

2

North-South Collaborations in a Changing World

Prospective or outgoing N-S collaborators are probably giving thought to the complex and puzzling world they are entering. Most of us are aware that the forces of change have accelerated in breathtaking ways in the past decade or so. A few examples will suffice:

- the technological revolution which has catapulted the personal computer and software industry from virtual non-existence 15 years ago to its present status as the world's biggest industry;
- the collapse of communist empires and the violent sorting out of the pieces;
- the internationalization of economic and social life along with the decreasing significance of borders; and
- the ironic juxtaposition of hopeful signs of progress alongside the most depressing catastrophes imaginable in the Third World.

A case can be made that these convulsions are all related. An effort is made in this chapter to examine some of the basic forces of change in the world today and their impact on the development of the South. Of course any analysis of such vast events risks error, but outgoing collaborators might find it useful to ponder the changes described below, for these changes arguably make their work of more vital importance to the development process than they perhaps imagined.

Without being dogmatic, it is a plausible hypothesis that a common thread (and lesson) of these sweeping technological, economic, political, and social changes relates to