

benefit life on earth generally by reducing the generation of toxic hazards. When people of wealth, who exercise control of manufacturing processes, marketing campaigns, and media coverage, are themselves threatened disproportionately by toxic hazards, the culture will evolve quickly to find their production largely unnecessary. It will be discovered, for example, that many plastic items can be made of wood, just as it was discovered in the late 1980s that the production of many ozone-destroying chemicals is unnecessary. Similarly, necessity being the mother of invention, it was discovered during World War II that many women could work in factories. When certain interests are threatened, the impossible does not even take longer.

The above approach to environmental injustice should, of course, be applied internationally and intranationally within all countries. The same considerations of justice condemn universally, all other things being equal, exposing poor people to vital dangers whose generation predominantly benefits the rich. This implies that rich countries should not

ship their toxic wastes to poor countries. Since many poorer countries, such as those in Africa, are inhabited primarily by nonwhites, prohibiting shipments of toxic wastes to them would reduce significantly worldwide environmental racism. A prohibition on such shipments would also discourage production of dangerous wastes, as it would require people in rich countries to live with whatever dangers they create. If the principle of LULU points were applied in all countries, including poor ones, elites in those countries would lose interest in earning foreign currency credits through importation of waste, as they would be disproportionately exposed to imported toxins.

In sum, we could reduce environmental injustice considerably through a general program of distributive justice concerning environmental hazards. Pollution would not thereby be eliminated, since to live is to pollute. But such a program would motivate significant reduction in the generation of toxic wastes, and help the poor, especially people of color, as well as the environment.

NOTES

1. Vicki Been, "Market Forces, Not Racist Practices, May Affect the Siting of Locally Undesirable Land Uses," in *At Issue: Environmental Justice*, ed. by Jonathan Petrikin (San Diego, Calif.: Greenhaven Press, 1995), 41.
2. See *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 411 R.S. 1 (1973) and *Village of Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation*, 429 U.S. 252 (1977).
3. Been, 41.
4. Murray Rothbard, "The Great Ecology Issue," *The Individualist* 21, no. 2 (February 1970): 5.
5. See Peter S. Wenz, *Environmental Justice* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 65–67 and associated endnotes.
6. Christopher Boerner and Thomas Lambert, "Environmental Justice Can Be Achieved Through Negotiated Compensation," in *At Issue: Environmental Justice*.
7. F. Diaz-Barriga et al., "Arsenic and Cadmium Exposure in Children Living Near to Both Zinc and Copper Smelters," summarized in *Archives of Environmental Health* 46, no. 2 (March/April 1991): 119.
8. Dick Russell, "Environmental Racism," *Amicus Journal* (Spring 1989): 22–32, 24.
9. Marianne Lavelle, "The Minorities Equation," *National Law Journal* 21 (September 1992): 3.
10. Christopher Hallowell, "Water Crisis on the Cape," *Audubon* (July/August 1991): 65–74, especially 66 and 70.
11. Athena Linos et al., "Leukemia and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and Residential Proximity to Industrial Plants," *Archives of Environmental Health* 46, no. 2 (March/April 1991): 70–74.
12. L. W. Pickle et al., *Atlas of Cancer Mortality among Whites: 1950–1980*, HHS publication #(NIH) 87–2900 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services, Government Printing Office: 1987).

13. Wenz, 216–18.
14. The idea of LULU points comes to me from Frank J. Popper, "LULUs and Their Blockage," in

Confronting Regional Challenges: Approaches to LULUs, Growth, and Other Vexing Governance Problems, ed. by Joseph DiMento and Le Roy Graymer (Los Angeles, Calif.: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1991), 13–27, especially 24.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. If, as Wenz suggests, cost should not determine where toxic sites are located, what should the criterion be?
2. Wenz suggests that in general those who derive benefits from public policy should be the same ones who sustain the burdens associated with that policy. If you apply that principle to such social practices as nuclear power, industrial pollution, wilderness preservation, and the growth of agribusiness, what is the result?
3. What does Wenz mean by LULU points? Do you find his proposal reasonable? Do you find it practical?
4. Can you develop a response to Wenz's rejection of free market theories of justice? Outline your response in three or four bullet points.
5. Would it be just for an impoverished community to accept toxic waste for pay? Should poor communities be free to accept a disproportionate burden for compensation?

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Deceiving the Third World: The Myth of Catching-Up Development

MARIA MIES

Maria Mies is Professor of Sociology at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences in Cologne, Germany, and an environmental activist. She has written extensively on problems of development, women's rights, and the environment.

In this essay, she challenges the idea that economic growth is the way for the poorer, southern countries to catch up with the richer, northern countries. Mies puts forth a case that the catch-up policy is both impossible and undesirable.

Virtually all development strategies are based on the explicit or implicit assumption that the model of 'the good life' is that prevailing in the affluent societies of the North: the USA, Europe and Japan. The question of how the poor in the North, those in the countries of the South, and peasants and women worldwide may attain this 'good life' is usually answered in terms of what, since Rostow, can be called the 'catching-up development' path. This means that by following the same path of industrialization, technological progress and capital accumulation taken by Europe and the USA and Japan the same goal can be reached. These affluent countries and classes, the dominant sex—the men—the dominant urban centres and lifestyles are then perceived as the realized utopia of liberalism, a utopia still to be attained by those who apparently still lag behind. Undoubtedly the industrialized countries' affluence is the source of great fascination to all who are unable to share in it. The so-called 'socialist' countries' explicit aim was to catch up, and even to overtake capitalism. After the breakdown of socialism in Eastern Europe, particularly East Germany, the aim is now to quickly catch up with the lifestyle of the so-called market economies, the prototype of which is seen in the USA or West Germany.

A brief look at the history of the underdeveloped countries and regions of the South but also at present day East Europe and East Germany can teach us that this catching-up development path is a myth: nowhere has it led to the desired goal.

This myth is based on an evolutionary, linear understanding of history. In this concept of history the peak of the evolution has already been reached by some, namely, men generally, white men in particular, industrial countries, urbanites. The 'others'—women, brown and black people, 'underdeveloped' countries, peasants—will also reach this peak with a little more effort, more education, more 'development'. Technological progress is seen as the driving force of this evolutionary process. It is usually ignored that, even in the early 1970s, the catching-up development theory was criticized by a number of writers. Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Johan Galtung, and many others have shown that the

poverty of the underdeveloped nations is not as a result of 'natural' lagging behind but the direct consequence of the overdevelopment of the rich industrial countries who exploit the so-called periphery in Africa, South America and Asia. In the course of this colonial history, which continues today, these areas were progressively under-developed and made dependent on the so-called metropolis. The relationship between these over-developed centres or metropolises and the under-developed peripheries is a colonial one. Today, a similar colonial relationship exists between Man and Nature, between men and women, between urban and rural areas. We have called these the colonies of White Man. In order to maintain such relationships force and violence are always essential.

But the emotional and cognitive acceptance of the colonized is also necessary to stabilize such relationships. This means that not only the colonizers but also the colonized must accept the lifestyle of 'those on top' as the only model of the good life. This process of acceptance of the values, lifestyle and standard of living of 'those on top' is invariably accompanied by a devaluation of one's own: one's own culture, work, technology, lifestyle and often also philosophy of life and social institutions. In the beginning this devaluation is often violently enforced by the colonizers and then reinforced by propaganda, educational programmes, a change of laws, and economic dependency, for example, through the debt trap. Finally, this devaluation is often accepted and internalized by the colonized as the 'natural' state of affairs. One of the most difficult problems for the colonized (countries, women, peasants) is to develop their own identity after a process of formal decolonization—identity no longer based on the model of the colonizer as the image of the true human being; a problem addressed by Fanon, Memmi, Freire, and Blaise. To survive, wrote Memmi, the colonized must oppress the colonization. But to become a true human being he/she, him/herself, must oppress the colonized which, within themselves, they have become. This means that he/she must overcome the fascination exerted by the colonizer and his lifestyle and re-evaluate what he/she is and does.

To promote the elimination of the colonizers from within the colonized, it is useful to look more closely at the catching-up development myth.

It may be argued that those who have so far paid the price for development also look up to those at the top as their model of the future, as their concrete utopia; that this is a kind of universal law. But if we also consider the price nature had to pay for this model, a price that now increasingly affects people in the affluent societies too, it may be asked why do not these people question this myth? Because even in the North, the paradigm of unlimited growth of science and technology, goods and services—of capital—and GNP have led to an increasing deterioration in the environment, and subsequently the quality of life.

DIVIDE AND RULE: MODERN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY'S SECRET

Most people in the affluent societies live in a kind of schizophrenic or 'double-think' state. They are aware of the disasters of Bhopal and Chernobyl, of the 'greenhouse' effect, the destruction of the ozone layer, the gradual poisoning of ground-water, rivers and seas by fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, as well as industrial waste, and that they themselves increasingly suffer the effects of air pollution, allergies, stress and noise, and the health risks due to industrially produced food. They also know that responsibility for these negative impacts on their quality of life lies in their own lifestyles and an economic system based on constant growth. And yet (except for very few) they fail to act on this knowledge by modifying their lifestyles.

One reason for this collective schizophrenia is the North's stubborn hope, even belief, that they can have their cake and eat it: ever more products from the chemical industry and clean air and water, more and more cars and no 'greenhouse' effect; an ever increasing output of commodities, more fast- and processed-foods, more fancy packaging, more exotic, imported food and enjoy good health and solve the waste problem.

Most people expect science and technology to provide a solution to these dilemmas, rather than taking steps to limit their own consumption and production patterns. It is not yet fully realized that a high material living standard militates against a genuinely good quality of life, especially if problems of ecological destruction are clearly understood.

The belief, however, that a high material living standard is tantamount to a good or high quality of life is the ideological support essential to uphold and legitimize the constant growth and accumulation model of modern industrial society. Unless the masses of people accept this the system cannot last and function. This equation is the real ideological-political hegemony that overlies everyday life. No political party in the industrialized countries of the North dares question this schizophrenic equation, because they fear it would affect their election prospects.

We have already shown that this double-think is based on assumptions that there are no limits to our planet's resources, no limits to technological progress, no limits to space, to growth. But as, in fact, we inhabit a limited world, this limitlessness is mythical and can be upheld only by colonial divisions: between centres and peripheries, men and women, urban and rural areas, modern industrial societies of the North and 'backward', 'traditional', 'underdeveloped' societies of the South. The relationship between these parts is hierarchical not egalitarian, and characterized by exploitation, oppression and dominance.

The economic reason for these colonial structures is, above all, the *externalization of costs* from the space and time horizon of those who profit from these divisions. The economic, social and ecological costs of constant growth in the industrialized countries have been and are shifted to the colonized countries of the South, to those countries' environment and their peoples. Only by dividing the international work-force into workers in the colonized peripheries and workers in the industrialized centres and by maintaining these relations of dominance even after formal decolonization, is it possible for industrial countries' workers to be paid wages ten times and more higher than those paid to workers in the South.

Much of the social costs of the reproduction of the labour force within industrial societies is externalized *within* those societies themselves. This is facilitated through the patriarchal-capitalist sexual division of labour whereby women's household labour is defined as non-productive or as non-work and hence not remunerated. Women are defined as housewives and their work is omitted from GNP calculations. Women can therefore be called the internal colony of this system.

The ecological costs of the industrial production of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, atomic energy, and of cars and other commodities, and the waste and damage for which they are responsible during both the production and the consumption process, are being inflicted on nature. They manifest themselves as air-, water-, soil-pollution and poisoning that will not only affect the present, but all future generations. This applies particularly to the long-term effects of modern high technology: atomic industry, genetic engineering, computer technology and their synergic effects which nobody can either predict or control. Thus, both nature and the future have been colonized for the short-term profit motives of affluent societies and classes.

The relationship between colonized and colonizer is based not on any measure of partnership but rather on the latter's coercion and violence in its dealings with the former. This relationship is in fact the secret of unlimited growth in the centres of accumulation. If externalization of all the costs of industrial production were not possible, if they had to be borne by the industrialized countries themselves, that is if they were internalized, an immediate end to unlimited growth would be inevitable.

CATCHING-UP IMPOSSIBLE AND UNDESIRABLE

The logic of this accumulation model, based on exploitation and colonizing divisions, implies that anything like 'catching-up development' is impossible for the colonies, for all colonies. This is because just as one colony may, after much effort, attain what was considered the ultimate in 'development',

the industrial centres themselves have already 'progressed' to a yet more 'modern' stage of development; 'development' here meaning technological progress. What today was the TV is tomorrow the colour TV, the day after the computer, then the ever more modern version of the 'computer generation' and even later artificial intelligence machines and so forth. This catching-up policy of the colonies is therefore always a lost game. Because the very progress of the colonizers is based on the existence and the exploitation of those colonies.

These implications are usually ignored when development strategies are discussed. The aim, it is usually stated, is not a reduction in the industrialized societies' living standards but rather that all the 'underdeveloped' should be enabled to attain the same level of affluence as in those societies. This sounds fine and corresponds to the values of the bourgeois revolutions: equality for all! But that such a demand is not only a logical, but also a material impossibility is ignored. The impossibility of this demand is obvious if one considers the ecological consequences of the universalization of the prevailing production system and lifestyle in the North's affluent industrial societies to everyone now living and for some further 30 years on this planet. If, for example, we note that the six per cent of the world's population who live in the USA annually consume 30 per cent of all the fossil energy produced, then, obviously, it is impossible for the rest of the world's population, of which about 80 per cent live in the poor countries of the South, to consume energy on the same scale.

According to Trainer, those living in the USA, Europe and Japan, consume three-quarters of the world's energy production. 'If present world energy production were to be shared equally, Americans would have to get by on only one-fifth of the per capita amount they presently consume'. Or, put differently, world population may be estimated at eleven billion people after the year 2050; if of these eleven billion people the per capita energy consumption was similar to that of Americans in the mid-1970s, conventional oil resources would be exhausted in 34-74 years; similar estimations are made for other resources.

But even if the world's resource base was unlimited it can be estimated that it would be around 500 years before the poor countries reached the living standard prevailing in the industrialized North; and then only if these countries abandoned the model of permanent economic growth, which constitutes the core of their economic philosophy. It is impossible for the South to 'catch-up' with this model, not only because of the limits and inequitable consumption of the resource base, but above all, because this growth model is based on a colonial world order in which the gap between the two poles is increasing, especially as far as economic development is concerned.

These examples show that catching-up development is not possible for all. In my opinion, the powers that dominate today's world economy are aware of this, the managers of the transnational corporations, the World Bank, the IMF, the banks and governments of the club of the rich countries; and in fact they do not really want this universalization, because it would end their growth model. Tacitly, they accept that the colonial structure of the so-called market economy is maintained worldwide. This structure, however, is masked by such euphemisms as 'North-South relations', 'sustainable development', 'threshold-countries' and so on which suggest that all poor countries can and will reach the same living standard as that of the affluent countries.

Yet, if one tries to disregard considerations of equity and of ecological concerns it may be asked if this model of the good life, pursued by the societies in the North, this paradigm of 'catching-up development' has at least made people in the North happy. Has it fulfilled its promises there? Has it at least made women and children there more equal, more free, more happy? Has their quality of life improved while the GDP grew?

We read daily about an increase in homelessness and of poverty, particularly of women and children, of rising criminality in the big cities, of growing drug, and other addictions, including the addiction to shopping. Depression and suicides are on the increase in many of the affluent societies, and direct violence against women and children

seems to be growing—both public and domestic violence as well as sexual abuse; the media are full of reports of all forms of violence. Additionally the urban centres are suffocating from motor vehicle exhaust emissions; there is barely any open space left in which to walk and breathe, the cities and highways are choked with cars. Whenever possible people try to escape from these urban centres to seek relief in the countryside or in the poor South. If, as is commonly asserted, city-dwellers' quality of life is so high, why do they not spend their vacations in the cities?

It has been found that in the USA today the quality of life is lower than it was ten years ago. There seems to be an inverse relationship between GDP and the quality of life; the more GDP grows, the more the quality of life deteriorates. For example: growing market forces have led to the fact that food, which so far was still prepared in the home is now increasingly bought from fast-food restaurants; preparing food has become a service, a commodity. If more and more people buy this commodity the GDP grows. But what also grows at the same time is the erosion of community, the isolation and loneliness of individuals, the indifference and atomization of the society. As Polanyi remarked, market forces destroy communities. Here, too, the processes are characterized by polarizations: the higher the GDP the lower the quality of life.

But 'catching-up development' not only entails immaterial psychic and social costs and risks, which beset even the privileged in the rich countries and classes. With the growing number of ecological catastrophes—some man-made like the Gulf War or Chernobyl—material life also deteriorates in the rich centres of the world. The affluent society is one society which in the midst of plenty of commodities lacks the fundamental necessities of life: clean air, pure water, healthy food, space, time and quiet. What was experienced by mothers of small children after Chernobyl is now experienced by mothers in Kuwait. All the money of oil-rich Kuwait cannot buy people sunlight, fresh air, or pure water. This scarcity of basic common necessities for survival affects the poor and the rich, but with greater impact on the poor.

In short, the prevailing world market system, oriented towards unending growth and profit, cannot be maintained unless it can exploit external and internal colonies: nature, women and other people, but it also needs people as consumers who never say: 'IT IS ENOUGH'. The consumer model of the rich countries is not generalizable worldwide, neither is it desirable for the minority of the world's population who live in the affluent societies. Moreover, it will lead increasingly to wars to secure ever-scarcer resources; the Gulf War was in large part about the control of oil resources in that region. If we want to avoid such wars in the future the only alternative is a deliberate and drastic change in lifestyle, a reduction of consumption and a radical change in the North's consumer patterns and a decisive and broad-based movement towards energy conservation. . . .

These facts are widely known, but the myth of catching-up development is still largely the basis of development policies of the governments of the North and the South, as well as the ex-socialist countries. A TV discussion in which three heads of state participated—Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Vaclav Havel of the CSFR, and Richard von Weizsacker, President of the then FRG—is a clear illustration of this. The discussion took place after a showing of the film *The March*, which depicted millions of starving Africans trying to enter rich Europe. The President of the FRG said quite clearly that the consumption patterns of the 20 per cent of the world's population who live in the affluent societies of the industrialized North are using 80 per cent of the world's resources, and that these consumption patterns would, in the long run, destroy the natural foundations of life—worldwide. When, however, he was asked, if it was not then correct to criticize and relinquish the North's consumption patterns and to warn the South against imitating the North he replied that it would be wrong to preach to people about reducing consumption. Moreover, people in the South had the right to the same living standard as those in the North. The only solution was to distribute more of 'our' wealth, through development aid, to the poor in the South, to enable them to 'catch-up'. He did not mention that this wealth

originated as a result of the North's plundering of the colonies, as has been noted.

The President of socialist Zimbabwe was even more explicit. He said that people in the South wanted as many cars, refrigerators, TV sets, computers, videos and the same standard of living as the people in the North; that this was the aim of his politics of development. Neither he nor von Weizsacker asked whether this policy of universalizing the North's consumption patterns through a catching-up strategy was materially feasible. They also failed to question the ecological consequences of such a policy. As elected heads of state they dared not tell the truth, namely that the lifestyle of the rich in the North cannot be universalized, and that it should be ended in these countries in order to uphold the values of an egalitarian world.

Despite these insights, however, the catching-up development myth remains intact in the erstwhile socialist countries of the East. Developments in East Germany, Poland and the ex-Soviet Union clearly demonstrate the resilience of this myth; but also the disaster that follows when the true nature of the 'free' market economy becomes apparent. People in East Germany, the erstwhile GDR, were anxious to participate in the consumer model of capitalist FRG and, by voting for the destruction of their own state and the unification of Germany, hoped to become 'equal'. Political democracy, they were told, was the key to affluence. But they now realize, that in spite of political democracy and that they live in the same nation state as the West Germans, they are *de facto* treated as a cheap labour pool or a colony for West German capital, which is interested in expanding its market to the East but hesitates to invest there because the unification of Germany means that the East German workers will demand the same wages as their counterparts in West Germany. Where, then, is the incentive to go East? Less than a year after the unification, people in East Germany were already disappointed and depressed: unemployment had risen rapidly; the economy had virtually broken down; but no benefits had accrued from the new market system. According to the politicians, however, a period of common effort will be rewarded by catching-up

with the West Germans. And, inevitably, the women in East Germany are worst affected by these processes. They who formerly had a participation rate of 90 per cent in the labour force are the first to lose their jobs, and more rapidly than men; they form the bulk of the unemployed. Simultaneously, they are losing whatever benefits the socialist state had provided for them: creches, a liberal abortion law, job security as mothers, time off for child-care, and so on.

But due to their disappointment with the socialist system people do not, yet, understand that this is the normal functioning of capitalism; that it needs colonies for its expansionism, that even democracy and formal equality do not result automatically in an equal standard of living or equal economic rewards.

In East Germany, the anger and the disappointment about what people call their betrayal by West German politicians, particularly Chancellor Kohl, has been converted into hostility towards other minorities, ethnic and racial minorities, foreign workers, other East Europeans, all of whom wanted to enter the 'European House' and sit at the table of the rich.

In other parts of the world the collapse of the catching-up development myth leads to waves of fundamentalism and nationalism directed against religious, ethnic, racial, 'others' within and outside their own territory. The main target of both nationalism and fundamentalism, and communalism, is women, because religious, ethnic and cultural identity are always based on a patriarchy, a patriarchal image of women, or rather control over 'our' women, which, as we know from many examples, almost always amounts to more violence against women, more inequality for women. Moreover, the collapse of the myth of catching-up development results in a further militarization of men. Practically all the new nationalisms and fundamentalisms have led to virtual civil war in which young, militarized men play the key role. As unacceptable as equals by the rich men's club and unable to share their lifestyle they can only show their manhood—as it is understood in a patriarchal world—by shouldering a machine-gun.

The myth of catching-up development, therefore, eventually leads to further destruction of the environment, further exploitation of the 'Third World', further violence against women and further militarization of men.

DOES CATCHING-UP DEVELOPMENT LIBERATE WOMEN?

. . . But more specifically let us ask why, for women, the catching-up development path even in the affluent societies of the industrialized North, is and will remain an illusion.

1. The promises of freedom, equality, self-determination of the individual, the great values of the French Revolution, proclaimed as universal rights and hence also meant for women, are betrayed for many women because all these rights depend on the possession of property, and of money. Freedom is the freedom of those who possess money. Equality is the equality of money. Self-determination is the freedom of choice in the supermarket. This freedom, equality, self-determination is always dependent on those who control the money/property. And in the industrialized societies and nations they are mostly the husbands or the capitalists' state. This at least is the relationship between men and women that is protected by law; the man as breadwinner, the woman as housewife.
2. Self-determination and freedom are *de facto* limited for women, not only because they themselves are treated as commodities but also because, even if they possess money, they have no say in what is to be offered as commodities on the market. Their own desires and needs are constantly manipulated by those whose aim is to sell more and more goods. Ultimately, women are also persuaded that they want what the market offers.

women in the world. In Europe or the USA the system may be able to fulfil some of women's demand for equity with men, as far as income and jobs are concerned (or wages for housework, or a guaranteed minimum income), but only as long as it can continue the unrestricted exploitation of women as producers and consumers in the colonies. It cannot guarantee to *all* women worldwide the same standard of living as that of middle-class women in the USA or Europe. Only while women in Asia, Africa or Latin America can be forced to work for much lower wages than those in the affluent societies—and this is made possible through the debt trap—can enough capital be accumulated in the rich countries so that even unemployed women are guaranteed a minimum income, but all unemployed women in the world cannot expect this. Within a world system based on exploitation, 'some are more equal than others'.

3. This, however, also means that with such a structure there is no real material base for international women's solidarity. Because the core of individual freedom, equality, self-determination, linked to money and property, is the *self-interest of the individual* and not altruism or solidarity; these interests will always compete with the self-interests of others. Within an exploitative structure interests will necessarily be antagonistic. It may be in the interest of Third World women, working in the garment industry for export, to get higher wages, or even wages equivalent to those paid in the industrialized countries; but if they actually received these wages then the working-class woman in the North could hardly afford to buy those garments, or buy as many of them as she does now. In her interest the price of these garments must remain low. Hence the interests of these two sets of women who are linked through the world market are antagonistic. If we do not want to abandon the aim of international solidarity and equality we must abandon the materialistic and self-centred approach to fighting only

for our own interests. The interests' approach must be replaced by an ethical one.

4. To apply the principle of self-interest to the ecological problem leads to intensified ecological degradation and destruction in other parts of the world. This became evident after Chernobyl, when many women in Germany, desperate to know what to feed to their babies demanded the importation of unpolluted food from the Third World. One example of this is the poisoning of mothers' milk in the affluent countries by DDT and other toxic substances as a result of the heavy use of fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides in industrialized agriculture. Rachel Carson had already warned that poisoning the soil would eventually have its effect on people's food, particularly mothers' milk; now that this has happened many women in the North are alarmed. Some time ago a woman phoned me and said that in Germany it was no longer safe to breastfeed a baby for longer than three months; mothers' milk was poisoned. As a solution she suggested starting a project in South India for the production of safe and wholesome baby food. There, on the dry and arid Deccan Plateau, a special millet grows, called *ragi*. It needs little water and no fertilizer and is poor people's cheap subsistence food. This millet contains all the nutrients an infant needs. The woman suggested that *ragi* should be processed and canned as baby food and exported to Germany. This, she said, would solve the problem of desperate mothers whose breast milk is poisoned and give the poor in South India a new source of money income. It would contribute to their development!

I tried to explain that if *ragi*, the subsistence food of the poor, entered the world market and became an export commodity it would no longer be available for the poor; its price would soar and that, provided the project worked, pesticides and other chemicals would soon be used to produce more *ragi* for the market in the North. But *ragi* production, she answered, would have to be

controlled by people who would guarantee it was not polluted. This amounts to a new version of colonialism. When I asked her, why as an alternative, she would not rather campaign in Germany for a change in the industrialized agriculture, for a ban on the use of pesticides, she said that this would take too much time, that the poisoning of mothers' milk was an emergency situation. In her anxiety and concern only with the interests of mothers in Germany she was willing to sacrifice the interests of poor women in South India. Or rather she thought

that these conflicting interests could be made compatible by an exchange of money. She did not realize that this money would never suffice to buy the same healthy food for South Indian women's infants that they now had free of cost.

This example clearly shows that the myth of catching-up development, based on the belief of the miraculous workings of the market, particularly the world market, in fact leads to antagonistic interests even of mothers, who want only to give their infants unpolluted food.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain why Mies thinks the catch-up policy is a myth—both impossible and undesirable to obtain. morally wrong for poor countries to seek a higher standard of living?
2. Evaluate the strength of Mies's arguments. Why are catch-up policies ill-conceived? Is it
3. What is Mies's alternative to catch-up policies? Do you agree with her? Explain your answer.

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Environmental Risks, Rights, and the Failure of Liberal Democracy: Some Possible Remedies

LAURA WESTRA

Laura Westra was, until her retirement, a professor of philosophy at the University of Windsor. A leading environmentalist, she holds two PhDs (in philosophy and law) and has done significant policy work in environmental law and ethics with a number of international organizations. She is the author of An Environmental Proposal for Ethics: The Principle of Integrity (1994), Perspectives on Ecological Integrity (1995), The Greeks and the Environment (1997), and Technology and Values (1997), and coeditor of Faces of Environmental Racism (1995). She has published more than sixty articles and chapters in books and journals.

In this article, Westra argues that democracies are failing to come to grips with environmental degradation. Traditional interpretations of rights, especially those of Judith Jarvis