

complex problem to be grappled with. Nevertheless, it is one politicians, development-planners and development-administrators in Asia live with, sleep over and dream about. It would be less than honest to deny that some of our dreams turn into nightmares. We are hampered by lingering remnants of our colonial past; diverted from time to time into grappling with non-developmental issues that form the life-blood of politics; constrained by international trends and tendencies; and frequently thwarted by a mismatch between plans and resources. Nevertheless, we continue to dream of, hope for, and work towards the creation of societies that are just and righteous in the balance they maintain between expectation and achievement. A better world, with fewer international disadvantages and disparities, is part of our hope.

When the phrase 'Third World' was introduced to international politics by a French political scientist in the mid-1950s, it was used to describe those nations which refused to be drawn into the policy of international confrontation pursued by mutually hostile blocs. There was a certain dignity attached to the phrase then, because it acknowledged that a number of small and newly-independent countries had the courage to chart their own course in often-troubled international waters. A 'third way' was possible in world affairs, the phrase implied, which enabled peoples who had only recently emerged from one form of bondage to escape the heavy hand of submissiveness to the momentum of bloc rivalry. Unfortunately, the phrase has gone down into common use as a symbol in global shorthand to capsule conditions of backwardness — as opposed to the comfort and overall superiority of the "First World". The comparison is implied and inescapable, though rarely acknowledged. The widely prevalent connotation of "third rate" or "third class" should not apply to the "Third World".

The extent to which the countries of Asia, and other countries described as belonging to the "Third World", have struggled in the post-colonial period to overcome the effects and after-effects of colonialism, is not to be denigrated either. Robert McNamara said countries now described as developed required a much longer time, at a comparable phase in their own development, to achieve the same rate of social and economic growth as developing countries did in the past 30 years: "It is a very impressive record. Indeed, historically, it is without precedent. Never has so large a group of human beings — two billion people — achieved so much economic growth in so short a time."

The achievement is all the greater when it is seen that the foundation for prosperity in the North was laid in the "heyday of colonialism" from 1850 to about 1950. During that time, per capital income in the North grew at an annual average of almost two percent. In the South, it grew at an annual rate of approximately 0.1 percent.

Today, we bear no malice to our former colonial rulers and we readily acknowledge those benefits left behind. Economic history helps to explain how the inequities of the past interact with the present, keep poor countries poor, despite their best efforts. The age of political liberation has not brought us economic liberation, because the levers of international economic power continue to be manipulated in distant capitals. Our quest for economic liberation is thus less than a logical and inevitable continuation of our struggle for political freedom.

A wide range of activities — including resource sharing, international trade, science and technology transfer, and monetary management, for instance — impinge in a direct and real way on the lives of our people. The creation of a new global economic equilibrium, thus, is not a matter of visionary zeal, but a workaday issue with important implications for human welfare and progress in our countries. Current arrangements ensure that we have to produce more, buy less from abroad for what is vital to our domestic development efforts. They ensure that however hard we run, we stay within the same circle. Today, in a context where the terms of trade are against us, we have to export 20,000 lbs. of tea to pay for the same bulldozer which we bought by exporting a thousand pounds, 20 years ago. So we are importing inflation together with bulldozers.

Transformation

As with political parity, the transformation from dependence to true economic interdependence can be brought about either through violent change or negotiation. To delay or stall the negotiating process is to invite turbulence and dislocation. It can be claimed, undoubtedly, that despite the failures in the North-South negotiations, some successes have been chalked up. The Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC) focussed attention on debt relief and led to debt-forgiveness in some \$5 billion. UNCTAD IV secured agreement on the establishment of a Common Fund, whose Articles of Agreement have since been adopted. UNCTAD V alerted the world to the plight of smaller, resource-sparse countries. The recently concluded 11th Special Session of the UN General Assembly produced a framework for development strategy in the 80s and a renewed pledge of enhanced resource transfers. The question then is not whether progress has been made in negotiation, but how fast it can and must be made if the world is to escape the perils of confrontation.

A time frame for negotiation can be set in relation to objective political and economic conditions in both the South and the North. Any time frame, however methodically it is calculated, will be destined to remain notional until the most appropriate form of global negotiation has been found. The selective-group of the CIEC has shown up as many flaws as the mega-