

danger of instability, disintegration and chaos unless we erect the new order in time. The danger is upon us. Until the new order is in place we face a global economic, social and security crisis.

The state of crisis cannot be doubted. Economic prediction may be a particularly cautious science, but there is a depressing unanimity to the forecasts emanating from such eminent monitors of the world's economic weather as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. Nor is it only instruments of the rich which issue these warnings. The people from public life in rich and poor countries who were drawn together in the Brandt Commission and the eminent professionals of the Commonwealth Group of Experts, have come to similar conclusions. Perhaps it is best summed up in the Brandt Report's Assessment that: "At the beginning of the 1980s the World community faces much greater dangers than at any time since the Second World War."

Early warning gives us the best chance of averting danger. To signal pending disaster is not to promote pessimism or peddle doom; it is to increase the chance of survival. It is, therefore, not only right but necessary to be realistic about the reality and the gravity of the crisis in the world economy. Unless the international community takes the emergency measures that the crisis calls for, the current forecasts for the next few years, depressing as they are, will turn out to have been understated. The consequences will be disastrous — and not just for some abstraction called the "world economy", but for the hundreds of millions of people whose destinies are on the line.

Absolute poverty

The World Bank, in its third annual world development report, has noted the possibility that the number of people in absolute poverty (at present estimated at 780 million) will actually increase during the 1980s. Without rapid growth, the report adds with cool detachment: "many developing countries will find it hard to maintain political stability". In other words, what lies ahead for the poorest countries is massive human misery and social disintegration. Who can doubt the implications of this for others besides the poor. Like an earthquake whose dispassionate shock waves rock rich cities and poor villages alike, the economic tremors now being signalled will leave no people unharmed. One-fifth of the human race cannot be condemned to squalor and degradation, to hunger and illiteracy, to disease and perpetual penury without placing in jeopardy the destinies of the other four-fifths.

Our senses tell us that the world has changed; that interdependence is a reality and not a myth or slogan; that the era of adversary power politics is passing and the era of negotiation and global compact has begun; that co-management of the world economy for the benefit of all is the only road to salvation for any. Yet, in

the North and the South, some masochistic compulsions make us defer consensus on change. History will surely say of human efforts in the 1970s: "They saw what needed to be done, but did not summon the will to do it". Must that also be history's verdict of the 1980s?

At the heart of the status quo are immense disparities in the human condition that mock our claim to enlightenment and morality. "In the North, ordinary men and women face genuine economic problems — uncertainty, inflation, the fear if not the reality of unemployment." But, as the Brandt Commission has knowledge, "they rarely face anything resembling the total deprivation found in the South". The wretchedness of absolute poverty bears no comparison. Even more to the point, it bears no ignoring. We no longer live in a world of separate, scattered, unconnected communities whose fortunes can be disengaged and whose misfortunes need not impair the prosperity or tranquility of the more favoured. Rich countries and poor, our world community, like rich and poor within national societies, need each other for survival and need, therefore, to have each others needs fulfilled.

These needs are not confined to the charitable relief of indigence. Quintessentially, they relate to the structures of global economic relationships and arrangements. Evidence of the inadequacy of these structures is all around and demands the attention of the major countries who have assumed responsibility for the management of the international system.

The spasmodic economic turbulence of the 1970s has carried over into the early eighties in what increasingly looks like a sustained depression. Growth rates of the industrialized countries are not likely to return to 1960s levels in the foreseeable future. The projected growth rate of just one per cent this year — over two percentage points below the already low average of 1970-78 — means a loss of output of over \$100 billion. Cumulatively over the period of the recession the loss of output and income is staggering.

Rising external debt

Oil-importing, middle-income countries face rising and onerous levels of external debt incurred largely to meet persistent deficits in current payments. The minor image of their now crippling debt burden is the over-exposure of the world's commercial banking system. The only hope these countries have is to earn enough from their exports to pay their debts and the oil bills and to contribute to the flow of world trade and jobs in industrialized countries — by sustaining their import of specialized manufactures. Yet rising protectionism threatens their future in particular.

In considering the oil-importing, low-income countries, words such as 'threatens', 'dangers' and 'imminent' are inappropriate. The crisis is here and now. For some it has reached catastrophic proportions and has taken the most cruel form of hunger and starvation. The world is not yet alive to the agonizing situation