THROUGH THE THIRD WORLD TOWARDS ONE WORLD

One of the characteristics of our time -- the beginning of the last decade of the present century -- is the increased lack of communication evident between industrialized, developed countries and those which remain underdeveloped. In truth, it must be said that even in the past, communication leading to real understanding has not very often taken place. Nevertheless, during the 1950s and 1960s certain initiatives were taken which gave evidence that dialogue and a convergence of interests had come about between developed and under-developed countries. For example, the United Nations Organization (UNO) decided to launch the first development decade in the 1960s. Linked to their decision to support Third World development was the creation of the United Nations conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). At that time, challenged by the processes of decolonization and emancipation being carried forward by the peoples of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific, the international community seemed to recognize that in order to build one world, it was necessary to give attention to the Third World and to assist the efforts of its peoples towards greater economic growth and development.

However, such attention did not last long. That is to say, the parties involved in the dialogue had their own particular agendas, and these did not fully coincide. The industrialized, developed nations underlined the need for the countries of the Third World to develop, but they understood such development to mean following the same path of economic growth which had been followed by Western industrialized nations\(^1\), and using the same economic indicators as these nations to measure and quantify the development achieved. The underdeveloped countries, on the other hand, had a somewhat different approach. They agreed that economic growth was necessary, but felt it should be based

\(^1\) See Walt Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth*. Cambridge, the University Press, 1960.
upon the exercise of self-reliance and aimed at self-determination in international relationships as well as at social justice in the internal organization of a given country. Unfortunately, as very often happens, those in the position of power insisted that their views should be followed. To this end they took advantage of international credit institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank (Bank for International Reconstruction and Development) and the General Agreements on Trade and Traffic (GATT) to influence the domestic economies of the developing countries. The countries on the 'periphery' had no alternative but to accept the line of the powerful Western nations or look for help from Socialist countries. That is to say, they were pressed by their economic need into agreeing with policies which ultimately meant resigning the exercise of self-reliance and self-determination. Those few who tried to follow their own path for development and keep their own identity soon suffered painful economic experiences with very high social costs.

Nonetheless, among the industrially advanced nations there have always been groups who were aware of the lack of communication between the parties. Moved by a sense of solidarity with the underdeveloped nations, they became the advocates and supporters of Third World peoples among the wealthy nations. They have been the voice of the voiceless, challenging those for whom the only valid arguments are accumulation of economic power and the increase of the GNP. These minority groups -- which unfortunately over the last thirty years have become fewer and fewer -- have always reminded the political authorities as well as big business and financial interests that for Third World nations, development means much more than the increase of things which can be possessed. For the peoples of the 'periphery' development is related not simply to economic development but also to human dignity and the exercise of self-determination and human rights. It is not simply a question of 'having', but above all a question of 'being'.

By the end of the 1960s it had become clear for the nations of the Third World that the kind of development they aimed for could not be achieved within the framework of the prevailing international economic order. After a long process of negotiation, the majority of these nations who had formed the group of the so-called 'Non-Aligned Nations', agreed upon a proposal which was approved in Algiers in 1973, to be presented at the 6th Special Session of the UNO General Assembly which met in April and May 1974 in New York. The UNO General Assembly at that time approved their motion for a New International Economic Order