

position of arbitrator with respect to its Andean, West Indian and Central American neighbours. A grudging member of the Andean Pact, against the wishes of its business élites, and lacking any real industrial capacity, Venezuela finds itself in a weak competitive position and wishes to delay the speedup of Andean integration until such time as its "petrodollars" enable it to acquire basic industries worthy of the name. Meanwhile, the "third world" policy followed by Mexico is quite suitable to a country whose prime concern is the sale of its petroleum products. In confronting the Western countries, minor victims of the oil-price increase, Venezuela finds it useful to count on the solidarity of the non-oil-producing Latin American countries, which are major victims of price inflation.

The new mechanism for continental co-operation instituted in October 1975 will not be able to prevent the consolidation of these four major Latin American powers — to the detriment of underdeveloped countries or those whose development is only average — and the accentuation of multipolarity in the Latin American system. These tendencies will probably find expression in three latent factors that will be developed through political interaction within SELA.

#### **Decline of ideology**

The brutal elimination of the constitutional Government of Chile in September 1973 coincided with the decline of ideological populism in both domestic and external policies. In a period of endemic "stagflation", governments were primarily concerned with maintaining and consolidating their power — and expanding it if possible. Symbolic messages about "Christian order" or "socialist revolution" were relegated to the background. This ideological truce facilitated the peaceful co-existence of such hostile regimes as those of Cuba and Brazil; like the OAS, SELA does not apply criteria of legitimacy to its members, other than their existence as states. This truce, accompanied by a freeze on various conflicts that can be explained as much by the relative extent to which the different armies are underequipped as by the compulsory balance resulting from multipolarity, will, however, encourage the effects of diplomatic and economic domination. Creation of economic satellites, diplomatic neutralization and indirect intervention will precede military alliance and subordination.

*Tercermundismo*: this neologism serves to describe a common expression of passive solidarity (one that is more psy-

chological than political) in opposition to the Western industrialized nations. The rare active forms of this ambiguous solidarity involve the maintenance or increase of present inequalities between nations. The increase in credits to the Third World in the case of Latin America, favouring the countries already having a sizeable industrial base, while the other countries have to be satisfied with the sort of aid piously described as "humanitarian" *Tercermundismo* will have the effect of allowing the advantaged countries on the continent to practise a populist manipulation of their proletarian customer states in their attempts to exert pressure on the Western industrial countries to redefining the conditions of local industrialization, especially the lowering of tariff barriers in favour of manufactured goods from the Third World, an action that would only favour the medium- and large-scale producers — Mexico, Argentina and Brazil. Thanks to the broadening of humanitarian aid and the relative stabilization of raw material prices, proletarian states will obtain sufficient resources to ensure maintenance of their societies and their precarious internal balance in the absence of structural development.

#### **Free trade**

The third factor is the revival of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA). In the name of continental solidarity, Mexican, Brazilian and Argentinian manufacturers will ask for free trade and unrestricted circulation of capital and goods. A whole series of problems related to LAFTA was again taken up in the discussions and statements made at the time SELA was established: lowering of tariffs and common customs policies; integrated enterprises; and transportation policy, among others. Everything happened as though Mexico had seen in SELA an excellent opportunity to rehabilitate LAFTA, which was making much slower progress than were the regional blocs. The latter, in order to develop, had to go it alone in protecting their local market. A too-liberal economic policy would pose a slightly greater threat to the regional agreements, which are at present in a state of political crisis. On the other hand, nationalist and local tendencies, which are more or less contained in regional groups in which technocratic officials inclined towards integration play a balancing role, will flourish within the loose institutions of SELA, where the different sectorial and thematic discussions will save the various ministerial delegations from undue con-

*Governments  
concerned  
with maintaining  
their power*