

of-payments deficits in particular cases, the developing countries, in effect, demanded assurances that they would not be left to their plight, that measures would be taken to enable them to match the expectations of their people, that they should not have to bear so much of the brunt for dislocations in the international economic system.

At the Seventh Special Session last September, the developing countries put forward their demands in a somewhat more moderate way. They were met by a much more responsive attitude on the part of developed countries. The leadership exercised by some moderate developing countries was a notable feature of the session, as was the significant advance in the position of the U.S.A. and the greater flexibility shown by members of the European Community. A genuine will to reach agreement and to avoid rhetoric were evident at the session and facilitated its successful conclusion.

Why did this change of attitude take place over 18 months?

The Sixth Special Session did have one positive effect. It brought the economic issues between developed and developing countries to the centre of the political stage. The notion of the New Economic Order gave some conceptual coherence to the many demands developing countries had been making for years. Political leaders called for a thorough review of policy related to the New Economic Order. Concerted efforts were made by a number of countries to resume the dialogue. In this way, the Seventh Special Session became a target occasion for the resolution of some of the outstanding problems.

The change in the situation in the Middle East was another factor. While the Sixth Special Session was called in the aftermath of the October 1973 war and the subsequent oil embargo and oil-price increases, the Seventh was convened shortly after the disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt and a period of relative calm in the area. Between the two special sessions, the UN as an institution had been severely tested. By September 1975, the political climate had cooled, permitting calmer discussion of economic issues.

A third very important reason for the change in atmosphere was the world economic situation and the perception by developing countries that continued inflation and recession in the Western industrialized world would have a damaging impact on them. Many of them considered that a general deterioration of the international trade-and-payments system was too great a price to pay for the wholesale reform of that system, even if reform was badly needed. The more radical among them might still press forward, but the moderates saw the danger of straining the system too much in its fragile state. Developing