

...ion — in the North as well as the South. "International solidarity," the Report notes, "must stem from strong mutual interests in cooperation and from compassion for the hungry."

little hope for Brandt approach

These are stirring words. But is a reformed international order the answer to Tropical Africa's problems? Here are grounds for skepticism.

First, a decade of North-South negotiations demonstrates the unwillingness of Western governments to accept restructuring of the international order that penalizes their economies. The Brandt Commission argues that there is a North-South harmony of interests in raising the living standards of the Third World's poor by means of international reform. This may be so; yet, the prospective benefits to the developed economies deriving from growing world markets for their sophisticated products are, obviously, long-term. Governments, however, act according to short-term interests which lead them to oppose any changes requiring expensive structural economic adjustments. In any event, reforms in the international economic and political order are not negotiated on the grounds of social justice and long-term mutual interest; rather, they come *faits accomplis* as a consequence of shifting economic power balances.

Second, NIEO, even if established, would disproportionately benefit the more prosperous Newly Industrializing Countries, rather than the least developed in subsaharan Africa. Those with existing industrial capacity and creditworthiness would receive a filip to their development. The Subsaharan countries, however, would really only benefit from the stabilization and raising of raw material prices — as well as from increased aid allocations. But, finally, even if these stabilization agreements eventuated, how within African countries would gain from them? How widely would the benefits be spread? It is quite possible that enhanced foreign earnings would go largely to finance augmented imports of luxury goods and weapons. This would reinforce the repressive potential of African states while providing the dominant classes with a greater stake in inequitable social orders. Such an outcome would obstruct an all-out assault on poverty.

If there is hope for Africa, then, this lies in a fundamental redirection of national development strategies. Both the realities of the international economy and the immensity of the problems confronting the African masses lead to this conclusion. This is not to suggest that the international order is equitable and therefore requires no reform. Far from it. It is rather to recognize the limited economic power of Subsaharan Africa, and thus its limited capacity to force or benefit from a new international order. However, African governments do, in principle, have it within their power to reorient their economies — towards self-reliance and satisfaction of their citizens' basic needs.

Agriculture first

The broad outlines of a new development direction can be briefly sketched, though the policy emphases must obviously vary to fit local circumstances. Since Tropical Africa has a largely rural population, the major thrust of a basic-needs strategy must lie in agriculture. The fundamental aim of policy should be to encourage small-holders to achieve adequate production of food, export crops and

inputs into the manufacturing sector. Improved productivity requires the governments to arrange the provision of extension services, infrastructure, agricultural inputs and credit to these small-holders. Even then, increased output can be forthcoming only if peasants participate in the income gains flowing from higher productivity. Pricing policy needs to reflect this fact. Industry, too, requires a reorientation — away from a reliance upon imported machinery and inputs to produce non-essentials for the affluent minority, and toward the utilization of local inputs to provide for the basic consumption and capital needs of the



vast majority. These changes in agriculture and industry would create a more dynamic, interlinked economy. But their success depends upon a redistribution of income, and probably assets too where ownership is concentrated, in order to form mass markets for the new product mix. The generation of more productive employment favors such a redistribution, but this in turn implies the development of more labor-intensive (though still efficient) technologies than those usually found in the modern sector. Hence, a basic-needs strategy implies the fostering of a local research and development capacity to provide such technologies in agriculture, industry and the service sector. Since each small country never can achieve technological self-reliance, regional and even broader cooperation is necessary in scientific research.

Collective self-reliance must also extend to regional and international trade. South-South trade links would partially replace the prevalent North-South pattern. This would make economic sense, in that each African economy could specialize in particular mass consumer goods and therefore capture economies of scale.

Change of this scale may be necessary to achieve the liberation that some African intellectuals have called the "Second Independence." Clearly, the shift in national power needed to inaugurate a new development direction