

gendered by more than 1,200 hours of dialogue between the deaf. The spokesman for the Venezuelan delegation explained the reason for his frustration thus: "The rich countries do not have the least political desire to pay any attention to the problems of the Third World, and even less to solve them."

Among the Group B countries (those with developed market economies), with rare exceptions, the impression was more optimistic; they had succeeded, behind a facade of understanding, in maintaining the very attitude for which Raoul Prebisch of Argentina, former UNCTAD Secretary-General, had reproached them during the second UNCTAD in New Delhi: "The developed countries, with the rare exception, continue to regard the problem of underdevelopment as a marginal problem that can be taken care of piecemeal with a few insufficient measures rather than with prompt and decisive action." "Prosperity," he added, "among individuals as among nations, tends to create an attitude of detachment, if not indifference, with regard to the well-being of others."

Near the end of the third UNCTAD, Prebisch — who had organized the first two conferences with such high hopes by introducing a report by Barbara Ward to the Economic Commission for Latin America, Santiago — resembled a defeated general. "The third UNCTAD is the conference of lost illusions," he said. Moreover, the spokesman for the Netherlands delegation deplored the fact, during the plenary session, that the developed countries had dashed the expectations of the Group of 77. "I admit," he said, "that we have reached agreement on a few subjects proposed at the Conference, but not on the major political orientations."

Objective reasons for gloom

Most, if not all, of the press comments painted an even gloomier impressionistic picture of the Santiago conference. This pessimism is based on numerous objective reasons, the main ones being:

On the one hand, the Group of 77 (actually 96 countries) agreed in Lima in November 1971 to submit the maximum common denominator of its claims to the third UNCTAD. On the other hand, the developed market-economy countries (Group B), burdened by the changes that had taken place and by economic, monetary and trade crises, agreed on a minimum common denominator of concessions to be offered to the Third World. Furthermore, the socialist bloc, convinced that it was not responsible for the present state of underdevelopment caused by the im-

perialistic and colonialist policies of the capitalist countries, often departed from the position taken by the Group of 77. The socialist countries are more interested in developing their trade with the rich countries in Group B than with the Third World.

China remained aloof from all groups, preferring a cautious tactic. This alignment of forces reduced the Santiago conference to a broadened reproduction of the Lima conference. In fact, the resolutions proposed by the Group of 77 received only weak additional support from the "have" countries, support that was often diplomatic and followed by strong "voting reservations". From the standpoint of practical consequences, this means that the rich countries — the only ones able to reverse the international trade trends that are harmful to the development of the Third World — will not be eager to commit themselves firmly to concerted and specific action. Pleading the urgency of their own problems, such as new members joining the European Economic Community, "stagflation" (unemployment and inflation at the same time), the United States' balance-of-payments deficit, and the international monetary crisis, the rich countries see the development of the Third World as a simple by-product of their own economic conditions.

Not accepting this marginal position, the Group of 77 supported its arguments in favour of full participation in international decisions on all the problems vital to it, citing the unfavourable trends in international trade (its share in international trade dropped from 21 per cent in 1960 to 17 per cent in 1970), the growing additional charge on its debt services (now over \$60 billion), the persistent protectionism of the rich capitalist and socialist countries with respect to their semi-finished and manufactured goods, and the difficulty in maintaining a stable and profitable price for its basic commodities and raw materials.

Different views of UNCTAD

This created a stalemate for the duration of the conference; there was no possible balance between supply and demand. They did not overlap. Another reason for the frustration of the poor and the "clear conscience" of the rich stems from their different conceptions of the very nature of the conference. In the Lima declaration and in the successive submissions at Santiago, the Group of 77 reiterated its faith in UNCTAD as a forum for negotiation with concrete implication for immediate action. Even though its claims are presented in