

ment has never been reached, partly because of fears of some "moderate" states such as India and Nigeria that such a secretariat would be taken over by the "militants". However, the lack of a proper secretariat has meant that the government acting as host to any particular non-aligned meeting has to perform the preparatory functions normally carried out by an international institution's bureaucracy. This has been a contributory factor in creating the working difficulties experienced at nonaligned meetings. At Algiers, for example, even though the summit meeting lasted a day longer than planned, the delegates failed to pass many of the resolutions that had been planned and, in the corridors if not in the public speeches, frequent criticisms of the lack of adequate preparatory political spadework could be heard.

The plenary sessions of nonaligned summit meetings are in themselves of very doubtful value, a fact that is recognized by many of the participants. They are the occasion for a whole flock of heads of state to read usually long, and often tedious, speeches (some of the heads of state at Algiers looked as if they were as bored as their listeners with the speeches their officials had prepared for them). Many such declarations were clearly prepared mainly with an eye for home consumption rather than as a contribution to an international debate on what the nonaligned group should be doing.

Importance of dialogue

However, having said this, one cannot write off these gatherings as useless, because they at least give the leaders of nonaligned countries an opportunity — perhaps one should say "excuse" — to meet informally or in small groups. Such meetings are almost certainly more important than the formal conferences themselves. It is therefore important to note the nature of the "atmosphere" of any particular nonaligned summit meeting, for this will inevitably have coloured all the private discussions that took place and will probably have played a vital role in that complicated and mysterious process by which politicians form their opinions (or change their minds).

At the Algiers summit meeting, the underlying theme was the belief, very widely held and expressed, that the main division in the world was no longer ideological but was between the rich industrialized nations and the poor underdeveloped ones. It seems likely that because of

this the nonaligned grouping will direct its efforts increasingly toward doing something to reduce the great disparities between the rich and the poor nations. But there are snags.

There is a natural tendency to associate the nonaligned nations with the underdeveloped nations, or so-called Third World. Indeed, it is often assumed that the two coincide. In fact, they do not, because the nonaligned grouping is still saddled with much of its Cold War baggage. For example, Pakistan and certain other typically Third World countries have never been members of the non-aligned grouping, either because of membership in the West's military pacts or of the presence of foreign military bases on their soil — both of which have always been obstacles to admission. (At Algiers, Malta was with difficulty admitted to the nonaligned "club" after promising that Britain and NATO base facilities would be terminated at the end of the current agreement.)

Wide disparities

Even if these political requirements were dropped (and the nonaligned are more indulgent toward Eastward leanings than Westward leanings), it would still be difficult to provide satisfactory Third World criteria. For, in economic terms, just as in terms of politics or ideology, there are wide disparities between members. Yugoslavia, for example, is, by the standards of most other members of the grouping, a rich industrialized country. And how do you equate oil-rich Kuwait with potentially bankrupt Chad?

The conclusion must be that it is simply not possible to define in any satisfactory way the nonaligned grouping — that it is, and will probably remain, a large, unwieldy body that will take few practical political or economic decisions. However, like many other unlikely institutions, it has developed, with the passage of time, a curious life of its own. It will probably, therefore, continue to exist.

It is also probable that it will continue to provide an opportunity for some of the leaders of the Third World to meet from time to time, formally and informally. It will, therefore, continue to play some sort of role in the formation of political opinion in much of the developing world. This is not much — certainly far less than is claimed in all those grandiloquent public speeches by heads of state at non-aligned summits. But it is something.

Site for bases of foreign states, certain nations in Third World do not fall within grouping of nonaligned