

## FOREIGN *Aid* DILEMMA

IN a searching scrutiny into the foreign aid program, Peggy and Pierre Streit, in a recent New York Times magazine article, looked into the reasons why ten years of American assistance have not brought greater results in the Middle East, despite the millions spent by the United States.

Taking Iran as a typical example, it was noted that the villages are subject to feudalistic systems under which tenant farmers work land owned by a landlord, receiving in payment a percentage of the crop. Under an American technical assistance program instituted five years ago, an effort was made to help peasants improve agricultural techniques and raise more food through improvement of grains. The use of an inexpensive insecticide removed an ancient scourge and in three years the crop yield doubled.

This increased crop yield, which seemed to be a great boon, was allocated as follows: one-fifth to the owner, one-fifth to the man supplying the seed, one-fifth to the man supplying the water, one-fifth to the man supplying beasts of burden, and one-fifth to the man supplying labor. The impoverished peasants came into the final category only. So while their portion doubled, it looked smaller than ever in relation to the greatly increased four-fifths accruing to the landlord as supplier of land, seed, water and beasts.

In some cases American aid technicians tried to improve the peasants' bread and tea diet by encouraging them to cultivate vegetable plots in their yards. This failed in some instances because landlords refused to allow water to be used on vegetable beds, preferring to have all available

water used on a cash crop from which they too would benefit.

The authors drew the conclusion that economic improvements would continue to be frustrated until there was a social and political evolution in the age-old system. The U. S. has, however, no choice but to work through governments, and the Iranian Parliament is composed mainly of landlords. Even though the Shah of Iran, along with a few others, has recognized a need for basic change, there has been little indication that the majority of landlords share his views.

Many villagers are aware of the fact that through American help the hated landlords have grown richer and more powerful than ever. Assistance in the fields of education and health have reduced illiteracy and nearly eliminated malaria—and it follows that literate and healthy peasants may find out how to overthrow the landlords, whereas sick and underfed people had too little energy to try, and here a new danger lurks. Ironically enough, the only voice raised against the old system has come from the Communist party which American influence has largely throttled.

"In some way," the authors conclude, "America must associate itself with the aspirations of the common man of the Middle East." No specific formula was suggested for accomplishing this. Henry George, whose prophetic vision can perhaps only now be appreciated fully, gave his life to the study of just such problems. No great truth can ever be lost. His method will surely be tried at last, but regrettably, only after many failures on the part of astigmatic mankind.