

But the progress and prosperity of 200 million Latin Americans will greatly depend on the vision and on the action taken by the Atlantic countries as well.

If the Atlantic countries will accept their prominent responsibilities towards Latin America as a basic feature of their long-term policies, and not only as an extemporaneous posture in times of political and financial emergency, another sound basis will have been established for tackling the problems of the '70s.

The third and last layer comprises the remaining countries of the world, namely Africa south of the desert belt from the Sahara to the Red Sea (except the Union of South Africa, which I am at a loss to categorize), China and that part of Asia which does not belong to the first two layers.

With respect to these really underdeveloped countries (including China, some day) we should—during the next decade—expand trade with them and extend trade facilities; step up economic aid, technical assistance and credit support; and help them exploit their natural resources; jointly devise how they should industrialize, increase agricultural productivity and organize their markets; and do as many other things for their benefit as we can.

We should, and do doubt will, also adopt emergency aid measures, expressing our solidarity in case of calamity.

But in our global appraisal and planning we must be clear in our mind.

Whatever we do, these countries by and large will not mature towards anything approaching our standards of organization and growth capacity. Their philosophy of life, their beliefs, values, motivations and attitudes—in some cases the heritage of a great culture older than ours—their total approach to what we call modern civilization, all these fundamental elements on which the future rests are not homogeneous with ours.

THE WEST'S ROLE IN UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Whatever we do, these countries will remain areas of later development as we understand it, and a matter for our thoughts during the '80s under this aspect.

As we realize this situation and try to map out the future globally, we are led to make a most painful reappraisal, that of redimensioning and timing the West's role with regard to underdevelopment.

It is quite obvious that we are facing here a most critical contradiction.

In fact, on the one side, interdependence is growing and modern communication systems make it possible for any point on the globe to be reached speedily and promptly, and for any people to reach other people, no matter how far apart they are geographically, culturally or politically. Yet, on the other side, the technological revolution, which has reached such momentum in the last few years, is creating at the same time a gap in this shrinking world among countries which were by and large considered to be at a compatible level of development until not too long ago.

This gap becomes immense and awesome when it is considered with regard to underdeveloped peoples. It is a gap in development level. The less endowed countries are not in a condition to absorb aid and the new technology, and therefore sink further in relative terms. In its turn, this causes a greater quality gap. As time passes the acquisitive capacity of these countries becomes weaker and weaker as technology becomes ever more complex. The gap widens to unbridgeable proportions: a gap in per-capita income, in growth capacity, in understanding, in everything which characterizes societies nowadays.

In fact Asia encompasses societies permeated with ancient traditions and cultures, which under present conditions can hardly be expected to be influenced from outside to the point of accepting radical change. Their customs are such that many aspects of modern life appear to be totally uncongenial to them.

Suffice it to consider the tragic struggle in India between the need of modernizing agriculture and the religious belief which makes cows and monkeys sacred, when the sanctity of cows and monkeys perpetuates starvation among men. Suffice it to consider the turmoil incomprehensible to Western minds which is the torment of China.

As to Africa, the last continent affected by the hurricane of political independence, it is still trying to weather the transition from a highly divided tribal society, to a nationhood in many cases difficult to trace and define. There is very little chance of planning ahead there. The economic and political viability of too many of the new African states is questionable at best.

In the face of this situation, we must also recognize that there are definite limitations with regard to both our human and material resources. We may feel deeply the human urge, but it would be unrealistic for us to plan a massive and decisive contribution toward solving the problem of underdevelopment in Asia and Africa.