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THE THIRD WORLD FORUM
AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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General Introduction

In the aftermath of the 2nd World War there emerged the hope of a harmonious development, based on the equality of peoples and the independence of nations. The colonial period was to end, and with it the exploitation of Asia, Africa and Latin America - that hope has been shattered.

Nevertheless, during this quarter century the peoples of Asia and Africa have won their independence - not without struggle, some of which, as in Indochina, continued throughout the whole period. But another feature of this quarter of a century has been a continuous and remarkable economic expansion in all the industrialized countries, with no major depression. Under these circumstances the illusion gained ground that the development of the three continents could be "grafted" out that of the advanced centres of the North. On the basis of this "creed" a whole ideology of "development" has been built up. This ideology implied the uncritical adoption of the principle of the international division of labour and of the virtues of the alleged "comparative advantages" to be derived from it.

It implied ~~large-scale~~ recourse to imported capital and technologies, this being regarded as a necessary condition for accelerating the development of the Third World.

This ideology and the practices it inspired have failed. At the end of these 25 years of expansion and illusions, the peoples of the Third World are poorer, more destitute, more exploited than ever. The gap between North and South has been continually widening. The few benefits that the Third World has derived from world expansion have been distributed more and more unequally, among countries, among regions and among social groups of

the same country. True, a small minority of the Third World population has experienced a substantial improvement in its standard of living. But in acquiring Western consumption patterns, they have become further alienated, politically and culturally, from the Third World. For the vast masses of the peoples of the South, their condition has steadily worsened during this quarter century. Starvation and unemployment have become their daily lot.

It is this failure that is at the root of the dual questioning: firstly of development strategies and models, and secondly of the international order. The time has come for the revolt of the peoples, who want a better social system, the revolt of the nations who want to consolidate their political independence by a genuine economic independence.

It is this dual observation of the crisis of development and that of the international order which led up to the establishment of the Third World Forum.

The initiative came from a small group of intellectuals of three continents, who met in Santiago at the invitation of President Salvador Allende in April 1973. At the end of this meeting, an appeal was launched by the signatories of what came to be known as the "Santiago". This platform, on the basis of which the provisional Forum committee called on the committed intellectuals of the Third World to organize themselves, recalls the two goals of the movement:

- To promote a new development strategy, a self-reliant one, focussed on the goal of meeting first of all the needs of the most destitute masses, geared to the necessary social changes and based on the development of the most appropriate technologies.
- To promote a new international economic order likely to help, instead of hindering, these autonomous and popular development strategies.

Twenty months later, in January 1975, the provisional committee convened a real congress of Third World intellectuals, proof of the highly favourable response to the Santiago appeal. Thus, at the kind invitation of the government of Pakistan. The Forum held its deliberations in Karachi. Having proclaimed its political platform - that of the Santiago Statement - the congress adopted its constitution and elected its first Executive Committee. The Forum is therefore a private international association of committed Third World intellectuals. It is open to all those who accept its basic goals.

Since then, the Forum has acquired more members, who are now numbered in hundreds. Regional Secretariats and national committees are functioning, organizing discussions and thinking about these fundamental themes.

The intention of this book, which the Executive Committee has asked us to prepare and edit, is to make our Forum a little better and more widely known. It consists of a series of studies provided by eminent members of the organization, grouped under three headings:

1. A critical presentation of the results of the model of dependent development which has characterized the last quarter century.
2. An analysis of the main aspects of the contemporary crisis of the world system.
3. A presentation of the requirements of a reconstruction based on the equality of nations and the satisfaction of the needs of the underprivileged masses.

We live in a time of challenge and criticism. Because of the failure of the development model of the last 25 years, the crisis that has occurred in all aspects of national and international social life, - in a word, the end of illusion - criticism has become fashionable almost everywhere. And the reason why the Club of Rome has had such a resounding success is not

just that it was backed by an extraordinary mobilization of the mass media, but also that it came at a time when the crisis itself made it necessary to do something new. In the West the intellectuals, the officials and the masses were seized by doubt: was it possible to prolong indefinitely a growth based on wasting the world's resources? Was it possible to avoid - and at what cost? - the evils of that polluting growth? Was it possible to give human perspectives to this purposeless civilization?

Our own criticism stems from a quite different angle. For the peoples of our countries the issues are of a different order. Our vision of the requirements of the future is therefore based on other concerns. Again, as is easily understandable, our scientific hypotheses are often different: we are neither Malthusians, nor stagnationists, nor pessimists. We are not afraid of the lack of natural resources, or pollution, or the moral and cultural vacuum. It is not our peoples who are wasting resources and polluting the earth. And it may be that our cultures will reveal an unsuspected potential for renewing the ultimate purpose of social activity; provided that at the same times, the social order and the international order are reshaped according to the requirements of our peoples.

Our Forum is too broadly-based for us to be able to claim a total homogeneity of views. Indeed, the specific conditions of our countries are too diverse for this to be possible. Hence this collection of articles is not without a certain diversity; but this diversity - desired, and even underlined by the very name of our organization - has its place within the context of the fundamental principles on the basis of which we are organized. The reader should also bear in mind that this volume does not aspire to deal in detail with all aspects of the crisis of development and the international order, but only with those aspects which at the moment seemed to us the essential ones.