

Editorial Foreword

THE EFFECTS OF REFORM. The first two articles in this issue further the discussion of a number of questions that have received attention in CSSH, in the social sciences generally, and even in daily newspapers. With scholarly moderation, both seek in concrete terms to take stock of major contemporary efforts to reform agrarian societies. In doing so they confront the methodological problem of what measures to apply. Almost by definition reforms prove in practice to be different and in their effect something less than at first implied. Thus Elias Tuma finds it necessary to compare results in terms of goals and perceptions as well as the degree of change and in terms of the relationship of the agrarian sector reformed to other aspects of agriculture—distinctions that emerge in Joel Samoff's study as well. The scores of articles that have appeared in CSSH on change in peasant society (the diligent reader can trace them back from the articles in 19:2 and 18:1) have stressed the central place of systems of land tenure, changes in which often lie at the heart of revolution (see 18:2), define social structure (20:4), and test the efficacy of planned modernization (20:2). Tanzania's efforts in this regard were of such a scale that McHenry compared them to those of China, Mexico, and the Soviet Union (18:3), noting a number of unusual features (including the emphasis on peasant welfare and participation) that gave this experiment special interest. That very concern Samoff now finds eroded by officials' confident concern for technological improvement and by the practical need for those at the center to work with established local interests. Operating on a broader comparative scale, Tuma puts eight contemporary cases in the historical perspective he set forth fifteen years ago (6:1) when he considered examples of agricultural reform from ancient Greece to the present. Then he found practice to have differed from promise, the motive for reform to have been largely political, and its economic effects to have been obtainable in a variety of ways. Those generalizations appear to hold up well in the contemporary world, so that these articles can serve as sobering reminders to social scientists easily fascinated by change of how difficult a thing it is deliberately to change society.

THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE. The history of medicine is often approached like a chronicle of technology in which correctly listing the new inventions and practices seems to be the part that matters. But in principle, at least, it has long been recognized that the history of medicine could offer glimpses into the pattern of social relationships as revealing as Dr. William Beaumont

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gained by peering through the bullet hole in a patient's stomach. The new insights may have to do with the modes of professionalization and the spread of uniform standards (as in Sussman's study of physicians in nineteenth-century France, 16:3) or with the relationship of doctor and patient as an indicator of social dominance and the impact of technology (as in Figlio's study in the same issue) or with the vitality of folk culture. In his study of eighteenth-century France, Harvey Mitchell notes the emphasis on nosology (which is part of the transformation Figlio deplors) reinforcing disdain that physicians, as carriers of urban enlightenment, felt for their rural clientele. It is not so clear to us, of course, that the folk remedies dismissed as superstition were much less efficacious than the bleeding and blistering favored by the men of science. Their confidence may have been essential to later achievements of medicine, but it did not make for good anthropology. Thus Donna Maier has the assumptions of a whole literature to correct as she reevaluates the state of Asante medicine. Not surprisingly, she finds it more varied, systematic, and self-conscious than nineteenth-century Europeans could recognize—congenial assumptions of superiority were not likely to be weakened by imperialism.

REGIONALISM. Michael Hechter's book on internal colonialism has attracted a great deal of attention both because of its systematic analysis and because of the timeliness of the topic. Ethnicity (on which CSSH has published a great deal, but more often as reflected in minorities than as measured in separatism) and regionalism (on which there will be more later in this volume) seem to have replaced nationality and nationalism, so much examined in the 'forties and 'fifties, as the rubric within which to study political identity. That follows partly from sharper focus and better definition and even more obviously from contemporary experience. The debate opened by William Sloan's critique as to whether regionalism should be seen primarily as cultural or as the result of underdevelopment and imperialism is one of which we are sure to hear a lot more.