commonly described as least developed. The countries that have been on the receiving end of both foreign aid and NGOs development/ humanitarian inputs are to be found mostly in Africa. It is therefore, appropriate that the role of foreign

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aid and NGOs in Africa has become the focus of inquiry for this introductory paper.

A critical inquiry into the role of foreign aid and into the role of the NGOs was virtually impossible during the era of the Cold War. During the cold war era, both foreign aid, NGOs as well as the policies of the World Bank were used as important instruments at the disposal of the Western World in the war against the spread of world communism. There were critical voices against the Western policies on Africa (Susan George, 1989). but these voices were quickly dismissed. Only after the demise of “communism/socialism“ did authors begin to seriously look into the overall impact of foreign aid and the aid offered by NGOs on that part of the world that has been the playing field for such kind of interventions.

One such critical voice is Michael Maren´s *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign aid and International Charity (1997).* For Maren, foreign aid and NGOs humanitarian/relief assistance is an industry, a religion and a self-serving system. This industry sacrifices its own practitioners as well as its intended beneficiaries in order that it may serve and grow (Maren, 1997:11). And his main conclusion is that foreign aid and international charity is highly destructive. It has to be noted that Maren´s experience is largely based on his long experience in the Republics Kenya and Somalia.

The distribution of development aid, according to Maren, was a big private business that relies on government contracts. NGOs like the Catholic Relief Services are paid by the United States government to give a way surplus food produced by subsidised farmers. The more food NGOs give away, the more money they received from the government to administer the handouts. Maren stressed that since the securing of the government money is the primary goal, NGOs are rarely interested to find out whether the project they are supposed to implement is good or not.

In most parts of Africa politicians loved to receive any kind of foreign aid. Some influential politicians could give aid projects as gifts to their

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supporters. An African politician could for instance ask a European NGO to start projects in his native district. The location of a European NGO in a district could in the short term perspective create employment opportunities for the inhabitants of that district. But the ordinary people see foreign aid and NGOs for what they are. Aid workers move into the big colonial houses and ride in high cars and are not different than the former colonial masters (both in colour and style of life).

Destruction brought by development and humanitarian assistance: the case of Somalia

According to Michael Maren Somalia was destroyed by foreign and humanitarian aid. During the time of Siyyad Barre (ruler of Somalia from 1969-1991) too much foreign aid came to Somalia. Those who gave the aid did not bother to find out how the aid funds were used. Aid money was divided among local officials and among the sons and daughters of politicians. The donors knew about this kind of gross corruption but did nothing to prevent it.

As Somalia was within the Western Bloc at least since 1978, it was entitled to receive US development aid. It is since this period that the destruction of the Somali agricultural infrastructure began to take place. The US food aid destroyed Somalia but who gained from it and how? All US food aid arrives under the authority of Public Law-480. This law has three mechanisms for delivering food to poor countries. These are: i) emergency food. This is a direct donation to feed starving children and is also used as food for work. ii) Food for development. This American food enters Somalia and is sold to anybody. The money collected in this way is used to finance development projects. iii). Food sold to merchants at a heavily subsided price. The American food that was sold to Somalia was bought by the people close to the president. The minister of Agriculture was one of those who sold American food and bought a huge farm with the profit. While Somalia's agricultural self-sufficiency was being destroyed, the political elite was busily

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engaged in the production of bananas and watermelons for export.

Traditional farmers were forced out of business by low prices and were either driven off their land or forced to sell it cheaply. The US surplus food grains were subsidising the production of bananas and other crops that did not compete with Western agricultural interests. Those who were relatives and friends of Siyyad Barre made millions of dollars, first by selling US grains and secondly by exporting bananas and water-melons to Europe. All this was made possible by food aid. And as more farmers were forced off their land, food aid became more necessary. The cycle of food aid dependence was firmly created. The final and direct impact of the massive food aid was the complete destruction of the subsistence agriculture in Somalia.

The World Bank knew (at least by 1988) what was happening in Somalia as a result of food aid. It pointed out that donors (Germany and Italy in addition to the US) were more interested to supply food rather than hard currency to Somalia. By dumping food in Somalia, these countries were subsidising their own farmers. NGOs like *Save the Children* were either not competent enough to analyse the impact of their intervention or were only interested in raising money to keep themselves in business.

The American government also knew. In a study commissioned by the US Department of State's Centre for the Study of Foreign Affairs, the author of the report wrote that donors were aware of Somalia's problems but did very little other than offering food aid.

Alex de Waal (1997) confirmed what Michael Maren explained, i.e. the disaster brought about by the international NGOs. According to de Waal, both the UN and the major NGOs committed serious acts of omission. They did not show any sense of accountability to their main mission of meeting humanitarian needs. But as the case of Somalia demonstrates, the international NGOs prospered institutionally, and their staff advanced their careers. So the NGOs and their staff gained whereas the humanitarian

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needs of the Somali people were completely ignored. The power of the international NGOs was so strong that they were able to advocate the military occupation of an independent country on humanitarian grounds. But as events were later to prove, international military intervention in Somalia was primarily aimed at protecting NGOs rather than the population of the region.

Food aid destroyed the survival strategies that the Somalis had developed in the past. During periods of famine the Somali society had a credit system where the nomads would come to the urban areas and could get loans that they would pay when times were good. There was a system among the nomads of sharing resources.

Which interests are protected in the name of feeding starving Africans: An example from the United Sates.

The story that Maren narrates and a summary of which is presented below appears at first sight highly conspiratorial. But read together with Alex de Waal (1997) and Graham Hancock (1989) the facts that Maren compiles are strong enough to take seriously his conclusions. In 1992 the US government, according to Maren, spent about 12 billion dollars in domestic and export subsidies for agricultural products. The shipping companies that transported food aid to Africa and other countries gained 580 million dollars over and above the world cargo rate. All these subsidy is part of the foreign aid that the US government gave the third world.

Maren further argues that the real battles over foreign aid are fought not in terms of helping the hungry but in terms of getting subsidies. The agricultural industry, the shipping industry, the big private food exporters, and the NGOs speak about food security, jobs and humanitarianism. The words they use to get their piece of the action are determined by their audience. The rationale can be hard-nosed utilitarian or humanitarian or a mixture of the two. But at the end, they are always after public money for private interests. The massive amount of this money cannot be compared with the few millions

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stolen by corrupted African dictators. The money to be made in Europe and America is much more and has no relation from what actually happens to the food once it leaves the European and American ports.

The role that the NGOs are made to play

Europe as well as the United States have annual food surplus that has either to be sold or destroyed. In places where they can be sold, they are sold at world prices. But the world market price for grains is not as high as when food is given away as food aid by European and United Sates governments. European and the US government buy their food for poor countries at domestic prices. In this way European governments subsidise the agricultural sector. The shipping industry and the big food exporting companies stand to gain. The profit margin is so significant that the agricultural, the shipping and food exporting companies are the most strongest advocates of food aid programmes. But they cannot do it alone. They need NGOs to assist them.

The NGOs serve two important functions. First, the NGOs are the primary lobbyists for sending food to the third world countries. For instance no one can lobby more effectively than the late Mother Theresa. Second, the NGOs are the agents and the contractors who move the food. In 1993, CARE, the biggest American NGO distributed almost 1.2 million metric tons of US donated food aid to 58 countries. Most of this food was transported by the American shipping industry. The shipping industry made huge profits as it charges several times more than the cargo rate at world market prices. It would not be difficult to imagine the profit made by the American shipping industry as it charges several times more than the world cargo rate.

The United States International Aid for Development (USAID) and the NGOs have evaluated food aid projects based on commodity management and outputs, such as numbers of children fed or miles of road constructed, but have not assessed the impact of their projects on long-term food security. NGOs have become too dependent on the food exporting companies. Maren

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believed that the survival of many NGOs depend on how much money they can get from the food exporting and shipping companies. The humanitarian instinct has become perverted by its partnership with special domestic interests. Having read Maren´s assessment I draw the following conclusion. Indeed it would be very interesting to study if there is a link between the decline of aid to agriculture and the politics of food aid where the major beneficiaries are the grain merchants and the shipping industry of Europe and North America.

A view that is far more critical than the one put forward by Michael Maren, Alex de Waal and Johnston is that by Graham Hancock. His major argument is that western aid (via the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank and individual donor states) would not and could not bring about any meaningful development for the poor regions of the world. According to Hancock, development aid is an industry that benefits the countries who give aid and the international organisations who administer it. Hancock cites some examples. Since the 1980s, most of the billions of US dollars given as aid is returned back to Europe and North America in terms of rent and mortgage. In 1988 the South got about 60 billion US dollars worth of aid but it paid back to the North about 40 billion US Dollars. The situation in Africa is the same. Since the 1990s, Africa makes annual payments about 30 billion US dollars to the International financial institutions whereas the annual amount of aid and loans made available to Africa has been in the range of 30 billion US dollars (Barrat-Brown and Mary Tiffen, 1992)

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The volume of aid is according to Hancock big enough to do harm. Aid is profoundly dangerous to the poor and inimical to their interests. Aid has destroyed the lives and environment of millions of people. Aid has supported and legitimised brutal tyrannies and has facilitated the emergence of inefficient bureaucracies. Aid has sapped the initiative, creativity and enterprise of ordinary people. Aid has created a moral tone in international affairs that denies the hard task of wealth creation and that substitutes easy handouts for the rigors of self-help.

The above description of the role of foreign aid and NGOs is of course not shared by all researchers. In fact the views of Michael Maren, Alex de Waal and Graham Hancock can be taken as too harsh. What is however certain is that the performance of NGOs has so far been far modest than what the NGOs and their supporters claim. In actual fact foreign aid and international charity have not succeeded to confront issues of poverty and development. The complex reasons and institutional constraints facing foreign aid and international charity are issues discussed widely by among others, Roger Ridell (1995).

One of the recent authors who studied this subject is Terje Tvedt (1998). Here are some of the salient features of the arguments. NGOs have promoted themselves as being involved in both neutral humanitarianism and partisan activities. In fact, most NGOs have taken on both roles in different circumstances. At one time NGOs advocated neutral humanitarian issues and at other times the same NGOs have spoken out in favour or against, for example the conflict in Bosnia. The general dilemma between humanitarian aid and “speaking out“ is not a new one. But Humanitarian organisations have in general stood for bringing aid to anybody regardless of political or religious affiliations.

Yet the fact remains that there has been a shift from development aid to emergency aid, where NGOs are active players. Emergency aid encourages and reproduces images of misery. A growing number of NGO employees are

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living on disaster and misery management. This reality creates and recreates all the time a social base for a special type of image production of “we“ and “them“. NGOs humanitarianism rests more on an image of permanent emergencies and peoples inability to help themselves.

Most NGOs seem to be less activist, and more geared towards humanitarian aid or towards long term project implementation. It is however important to remember that the most influential NGOs gain quite a lot in prestige and visibility during crises and emergencies. In conflict situations the NGOs appear as a humanitarian monolith. In Rwanda more than 100 NGOs from all over the western world worked together in the refugee camps without raising debates on policy or aid issues. This is a clear evidence that NGOs do not criticise each other. With thousands of NGOs (there are about 4000 NGOs in Western Europe and North America with development and humanitarian activities in the developing countries) working in the same country, it is astonishing that the NGOs seldom disagree among themselves on fundamental policy issues or aid strategies. There is indeed an internal solidarity within the international world of the NGOs.

From Pearson Commission to the UN Millennium Development Goals: a betrayal of the poor

The UN Millennium development goal is based on the data collected and interpreted by the World Bank. And according to this data, nearly half of the world’s population attempts to survive on less than 2 USD per day. But according to the United Nations these are not considered poor. Those that the UN targets as poor are the 1.2 billion (one thousand and two hundred million) people who struggle to survive on less than 1 USD per day. The great majority of these poor people live in Africa and Asia. In spite of the absence of reliable figures, as much as 70 percent of the African population fall within the category of the poor who survive on less than 2USD per day. The UN millennium document noted what researchers have pointed out over 15 years ago that a great majority of Africans were as poor today as they

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were twenty years ago.

Further, the UN Millennium document pointed out the impact of the persistence of income inequality on the global political climate. We live in a world where 20 percent of the population (most of whom reside in Europe, North America and Japan) consume about 70 percent of the world's income. And more than 60 percent of the world's poor earn leas than 20 percent of the world's income. Extreme poverty, the United nations says is as an affront to common humanity.

In fairness to the UN Millennium Development Goals, the document identifies correctly the central challenge, namely that of ensuring that globalisation becomes a positive force for all people throughout the world, instead of leaving billions of them behind in squalor. Inclusive globalisation must be built on the great enabling force of the market, but market forces alone will not achieve it. It requires a broader effort to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity (Millennium goals, p. 4).

It is also important to state that the Millennium Development Goals document does indeed point out the need for a serious global commitment: It writes: no where is a global commitment to poverty reduction needed more than in Africa south of the Sahara, because no region of the world endures greater human suffering. The latest estimates indicate that sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of people who live on less than $1 a day. Growth in per capita income averaged 1.5 per cent in the 1960´s, 0.8 per cent in the 1970s, and minus 1.2 per cent in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the region grew more slowly than any other group of middle- or low-income countries.

According to my view, the UN Millennium Document on Development is a tragic failure. The central problem with the UN Millennium Document is the poverty of its vision and hence of its commitment. In sharp contrast to the first UN Commission on Development (Pearson Commission), the UN Millennium Document on Development limits itself to a principle of intention

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of four points. First, the UN Millennium document expresses the wish that poverty (those living below 1 USD per day) would be reduced by half by 2015. Second, it limits itself by reminding the rich countries that they have an indispensable role to play by further opening their markets, by providing deeper and faster debt relief, and by giving more and better-focused development assistance. Thirdly, it challenges the foremost experts in the field of agriculture to think through the barriers of low productivity in Africa. And finally, the Millennium document leaves the task of the renewal of African agriculture to the philanthropic [NGOs] foundations.

Each of the above four points are so vague that they are virtually impossible to implement and monitor. Let us for instance take the strategy on poverty reduction. What does the reduction of the number of the poor by half by 2015 mean? Does this mean the reduction by half of those 1.2 billion poor people at the year 2000? The population of the poor of the world is bound to nearly double in the coming fifteen years. So does the UN Millennium Document refer to the population at 2015 or at 2000? Even if we concede the UN Millennium Document does indeed refer to the population at 2015, there is no mention of strategies that need to be in place. The UN Millennium Document limits itself by reminding rich countries to open up their markets.

The UN Millennium Document is a betrayal of the poor It has nothing to say about the development needs of the poor regions of the world. Yet it is only the UN that has the mandate and the moral responsibility to lay down policies for a stable and sustainable world. How far the UN has neglected its role in the evolution of an equitable international economic order becomes clear when two of its documents are put side by side.

Pearson Commission (1969)	**UN Millennium Document (2000)**
Development aid should enable the recipient country to achieve an annual growth of 6 %	Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than 1 USD a day by 2015.

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Concluding remarks

A globalised world requires a global policy of welfare. In sub-Saharan Africa, the scarcity of funds is the absolute reason for continued poverty. Africa pays more in the form of rent and mortgage to the international financial institutions and the World Bank than what it gets in Official Development Aid. Most of the capital that is produced in Africa (by the sale of primary products) is handed to the World Bank and other lenders as a repayment of ill conceived and failed projects (Susan George and Fabio Sabelli, 1992). The cancellation of African debts would certainly go some way in releasing some funds to finance the social infrastructure. This, however, would not be enough. Sub-Saharan Africa requires a continuous flow of funds for a good number of years before its economy could reach a dynamic level as recommended by the Pearson Commission. But where are the resources to come from? The resources for rebuilding (or building) the shattered (undeveloped) economies of regions crippled by poverty is available in the OECD countries. The crucial issue that has to be answered quite urgently is why the OECD countries should be concerned with global poverty. The Pearson Commission answered the question though it did not provide clear strategies. The UN Millennium Document on Development recognises the impact of extreme inequality on the global political climate. The goal of a global welfare policy is neither utopian nor speculative. It is a solution to a world that has become truly global in its economic and cultural dimensions.

A possible scenario is to mandate the World Bank to raise funds that it needs to provide basic needs (health, education, housing) until such time that the economies of the developing world has reached a take off stage in terms of revenue collection and implementation of social policies. A global economic system that excludes the vast majority of the world´s population from a life free of un-freedom (to borrow the words of Amartya Sen) is degrading for humanity. The Pearson Commission pointed out that the rich countries of the world had (even more now than ever) the possibilities to

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assist the poorer regions to achieve a sustainable economies, but the question was (and still valid today) whether the rich countries have the will to do so.

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«For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath» Matthew 25:29. This paper is part of the lectures that I delivered at the *Master in International Studies in Philanthropy* (MISP) at Bologna University. I am grateful to Professor Giuliana Gemelli, the director of the program, for invaluable support and encouragement.

Notes

[1] Colonialism as a field of study had its golden period in the decade following the independence of Africa. By the end of the 1980´s, colonialism as a theme of study was no longer interesting. To my knowledge, there is very little revisionist research on the colonial experience. Since the 1990´s the great majority of African research is on post-colonial experience. The

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huge unevenness in African research, where some themes and periods are more preferred than others, is I believe, deplorable.