

The evolution of viable courses of action make it imperative that we clearly understand the nature of the developing world. We have to recognize that in parts of the South, economic growth rates have outstripped those of the North. A number of developing countries are competing successfully in markets in the North. Even a nation like India, having a popular image as a poor and dependent nation, is now the ninth largest industrial power in the world. Very clearly, the notions of what we call "the developing world" in reality have only one important common characteristic -- the desire to make their own way in the world.

But that goal will be next to impossible to achieve if the Third World nations are persistently caught up in the tensions of the North. Canada's Parliamentary Task Force on North-South Relations pin-pointed the problem this way:

"The ability of the North to promote or respond to the interests of the South is seriously impaired by tensions within the North, between the countries of the West and the Communist bloc. East and West have frequently approached the South solely as a new arena in which to carry on old battles. Often their relations with governments in the South have been based on notions such as 'the enemy of my enemy must be my friend'. Progress in the years ahead will depend in no small part on moderating these tensions and abandoning such simple judgements."

Clearly, the relaxation of tensions between the East and the West would be helpful to making real progress in international development. In the West, our hopes have rested in large part on the process of détente. Unfortunately, while the goals of détente still remain valid, the invasion of Afghanistan resulted in an abrupt decline in optimism for this process in the West and a concomitant rising scepticism in the Third World. In many ways, that Soviet adventure evoked in the developing countries memories of the imperialist adventurism which they have worked so hard to shake off. For the West, it threatened the very foundations of détente.

But the West discovered, through the experience of Afghanistan, that there are divergences of view among us.