

(4) To serve as a consulting and co-ordinating body for Latin American countries to enable them to adopt common positions and strategies towards other countries or groups of countries, as well as in international organizations, or, as the occasion arises, in the discussion of economic and social issues at international gatherings.

(5) In the context of the objects of intraregional co-operation within SELA, to provide suitable means of ensuring that relatively less-developed countries receive preferential treatment, and to enact special measures in favour of limited-market countries and those whose situation on the continent influences their degree of development, taking into account the economic conditions of each of the member states.

*Declaration
of principles
crowned efforts
of smaller states*

This ringing declaration of principles seemed to crown the efforts of the small- and medium-sized states, which for about ten years had been firmly committed to the path of regional integration and were attempting to obtain a continental political ratification for their efforts at industrialization. The trend is exemplified in the efforts of the Chancellor of the Frei Government in Chile, Gabriel Valdes, to gain support for the May 1969 declaration called the "Vina del Mar Latin American Consensus". The declaration looked towards increased compatibility between the political and military agreements of the inter-American system and the reform options of the new local political forces and the industrial voluntarism of regional pacts. Three of these pacts reflect the beginnings of a common market:

The Andean Pact, uniting Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, is certainly a model of industrial integration for the continent.

The Central American Common Market, made up of Guatemala, San Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica, has engendered an interesting expansion of regional trade based on light manufacturing industries.

The Caribbean Community attempts to maintain close relations between the former British colonies in the West Indies.

Time of crisis

Mexico, supported by Venezuela, launched the SELA operation at a time when the first two regional groups were in crisis. It was good politics to offer the participants in the regional pacts symbolic consolation, without giving them a real opportunity to resolve among themselves the inevitable difficulties of integration policies.

The protection granted to local agreements was rendered void by the institutional provisions, which created a few loose, scattered co-ordinating bodies, making the new organization more like the Council of Europe or the Organization for African Unity than an embryonic Common Market. A "mini-secretariat" located in Caracas, a Latin American ministerial council and "action committees" whose responsibilities remain vaguely defined scarcely represent the legal authority, the technocratic competence and the institutional means required to achieve the concrete objects of integration; rather, they provide a convenient forum for agreement or disagreement over influence by the major powers, without compelling them to exercise any effective solidarity. Latin American unity was buried before it ever saw the light of day under the weight of an America of nation states — some of which, of course, were "more equal than others".

Four states are at present attempting to take advantage of the temporary decline of American influence to consolidate rapidly their own influence in the inter-American system and to fight the sort of balanced and egalitarian development policies for the continent as a whole that would call their existence as nation states into question and do away with their present comparative advantages. Three of these states certainly constitute embryonic imperial powers with respect to their neighbours, which are more or less deprived in terms of population or industrial capacity.

Mexican success

Mexico, with a population of over 50 million, has succeeded, by means of an authoritarian and "corporatist" political system, in bringing about sectorial development in industry, mining and tourism. This development is limited by the social inequalities that curb the self-financing capacity of the domestic market. Mexico is at the present time probably the only SELA country that is able, from a logical point of view, to carry out successfully a generalized industrialization policy, socialist or capitalist. Such a policy would, however, endanger the present political equilibrium, which rests on a system of organized clientele that are certainly not ready to sacrifice themselves for a structural revolution, whether domestic or continental.

Failing to resolve its problems by internal means, Mexico has to strengthen its real but contradictory expansion through an external offensive at three levels, meet-