

blems in Egypt, Tanzania, the Philippines, Mexico and other countries we have studied," and respond to *Food First* authors' Joseph Collins and Frances Moore Lappe who wrote *What Difference would a Revolution Make?* after an extended visit to Nicaragua.

Collins and Lappe contend that the Sandinista government did not promote "Land to Tiller" programs on purpose in order to sustain the production level (which often falls after such programs) and to prevent possible inequities in parceling out land. Powelson says that the experience was the opposite of what was intended. "Production and output dropped substantially on state farms" – unlike the private farms in Bolivia and Paraguay after land reform.

Most peasants want individual ownership despite what Collins and the Sandinista say. Powelson says the *Food First* authors could

"provide a great service" by "confin(ing) themselves to promoting the priority of food first for less developed countries."

This book, *Peasant Betrayed*, in fact demonstrates, as Collins and Lappe contend, that governments in LDCs and international agencies discriminate against agriculture – even in land reform programs. "Many LDCs could feed their poor if they devoted greater resources to agriculture," Powelson says.

But he also argues that Lappe's bias – that food should be produced for local consumption first rather than planting plantation crops – may be in Nicaragua "a formula for poverty." He responds, "In a classic case of comparative advantage, countries adept at plantation agriculture – exporters of sugar, coffee, tea cotton etc. – can feed their poor better if they export these crops and buy basic food stuffs with the proceeds. *The key is not which crops to grow – exports or food consumption – but one of increasing the income of the poor.*" (emphasis added)

HE CONCLUDES by asking the question: "So then, who advocates for the peasants?"

Neither Marxists nor capitalists; neither the USA nor the USSR; not even most non-governmental agencies such as Oxfam. Only the American Friends Service Committee is cited for enhancing the power of the peasants without getting into politics. Marxists have the better rhetoric but neither Left nor Right are concerned about peasant empowerment.

"Power to the masses" to the authors means "freedom for the masses to structure their own societies, to select private, state or cooperative farming" as they like. Despite the Marxist rhetoric, "peasants have never selected a state farm except under coercion."

The authors conclude "that no foreign government or international agency qualifies as an advocate for the peasant – i.e. promotes the peasant's control over his own structures and freedom in his decision making."

There is ample opportunity to test these theories again in an era where we see formidable changes in two Marxist nations – China (where the government is giving incentives to the peasants) and the USSR (where "perestroika" may allow more private farms) and even in the USA where thoughtful concern about the inequitable distribution of wealth and access to land may lead to change.

This book is a wonderful addition to the library of those who want to first identify and then slay the dragons of land reform.

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Peasant farmers betrayed

HENRY GEORGE SESQUICENTENNIAL CONFERENCE

A CELEBRATORY conference to mark the 150th birthday of American reformer Henry George will be held in Philadelphia, the city of his birth, from Saturday July 29 to Sunday August 6, 1989.

This will be the 18th conference staged by the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade, and will be held jointly with the Council of Georgist Organisations.

Plenary papers are invited from scholars, which will then be published by the newly formed Centre for Incentive Taxation in England in conjunction with Shephard Walwyn Ltd.

Editor of the book will be Richard Noyes, the IU President, whose co-authors will examine the contemporary relevance of Henry George's philosophy.

Their analyses will be presented in a problem-solving context, addressing major global issues such as ecology, social and economic justice, and the reform of socialist economies.

The conference will be held at the University of Pennsylvania. Charges:

- Conference fee: \$40 (£22.50)
- Accommodation: \$395 (£220)

Bookings should be through the IU at 177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EU, England.