

The Archaeology of the Development Idea

Wolfgang Sachs

Chapter One

A Guide to the Ruins

Ruined buildings hide their secrets under piles of earth and rubble. Archaeologists, shovel in hand, work through layer upon layer to reveal underpinnings and thus discover the origins of a dilapidated monument. But ideas can also turn out to be ruins with their foundations covered by years or even centuries of sand.

I believe that the idea of development stands today like a ruin in the intellectual landscape, its shadows obscuring our vision. It is high time we tackled the archaeology of this towering conceit, that we uncovered its foundations to see it for what it is: the outdated monument to an immodest era.

A World Power in Search of a Mission

Wind and snow stormed over Pennsylvania Avenue on 20 January 1949 when, in his inauguration speech before Congress, US President Harry Truman defined the largest part of the world as "underdeveloped areas". There it was, suddenly a permanent feature of the landscape, a pivotal concept which crammed the immeasurable diversity of the globe's south into single category: underdeveloped. For the first time, the new world view was thus announced; all the peoples of the earth were to move along the same track and aspire to only one goal: development.

And the road to follow lay clearly before the President's eyes: "Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace."

After all, was it not the US which had already come closest to this utopia? According to that yardstick, nations fall into place as stragglers or lead runners. And "the United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques". Clothing self-interest in generosity, Truman outlined a programme of technical assistance designed to "relieve the suffering of these peoples" through "industrial activities and "a higher standard of living".

Looking back after forty years, we recognise Truman's speech as the starting gun in the race for the South to catch up with the North. But we also see that the field of runners has been dispersed, as some competitors have fallen by the wayside and others have begun to suspect that they are running in the wrong direction.

The idea of defining the world as an economic arena originated in Truman's time; it would have been completely alien to colonialism. True, colonial powers saw themselves as participating in an economic race with their overseas territories as a source of raw-materials. But it was only after the Second World War that they had to stand on their own and compete in a global economic arena.

For Britain and France during the colonial period, dominion over their colonies was first of all a cultural obligation which stemmed from their vocation to a civilising mission. British imperial administrator Lord Lugard had formulated the doctrine of the "double mandate": economic profit of course, but above all the responsibility to elevate the coloured races to a higher level of civilisation. The colonialists came as masters to rule over the natives; they did not come as planners to start the spiral of supply and demand.

Development as Imperative

According to Truman's vision, the two commandments of the double mandate converge under the imperative of 'economic development'. A change in world view had thus taken place, allowing the concept of development to rise to a standard of universal rule. In the US's Development Act of 1929, still influenced by colonial frameworks, "development" applied only to the first duty of the double mandate: the economic exploitation of resources such as land, minerals and wood products, the second duty was defined as "progress" or "welfare".

At this time it was thought only resources could be developed, not people or societies. It was in the corridors of the State Department during World War Two that "cultural progress" was absorbed by 'economic mobilisation' and development was enthroned as the crowning concept. A new world view had found its succinct definition: the degree of civilization in a country could be measured by the level of its production. There was no longer any reason to limit the domain of development to resources only. From now on, people and whole societies could, or even should, be seen as the object of development.

Truman's imperative to develop meant that societies of the Third World were no longer seen as diverse and incomparable possibilities of human living arrangements but were rather placed on a single "progressive track", judged more or less advanced according to the criteria of the Western industrial nations.

Such a reinterpretation of global history was not only politically flattering but also unavoidable, since under-development can only be recognised in looking back from a state of maturity. Development without predominance is like a race without direction. So the pervasive power and influence of the West was logically included in the proclamation of development. It is no coincidence that the preamble of the UN Charter ("We, the peoples of the United Nations...") echoes the Constitution of the US ("We the people of the United States..."). Development meant nothing more than projecting the American model of society on to the rest of the world.

Truman really needed such a reconceptualisation of the world. The old colonial world had fallen apart. The United States, the strongest nation to emerge from the War, was obliged to act as the new world power. For this it needed a vision of a new global order.

The concept of development provided the answer because it presented the world as collection of homogeneous entities, held together not through the political dominion of colonial times, but through economic interdependence. It meant the independence process of young countries could be allowed to proceed because they automatically fell under the wing of the US anyway when they proclaimed themselves to be subjects of economic development.

Development was the conceptual vehicle which allowed the US to behave as herald of national self-determination while at the same time founding a new type of world-wide domination: an anti-colonial imperialism..

Regimes in Search of a *Raison D'etat*

The leaders of the newly founded nations — from Nehru to Nkrumah, Nasser to Sukarno — accepted the image that the North had of the South, and internalised it as their self image. Under-development became the cognitive foundation for the establishment of the nations throughout the Third World.

The Indian leader Nehru (incidentally, in opposition to Gandhi) made the point in 1949: "It is not a question of theory; be it communism, socialism or

capitalism, whatever method is more successful, brings the necessary changes and gives satisfaction to the masses, will establish itself on its own.... Our problem today is to raise the standard of the masses..". Economic development as the primary aim of the state; the mobilisation of the country to increase the output: this beautifully suited the Western concept of the world as an economic arena.

As in all types of competition, this one rapidly produced its professional coaching staff. The World Bank sent off the first of its innumerable missions in July 1949. Upon their return from Colombia, the 14 experts wrote: "short-term and sporadic efforts can hardly improve the overall picture. The vicious circle... can only be broken seriously through a global relaunching of the whole economy, along with education, health and food sectors."

To increase production at a constant level, entire societies had to be overhauled. Had there ever existed a more zealous state objective? From then on, an unprecedented flowering of agencies and administrations came forth to address all aspects of life — to count, organise, mindlessly intervene and sacrifice, all in the name of "development". Today the scene appears more like collective hallucination. Traditions, hierarchies, mental habits — the whole texture of societies — have all been dissolved in the planner's mechanistic models.

But in this way the experts were able to apply the same blue-print for institutional reform throughout the world, the outline of which was most often patterned on the American way of life. There is no longer any question of letting things "mature for centuries", as in the colonial period. After the Second World War, engineers set out to develop whole societies, and to accomplish the job in a few years or at the most a couple of decades.

Shocks and Erosion

In the late 1960s, deep cracks began to appear in the building: the trumpeted promises of the development idea were built on sand! The international elite, which had been busy piling one development plan on another, knitted its collective brow. At the International Labour Office and the World Bank, experts suddenly realised that growth policies were not working. Poverty increased precisely in the shadow of wealth, unemployment proved resistant to growth, and the food situation could not be helped through building steel factories. It became clear that the identification of social progress with economic growth was pure fiction.

In 1973, Robert McNamara, the President of the World Bank, summed up the state of affairs: "Despite a decade of unprecedented increase in the gross national product... the poorest segments of the population have received relatively little benefit... The upper 40% of the population typically receive 75% of all income." No sooner had he admitted the failure of Truman's strategy, than he immediately proclaimed another development strategy with its new target group — rural development and small farmers. The logic of this conceptual operation is obvious enough: it meant the idea of development did not have to be abandoned; indeed, its field of application was enlarged. Similarly in rapid succession during the 1970s and 1980s unemployment, injustice, the eradication of poverty, basic needs, women and the environment were turned into problems and became the object of special strategies.

The meaning of development exploded, increasingly covering a host of contradictory practices. The development business became self-propelling: whatever new crisis arose a new strategy to resolve it could be devised. Furthermore, the background motive for development slowly shifted. A rising environmental chorus noted that development was not meant to promote growth,

but to protect against it. Thus the semantic chaos was complete, and the concept torn to shreds.

A Concept Full of Emptiness

So development has become a shapeless amoeba-like word. It cannot express anything because its outlines are blurred. But it remains ineradicable because it appears so benign. They who pronounce the word denote nothing but claim the best of intentions.

Development thus has no content but it does possess a function: it allows any intervention to be, sanctioned in the name of a higher evolutionary goal. Watch out ! Truman's assumptions travel like blind passengers under its cover. However applied, the development idea always implies that there are lead runners who show the way to latecomers; it suggests that advancement is the result of planned action. Even without having economic growth in mind, whoever talks of development evokes notions of universality, progress and feasibility, showing that they are unable to escape Truman's influence.

This heritage is like a weight which keeps one treading in the same spot. It prevents people in Michoacan, Gujarat or Zanzibar from recognising their own right to refuse to classify themselves as under-developed; it stops them rejoicing in their own diversity and wit. Development always entails looking at other worlds in terms of what they lack, and obstructs the wealth of indigenous alternatives.

Yet the contrary of development is not stagnation. From Gandhi's *Swaraj* to Zapata's *Ejidos*¹, we see that there are striking examples of change in every culture.

Distinctions such as backward/advanced or traditional/modern have in any case become ridiculous given the dead end of progress in the North, from poisoned soil to greenhouse effect. Truman's vision will thus fall in the face of history, not because the race was fought unfairly, but because it leads to abyss.

The idea of development was once towering monument inspiring international enthusiasm. Today, the structure is falling apart and in danger of total collapse. But its imposing ruins still linger over everything and block the way out. The task, then, is to push the rubble aside to open up new ground.

Chapter Two

The Discovery of Poverty

I could have kicked myself afterwards. Yet my remark had seemed the most natural thing on earth at the time. It was six months after Mexico city's catastrophic earthquake in 1985 and I had spent whole day walking around Tepito, a dilapidated quarter inhabited by ordinary people but threatened by land speculators. I had expected ruins and resignation, decay and squalor, but the visit had made me think again; there was a proud neighbourly spirit, vigorous building activity and a flourishing shadow economy.

But at the end of the day the remark slipped out: "It's all very well but, when it comes down to it, these people are still terribly poor." Promptly, one of my companions stiffened: "*No somos pobres, somos Tepitanos!*" (We are not poor people, we are Tepitans). What a reprimand! Why had I made such an offensive remark? I had to admit to myself in embarrassment that, quite involuntarily, the cliches of development philosophy had triggered my reaction.

Inventing the Low-income Bracket

"Poverty" on a global scale was discovered after the Second World War; before 1940 it was not an issue. In one of the first World Bank reports, dating from 1948-49 the 'nature of the problem' is outlined: "Both the need and potential for development are plainly revealed by a single set of statistics. According to UN Bureau of Statistics, average income per head in the United States in 1947 was over \$1400, and in another 14 countries ranged between \$400 and 900. For more than half of the world's population, however the average income was less — and sometimes much less — than \$100 per person. The magnitude of this discrepancy demonstrates not only the urgent need to raise the living standards in the underdeveloped countries, but also the enormous possibilities to do just this.."

Whenever poverty was mentioned at all in the documents of 1940s and 1950s, it took the form of a statistical measurement of per capita income whose significance rested on the fact that, it lay ridiculously far below the US standard.

When size of income is thought to indicate social perfection, as it does in the economic model of society, one is inclined to interpret any other society which does not follow that model as "low income". This way, the perception of poverty on a global scale was nothing more than the result of a comparative statistical operation, the first of which was carried out only in 1940 by the economist Colin Clark.

As soon as the scale of incomes had been established, order reigned on a confused globe: horizontally, such different worlds as those of the Zapotec people of Mexico, the Tuareg of north Africa and Rajasthanis of India could be classed together, whilst a vertical comparison to "rich" nations demanded relegating them to a position of almost immeasurable inferiority.

In this way 'poverty' was used to define whole people, not according to what they are and want to be, but according to what they lack and are expected to become. Economic disdain had thus taken the place of colonial contempt.

Moreover, this conceptual operation provided a justification for intervention: wherever low income is the problem, the only answer can be 'economic

development.' There was no mention of the idea that poverty might also result from oppression and thus demand liberation. Or that a culture of sufficiency might be essential for long term survival. Or even less, that a culture might direct its energies towards spheres other than the economic.

No; as it was in the industrial nation so it was to be in all the others; poverty was diagnosed as a lack of spending power crying to be banished through economic growth. Under the banner of poverty' the enforced reorganisation of many societies into money economies was subsequently conducted like a moral crusade. Who could be against it?

Descent to the Biological Minimum

Towards the end of 1960s, when it was no longer possible to close one's eyes to the fact that `economic development' was patently failing to help most people achieve a higher standard of living, a new conception of `poverty' was required. `We should strive', McNamara of the World Bank stated in 1973, `to eradicate absolute poverty by the end of the century. That means, in practice, the elimination of malnutrition and illiteracy, the reduction of infant mortality and the raising of life expectancy standards to those of the developed nations'.

Whoever lived below an externally defined minimum standard was declared absolutely poor; the yardstick of per capita income was thrown on to the trash heap of development concepts. Two shifts in the focus of international discussion of poverty were responsible for this. On the one hand, attention switched to yawning social gulfs within societies, which had been completely blurred by national averages. On the other, income revealed itself to be a rather blunt indicator of the living conditions of those not fully integrated into a money economy.

These new efforts to understand poverty in terms of quality of life emerged out of disappointment at the results of the stimulation of growth, but they brought their own form of reductionism. Since the first attempts in England at the turn of the century, the calculations of an absolute poverty line has been based on nutrition; the absolute poor are those whose intake of foods does not exceed a certain minimum of calories.

The trouble with such definitions is that they reduce the living reality of hundreds of millions of people to an animalistic description. In an attempt to find an objective and meaningful criterion, the ground was clear for a conception of reality which reduces the rich variety of what people might hope and struggle for to one bare piece of data about survival. Can a lower common denominator be imagined?

No wonder, the measure taken in response — ranging from deliveries of grain to people who eat rice to literacy campaigns in regions where the written word is altogether uncommon — have all too often been insensitive and shown no regard for people's self-esteem.

Reducing lifeworlds to calorie levels, to be sure, makes the international administration of development aid a lot easier. It allows a neat classification of the clientele (without which world-wide strategies would be pointless) and it serves as permanent proof of a state of global emergency (without which doubt might be cast on the legitimacy of some development agencies).

This readjusted idea of poverty enabled the development paradigm to be rescued at the beginning of 1970s. In its official version, the fulfilment of basic

needs strictly called for economic growth, or at least growth 'with redistribution'. The link to the previous decade's dogma of growth was thus established.

Poor is Not Necessarily Poor

Binary divisions, such as healthy/ill, normal/abnormal or, more pertinently, rich/poor, are like steamrollers of the mind; they level a multiform world, completely flattening anything which does not fit. The stereotyped talk of poverty has disfigured the different, indeed contrasting, forms of poverty beyond recognition. It fails to distinguish, for example, between frugality, destitution, and scarcity.

Frugality is a mark of cultures free from the frenzy of accumulation. In these, the necessities of everyday life are mostly won from subsistence production with only the smaller part being purchased on the market. To our eyes, people have rather meagre possessions; may be the hut and some pots and the Sunday costume, with money playing only a marginal role. Instead, every one usually has access to fields, rivers and woods, while kinship and community duties guarantee services which elsewhere must be paid for hard cash. Despite being in the 'low income bracket' nobody goes hungry. What is more, large surpluses are often spent on jewellery, celebrations or grandiose buildings. In a traditional Mexican village, for example, the private accumulation of wealth results in social ostracism; prestige is gained precisely by spending even small profits on good deeds for the communities. Here is a way of life maintained by a culture which recognises and cultivates a state of sufficiency; it only turns into demeaning 'poverty' when pressurised by an accumulating society.

Destitution, on the other hand, becomes rampant as soon as frugality is deprived of its foundation. Along with community ties, land, forest and water are the most important prerequisites for subsistence without money. As soon as they are taken away or destroyed, destitution lurks. Again and again, peasants, nomads and tribals have fallen into misery after being driven from their land, savannas and forests. Indeed the first state policies on poverty, in sixteenth century Europe, were a response to the sudden appearance of vagabonds and mendicancy provoked by enclosures of the land; it had traditionally been the task of communities to provide for widows or orphans, the classical cases of unmaintained poor people.

Scarcity derives from modernised poverty. It affects mostly urban groups caught up in the money economy as workers and consumers whose spending power is so low that they fall by the wayside. Not only does their predicament make them vulnerable to the whims of the market, but they also live in a situation where money assumes an ever-increasing importance. Their capacity to achieve through their own efforts gradually fades, while at the same time their desires, fuelled by glimpses of high society, spiral towards infinity; this scissor-like effect of want is what characterises modern poverty. Commodity-based poverty, still described as "the social question" in the nineteenth century, led to the welfare state and its income and employment policy after the world economic crisis of 1929. Precisely this view of poverty, influenced by Keynes and the New Deal, shaped the development ideas of the post-war era.

More Frugality, Less Destitution

Up until the present day, development politicians have viewed "poverty" as the problem and "growth" as the solution. They have not yet admitted that they have been largely working with a concept of poverty fashioned by the experience of commodity-based need in the northern hemisphere. With the less well-off *homo economicus* in mind, they have encouraged growth and often

produced destitution by bringing multifarious cultures of frugality to ruin. For the culture of growth can only be erected on the ruins of frugality; and so destitution and dependence on commodities are its price.

Is it not time after forty years to draw a conclusion? Whoever wishes to banish poverty must build on sufficiency; a cautious handling of growth is the most important way of fighting poverty.

It seems my friend from Tepito knew of this when he refused to be labelled 'poor'. His honour was at stake, his pride too; he clung to his Tepito from of sufficiency, perhaps sensing that without it there loomed only destitution or never-ending scarcity of money.

Chapter Three

Technology as a Trojan Horse

There are two entirely different principles which can shape a society's image of itself. Either a person-to-person or a person-to-things relationship predominates. In the first case, events are examined in the light of their significance with regard to neighbours or relatives, ancestors or gods; whereas, in the second, all the circumstances in the life of society are judged according to what they contribute to the acquisition and ownership of things. The modern epoch, whose thoughts and aspirations revolve mainly around property, production and distribution, devotes itself to the cult of things, the use of technology is thus its beatifying ritual.

It was not until after the Second World War, precisely in the "age of development", that the Third World countries moved in to focus within this world view; they were perceived for the first time from a material-centred view point. Spurred on by the experience of societies investing all their physical and mental energies in the propagation of things, development strategists perused the world and, lo and behold, discovered an appalling lack of useful objects wherever they looked.

However, what was of primary importance in many villages and communities — the tissue of relationships with neighbours, ancestors and gods — more or less melted into thin air under their gaze. For this relation, the popular image of the Third World was dominated by have-nots desperately battling for mere survival; and whatever constituted their strength, their honour or their hope remained out of sight.

Although such a definition fails to capture the realities of the lives of many people, it still provided the basis for programmes of global goodwill. A classic example of this occurred when John F. Kennedy called upon Congress in March 1961 to finance the 'Alliance for Progress'. 'Throughout Latin America', he said, 'millions of people are struggling to free themselves from the bonds of poverty, hunger and ignorance'. In the wake of such an exposition, in material centred terms, of the aspirations of people throughout Latin America - from traders on the Gulf of Mexico to cattle farmers of the pampa — the strategic conclusion was self-evident. "To the North and the East," Kennedy continued, 'they see the abundance which modern science can bring. 'They know the tools of progress are within their reach'.

From Truman's pledge to provide scientific and technical aid, to the hopes of some countries in recent years to leapfrog the outdated industrial nations with the help of bio-techniques and information technology, the 'tools of progress' were regarded as the guarantors of successful development. Indeed, if ever there was a single doctrine uniting North and South it was this; more technology is always better than less.

The popularity of this doctrine derives from the tragic fallacy that modern technologies possess the innocence of tools. Are they not basically comparable to a hammer which one can choose to pick up or not but which, when used, immensely increases the power of one's arms? Throughout all classes, nationalities and religions the consensus was for 'more technology' because technology was viewed as powerful but neutral, entirely at the service of the user. Modern Technology seemed to be applicable to any cultural project.

In reality, of course, a model of civilisation follows hot on the heels of modern technology. Like the entry of the Trojan horse in the ancient myth, the introduction of technology in Third World paved the way for a conquest of society from within.

Not a Tool But a System

Commercial artists particularly love to represent modern technologies as the triumphant heirs of primitive techniques. The jungle drum is pictured as the precursor of intercontinental computer mail, the search for medicinal plants compared to synthesis of antibiotics, or the striking of fire from flint revealed as an underdeveloped form of nuclear fission. Hardly any piece of fiction has contributed more to hiding the true nature of technical civilisation than that of seeing in modern technology nothing more than mere tool, even if a particularly advanced one.

Take the example of an electric mixer. Whirring and slightly vibrating, it makes juice from solid fruit in next to no time. A wonderful tool ! So it seems. But a quick look at cord and wall socket reveals that what we have before us is rather the domestic terminal of a national, indeed worldwide, system: the electricity arrives via a network of cables and overhead utility lines which are fed by power stations that depend on water pressures, pipelines or tanker consignments which in turn require dams, offshore platforms or derricks in distant deserts. The whole chain only guarantees an adequate and prompt delivery if everyone of its parts is overseen by armies of engineers, planners and financial experts, who themselves can fall back on administrations, universities, indeed entire industries (and sometimes even the military).

As with a car, a pill, a computer or a television, the electric mixer is dependent on the existence of sprawling, interconnected systems of organisation and production. Whoever flicks a switch is not using a tool. They are plugging into a combine of running systems. Between the use of simple techniques and that of modern equipment lies the reorganisation of a whole society.

However innocent they appear to be, the products of modern world only function as long as large parts of society behave according to plan. This entails the suppression of both individual will and chance, apart from odd remnants of spontaneity. After all, the aforementioned mixer would not make one revolution were it not assured that, in the whole system chain, everything happens at the right time and place and is of the right quality. Coordination and scheduling, training and discipline, not just energy, are the elixir of life for these exceedingly compliant devices. They appear helpful and labour saving, yet call for the predictable performance of many people in distance places; the tools only function insofar as people themselves turn into tools.

But in developing countries especially, things often don't work that way. In almost any developing country you can find unused equipment, rusting machinery and factories working at half their capacity. For the 'technical development' of a country demands putting into effect that multitude of requirements which have to be fulfilled to set the interconnected systems whirring. And this generally amounts to taking apart traditional society step by step in order to re-assemble it according to functional requirements. No society can stay the same; there can be no mixers without remodelling the whole. It is not astonishing in view of this Herculean task, that the development debate has incessantly repeated the phrase 'comprehensive planning instead of piecemeal solutions' since the early 1960s.

Not a Tool But a Worldview

Any technical device is much more than an aid; it is culturally potent. The overwhelming effects of its power dissolve not only physical resistance but also attitudes to life. Technologies shape feelings and fashion world views; the traces they leave in the mind are probably more difficult to erase than traces they leave in the landscapes.

Who has not experienced the thrill of acceleration at the wheel of a car? A slight movement of the ball of the foot suffices to unleash powers exceeding those of the driver many times over. This incongruity between gentle effort and powerful effect, typical of modern technology, gives rise to the exhilarating feelings of power and freedom which accompany the triumphant forward march of technology. Be it a car or plane, telephone or computer, the specific power of modern technology lies in its ability to remove limitations imposed on us by our bodies, by space and by time.

There is more to it, though, than the shaping of the feelings. Something new becomes real: It is probably no exaggeration to say that the deep structures of perception are changing with the massive invasion of technology. A few key words probably suffice: nature is viewed in mechanical terms, space is seen as geometrically homogeneous and time as linear. In short, human beings are not the same as they used to be — and they feel increasingly unable to treat technologies like tools by laying them down.

Through transfer of technology, generations of development strategists have worked hard to get Southern countries moving. Economically they have had mixed results, yet culturally — entirely unintended — they have had resounding success. The flood of machines which has poured into many regions may or may not have been beneficial, but it has certainly washed away traditional aspirations and ideals. Their place has been taken by aspirations and ideals ordered on the coordinates of technological civilization not only for the limited number who benefit from it, but also for the far larger number who watch its fire works from the sidelines.

Fragile Magic

As every one knows, magic consists of achieving extraordinary effects through the manipulation of powers that are not of this world. Cause and effect belong to two different spheres; in magic, the sphere of the visible is fused with the sphere of the invisible.

Whoever puts their foot down on the accelerator or pulls a lever also commands a remote, invisible world in order to bring about an event in the immediate, visible everyday world. All of a sudden, incredible power or speed becomes available, whose actual causes lie hidden far beyond the horizon of direct experience. The fireworks display happened, so to speak, front stage, whilst the gigantic machinery that makes it all possible ticks away backstage, out of sight.

In this separation of effect and cause, in this invisibility of the systems that pervade the society and produce technical miracles, lies the reason for the magic technology which, especially in the Third World, holds so many people spellbound. The speeding power of the car excites the driver precisely because its prerequisites (pipelines, streets, assembly lines) and its consequences (noise, air pollution, greenhouse effect) remain far beyond the view from the wind shield. The glamour of the moment is based upon a gigantic transfer of its cost: time, effort and the handling of consequences are shifted on to the systems

running in the background of society. So the appeal of technical civilization often depends on an optical illusion.

The forty years of development have created a paradoxical situation. Today the magic 'tools of progress' dominate the imagination in many countries but the construction of the underpinning systems has got stuck and, indeed, may never be completed in view of the shortage of resources and the environmental crisis. It is this rift between the newly acquired ideal and the reality lagging behind that will shape the future of developing countries. There was no way to shove the Greeks back into the wooden horse after they had appeared right inside Troy.

Chapter Four

The Economist's Blind Eye

"Should India ever resolve to imitate England, it will be the ruin of the nation." In 1909, while still in South Africa, Mohandas Gandhi formulated the conviction upon which he then, over a period of 40 years, fought for the independence of India. Although he won the fight, the cause was lost; no sooner was independence achieved than his principle fell into oblivion.

Gandhi wanted to drive the British out of the country in order to allow India to become more Indian; Nehru, on the other hand, saw independence as the opportunity to make India more Western. An assassin's bullet prevented the controversy between the two heroes of the nation from coming into open, but the decade-long correspondence between them clearly demonstrates the issues.

Gandhi was not won over to technical civilisation with its machines, engines and factories, because he saw in it a culture which knew no more sublime end than that of minimising bodily effort and maximising physical well-being. He could only shrug his shoulders at such an obsession with gaining comfort; as if a good life could be built on that! Didn't India's tradition, undisturbed for thousands of years, have more substantial things to offer?

Although far from being a traditionalist on many issues, Gandhi insisted on a society which, in accordance with Hindu tradition, gave priority to a spiritual way of life. An English style of industrialism is out of place wherever *swaraj*, the calm freedom to follow personal truth, is to rule. Gandhi pleaded for a renewal of countless villages of India and for a form of progress to be judged accordingly. In his eyes, India was committed to an idea of the good and proper life that contradicted the ideals prevalent in England during the age of automation. For this reason, a wholesale imitation of the West was simply out of question. Individual elements should, in his mind, be adopted only in so far as they could help give better expression to India's aspirations.

Nehru disagreed. He saw no alternative but to introduce the young nation to the achievements of the West as soon as possible and take the road towards an economic civilization. Even in the early days, and in spite of his great admiration for the man, he found Gandhi 'completely unreal' in his vision. Though he intended to avoid the excesses of capitalism, he still viewed Indian society defining itself in terms of its performance in providing goods.

From an economic viewpoint, however, the nature of humanity, the function of politics and the character of social reform all assume a particular meaning. People are seen as living in a permanent situation of scarcity, since they always have less than they desire. The most noble task of politics is therefore to create the conditions for material wealth; and this in turn requires the reorganisation of society from a host of locally-based subsistence communities into a nationwide economy.

Nehru thus fostered precisely that Western self-delusion which was also at the core of the development idea: that the essential reality of a society consists in nothing else than its functional achievements, the rest is just folklore or private affairs. From this viewpoint the economy overshadows every other reality; the laws of economy dominate society and not the rules of society the economy. This is why, whenever development strategists set their sights on a country, they do not see a society that *has* an economy, but a society that *is* an economy.

When Production is Not God

Observing a group of Maya Indians who work their fields in the mountains around Quiche in Guatemala, and seeing the barren ground, the primitive tools and scanty yield, one might easily come to the conclusion that nothing in the world is more important to them than increasing productivity. Remedies could swiftly be found: better crop rotation, improved seeds, small machines, privatisation, and anything else the cookbook of management might recommend.

All this is not necessarily wrong but the economic view-point is notoriously colour blind: it recognises the cost-yield relation with extreme clarity, but is hardly able to perceive other dimensions of reality. For example, economists have difficulty in recognising that the land bestows identity upon the Indios since it represents the bridge to their ancestors. Likewise economists often fail to note the central importance of collective forms of labour, in which the village community finds visible expression. The outlook of the Maya is incompatible with that of the economists.

To put this in the form of a paradox: not everything that looks like an economic activity is necessarily a part of economics. Indeed, economics offers only one of the many ways of looking at goods-oriented activities and putting them in a larger context. In every society things are produced, distributed and consumed; but only in modernised Westernised societies are prices and products, conditions of ownership and work, predominantly shaped by the laws of economic efficiency. Elsewhere different rules are valid, other models prevail.

The Bemba in Zambia, for example, see a good harvest or a successful hunting expedition as a gift from their ancestors; they court the ancestors' favour in the hope of higher production. Then there are the cycles of cultivation practised by the farmers in Maharashtra, which neatly fit into the yearly round of weddings, festivals and pilgrimages. New methods of cultivation can soon disrupt this social calendar.

In societies that are not built on the compulsion to amass material wealth, economic activity is also not geared to slick, zippy output. Rather, economic activities like choosing an occupation, cultivating the land, or exchanging goods, are understood as ways of enacting that particular social drama in which the members of the community happen to see themselves as the actors. That drama's story largely defines what belongs to whom, who produces what and how it is exchanged. The 'economy' is closely bound up with life but it does not stamp its rules and rhythms on the rest of society. Only in the West does the economy dictate the drama and everyone's role in it.

An Invention in the West

As late as 1744, Zedler's Universal Encyclopaedia unwittingly gave a naive definition of the term 'market'...: '... that spacious public place, surrounded by ornate buildings or enclosed by stands, where, at certain times, all kinds of victuals and other wares are offered for sale; hence the same place is also called market place'.

The market, heralded both as blessing and as bane over the last two centuries, this powerful idea — nothing more than a location! The author of the Encyclopaedia seemed only to be thinking of crowds, stands and baskets. There is no mention of 'market shares', 'price fluctuations' or 'equilibrium'. Between then and now a far-reaching change has taken place in the self-image of society.

Adam Smith was the first thinker who, when using the term 'market', no longer envisaged a locally determinable outlet for goods, but that society-wide space throughout which all prices intercommunicate. This innovation was no

accident, but mirrored a new social reality: an economy of national scope. Before then, a domestic market was not something to be taken for granted; even in Europe at the end of seventeenth century, one could hardly find trade between different regions of the same country !

Of course from time immemorial there has been trade — one need only think of the North German Hanseatic League or the splendour of Venice — but this was trade with distant countries which remained limited to a few cities as bridgeheads. History knows markets in all shapes and sizes, but they were local and temporary places of exchange between towns and the surrounding countryside.

In Adam Smith's century, however, the nation-state drew a web of trade relations over the whole of society and established the domestic market. Like today's developing countries, the young states of that time pushed hard to make economic principles prevail everywhere, be it only to finance their own existence. That was birth of the national economy, even on a lexical level; while the term 'economy' had formerly been applied to the 'domestic economy' of the prince, now the whole nation was transformed into a 'political economy'. And Smith became the theoretician of a society governed by the rules of the market.

Alternatives to the Economy?

The transformation of society into a political economy was, of course, only achieved after a prolonged struggle demanding many sacrifices. After all, people were not shaped by a commercial ethos: it did not influence how they regarded work or property, their idea of good conduct or their sense of time. The merchant was not yet an entrepreneur, land was not saleable, competition was frowned upon, usury dis-reputable, and those who worked for wages lived on the fringes of society. As a result, the progress of capitalism was punctuated by bitter disputes about whether and to what extent land and forest, grain and money, and workers themselves, could be treated as commodities.

In the last decades, similar radical changes have taken place in large parts of the Third World as the economic ideology has tightened its grip. Traditions of sufficiency have been pushed aside, local exchange relations dissolved, collective forms of ownership broken up, and subsistence economies wiped out. For a long time the guiding light of international development policy was to create societies of paid workers and consumers everywhere. Experts scrutinised countries to identify "obstacles to development" which were hampering the free mobility of 'production factors',. No cost was too high and few sacrifices were too great in the quest to turn societies into smoothly running political economies.

Without any doubt, miracles were thus wrought, and a great tide swept through the countries of the Southern hemisphere. History had taken an enormous leap. However, it is becoming ever clearer that disaster is in the offing. At the very moment the economy has finally achieved worldwide dominion, social disruptions and environmental destruction have become rampant.

The domination of the economy is showing its menacing side. Societies find themselves cornered: they cannot afford to surrender to this monster, but they cannot escape from it either. In fact the economy, during its rise to the top, has stamped out alternatives to itself which are not so hazardous for both humans and nature.

How is it possible to reinvent economic institutions that allow people to live gracefully without making them prisoners of the pernicious drive to accumulate? Maybe there will be more creative power in the Third World to meet this historical challenge. Simply because, in spite of everything, many people there still remember a way of life in which economic performance was not paramount.

Whose Environment?

Neil Armstrong's journey to the moon cast a new light not on the neighbouring celestial body, but on our own earth. Looking back at the distant earth from the Apollo spaceship, he shot those pictures which even today decorate the cover of nearly every report on the future of the planet: far away, a small, fragile ball standing out brightly against the darkness of our space, its water and continents veiled by a fine layer of cloud. This is nothing less than a visual revolution: only since Armstrong have we been able to see the globe. This has made it possible for the first time to speak of *our* planet.

Yet the possessive pronoun betrays at the same time a deep ambivalence. 'Our' can express an attachment, a common destiny, an all encompassing reality, but it can also indicate ownership and refer to freely usable property. Consequently the photograph may arouse a feeling of responsibility, but also renew a taste for control.

The idea of 'environment' has been subject to exactly the same ambivalence. Whereas this was first understood as something opposed to economic growth, it is now taking on a new meaning, heralding a new round of 'development'. 'Poverty' and 'hunger' have run their course, it seems that the crisis of planetary survival will trigger off a new flood of 'development' in the 1990s. It is hardly a coincidence that the report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development (the Brundtland Report) opens with a reference to the photograph of the planet from space and subsequently concludes: "This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized - and managed".

On the international stage, 'environment' moved into the limelight for the first time in 1972 at the UN Environment conference in Stockholm. The Swedes, worried by acid rain and poisonous residues in birds and fish, had proposed the Conference and were met with a swift response, especially in the US and Canada, where environment conflicts were already daily subjects of conversation.

The World as a System

A new category of problems - 'global issues' - emerged which demanded a forum and the UN seized the opportunity. Stockholm was only the beginning of a series of major conferences (on population, food, science and technology, desertification and so on), which helped alter our perception of global space. The world had previously been seen as open country in which a multitude of nations pursued economic growth, each for itself and against all the others. This was slowly replaced by the image of an interconnected global system in which all nations had to operate under an array of restrictive conditions. Global space was experienced less and less in terms of opportunity and even more clearly in terms of limitation.

The world was now conceived as a system made up of population, technology, food, resources and environment. Its stability was jeopardized as soon as these components were no longer in equilibrium. Indeed, disaster was predicted, since the demands of population and technology were threatening vastly to exceed the capacity of the world's resources. Unlimited growth was thus called a dangerous illusion because the world was in fact a closed space with only a limited carrying capacity.

The Club of Rome popularised this perception of the future. But the global ecosystem approach was successful only because it was wholly compatible with the interest of the development elite: it shared their perspective — the lofty heights of worldwide planning — and sorted the confusion in the world neatly and tidily into clear sets of data that practically clamoured for action.

Although such a critique of growth was initially a blow for conventional wisdom, it cleared the ground for the definition of a new development problem: the long-term conservation of natural resources. Government had little interest in the 'limits to growth' but, on the other hand, could hardly ignore the fact that growth depended on much more than previously cherished conditions like 'capital formation' or 'manpower training'.

The message was that whoever wanted long-term growth had better refrain from squandering all resources today, and this insight led to talk of 'the efficient management of natural resources'. By translating an indictment of growth into a problem of conserving resources, the conflict between growth and environment had been defused and turned into a managerial exercise; development planners now had to think of nature too. The Brundtland Report derives its strength from precisely this perspective: "In the past we have been concerned about the impacts of the economic growth upon the environment; we are now forced to concern ourselves with the impact of ecological stress upon our economic prospects'.

However, a further obstacle stood in the way of the happy union of 'environment' and 'development'. If you protected the environment weren't you failing in your mission to 'eliminate poverty'? Would not the poor be left empty-handed if growth came under attack? Lo and behold, the poor were discovered to be agents of the destruction of resources, so that growth for the sake of 'eliminating poverty' could be presented as a strategy of environmental protection. If there are no more poor people looking for fire wood or overtaxing the soil, so the argument runs, then the environment will also be helped. This is why the Brundtland Report calls for the 'satisfaction of basic needs' as a method of resource conservation.

After these readjustments had been made, both conventional and socially aware adherents of growth were able to live with a call for a conserver society; environmentalism was no longer in contradiction with the traditional debates on growth and basic needs. In effect the Brundtland Report incorporated ecological concern into the idea of development by erecting 'sustainable development' as a conceptual roof under which the environment could be both violated and healed. As so many times in the last 40 years, when the destructive effects of development were recognized 'development' was stretched in such a way as to include both injury and therapy.

The Trend Towards Ecocracy

Catchwords are crystallizations of desires. 'Ecology' has become the motto of our age because it holds the promise of reuniting what has been sundered and of healing what has been wounded - in short, of nurturing the whole. Indeed, the inability of modern institutions to see beyond the horizon of their specific interests and to answer for the (so-called) side-effects of their actions is now on record. Their high level of efficiency is based on indifference to all consequences that do not enter their own immediate calculations. Even the Third World has not been spared this: intensive agriculture causes the water table to sink; energy policies tolerate the clearing of rain forests; chemical factories sow disease, sometimes even death.

The Language of Control

All the environment reports on development policy respond to this with calls for far sightedness and integrated planning. One of their key concepts is that of the 'system'. But beware! Systems language is not innocent; it tailors your perception. If you look at a habitat, be it a pond in the forest or planet earth, as a 'system', you are implying that you can identify the fundamental components that make it up. In the case of the pond the system may constitute an interplay between energy, mass and temperature, with the world system, it may involve population, resources and environment.

Essentially it means reducing a confused reality to a handful of abstract notions. Systems language purges reality of local particularities, of quality and uniqueness; it is insensitive to the individuality of a situation.

Moreover, systems language cannot resist looking at living communities from the standpoint of control. It is, in its origin, the language of engineers and managers. The systems concept was invented between the world wars in order to describe organisms in a sober, mechanistic manner, 'whole' being interpreted as 'equilibrium' and, in the tradition of engineering, the relationship between the whole and its parts as a 'self-regulating mechanism' with the function of maintaining this equilibrium. The terms 'ecosystem' or 'global system' cannot shake off the legacy of engineering; the language is committed to an interest in regulation and control.

Even the apparently harmless world 'environment' obeys this interest splendidly. In contrast to 'nature' for instance, it does not reveal any life; it is abstract and colourless and the embodiment of passivity. On closer examination this is not surprising, for 'environment' as a concept has no existence in itself, but rather is something surrounding a subject which is usually not specified. What does the environment surround? What is important about it and for whom?

In the international environmental reports, the hidden subject is usually nothing other than the national economy. Environment appears here as the sum total of physical barriers hampering the dynamics of the economic system. And the solution to the environmental problem here is usual for the economic system to leap to even higher levels of complexity rather than for its own dynamics to be questioned.

Rural communities in the Third World do not need to wait for experts from hastily founded eco-development institutes to descend on them and deliver remedies for, let's say, soil erosion. Provision for the welfare of their children and grandchildren has always been a part of their cultivation methods and economics. In the future, however, centralised environmental planning threatens to come into conflict with local ecologies.

For example, in the Indian Himalayas the Chipko Movement made the combative courage and wisdom of the women, who protected the trees from chain-saws with their bodies, into a symbol of local resistance reaching far beyond the borders of India. Yet their success had its price: forest managers moved in and claimed responsibility for the trees. They brought along surveys, showed around diagrams, pointed out growth curves, and argued with optimal felling rates. Those who had defended the trees to protect their means of subsistence and to give testimony to the interconnectedness of life saw themselves unexpectedly bombarded with research findings and the abstract categories of resource economics. The suppression of local knowledge by experts and bureaucracies may increase even further through environmental planning.

The Threat of Conservation

Furthermore, subsistence economies may be led into disaster by the movement towards conservation. Subsistence cultures are, after all, intimately bound up with nature: they live directly from it and can thus keep the money economy at arm's length. Wherever forests are converted into tree plantations or national parks, communities which use them as their living space are threatened not only with banishment but also with economic downgrading.

The re-forestation programmes in the wake of the Chipko movement, for example, favoured fast-growing species of wood whose effect on the soil and water balance were such that they could no longer provide a home for the indigenous people. An ecology that aimed at the management of scarce natural resources clashed with an ecology that wished to preserve the local commons. In this way national resource planning can be a continuation of the war against subsistence.

Satellite pictures of the earth scanning crops, pastures and forests evoke a spurious universalism. In these pictures, human beings and what nature means to them and their lives are missing. Global resource management tends to disregard the local context. Such disregard used to go under the name of colonialism.

Chapter Six

One World Against Many Worlds

Roughly 5100 languages are spoken on the earth at the moment. Just under 99 per cent of them are native to Asia and Africa, the Pacific and the Americas, with just one percent in Europe. In Nigeria more than 400 languages have been counted, in India 1682, and even Central America, which is geographically quite small, boasts 260 languages. Mountain valleys and islands, deserts and forests: these are often the places where tiny linguistic worlds assert their existence. A patchwork quilt of linguistic areas, large and small, covers the planet. But all indicators suggest that within a generation not many more than 100 of these languages will survive.

Languages are dying out every bit as quickly as species; just as plants and animals are disappearing from the history of nature never to be seen again, with the demise of languages whole cultures are vanishing from the history of civilization. Entire conceptions of what it means to be human are evaporating in the heat of 'development'.

And yet, the death of languages is only the most dramatic signal of the worldwide evaporation of cultures. Although the individual effects of this often enough remain on the surface, the aggregate effect of transistor radios and "Dallas", agricultural advisers and nurses, the regime of the clock and the iron laws of the market, triggers a historically unprecedented transformation. Whichever way you look at it, a global monoculture is spreading like an oil slick over the planet.

We have now had 40 years of 'development', fashioned on the model of 'one world'. The upshot of it all, if appearances do not deceive, is a looming vision of horror. Ideas such as 'world domestic policy', 'unified world market', or even 'global responsibility' have stimulated noble minds and are bandied about with a tone of moral pathos, today even more than a few years ago. But their innocence in an age of cultural evaporation is tarnished.

The Shadow Side of the 'Humanity' Idea

At least there is a brass plate. In San Francisco's Fairmount Hotel, to remind the passing conference visitor that it was here, on 4 May 1945, that a global hope was initialled. In room 210, delegates from 46 countries agreed on the text of the United Nations Charter.

Hitler's Germany was finally defeated and time would soon run out for Japan too; the Charter promulgated those principles which were designed to usher in an era of peace. Down with acts of national egoism! Long live international understanding! The unity of 'mankind' was invoked on all side, universalism was the idea of the moment. Roosevelt's four freedoms were to apply 'in all parts of the world', and 'all people in all countries' were to be granted 'the conditions for economic and social progress'. Only within the horizons of a global society of human beings with equal rights, according to the vision, would violence and war be banished from the face of the earth.

The United Nations appealed to ideals which had taken shape during the European Enlightenment, when 'humanity' took over from Christianity as the dominant collective concept. From then on 'humanity' became the common denominator uniting all peoples, causing differences in skin colour, religion and social forms to fade into insignificance.

Not that this had obliterated the image of The Other ! Just as Christians had their heathens, philosophers of the Enlightenment had their savages. But whereas `heathens' populated geographically remote areas, the Enlightenment's savages inhabited an earlier stage of history. The unity of humankind could be envisaged by placing differences in a temporal context: `savages' were human beings who were not yet fully mature and responsible.

The Enlightenment's idea of one humankind suggested that, as history ran its course, differences would dissolve into one `civilization' `Development', especially as exemplified by the UN Charter, closely follows this tradition to conceive of `one world'. The `underdeveloped' have taken the place of the `savages', but the arrangement of concepts remains the same: a global society endowed with peace does not yet exist, but must first be achieved through the `development' of backward peoples. Whatever is different is seen as a threat which must be neutralized through `development'. Consequently, the unity of the world is going to be realized through its westernization.

Today it seems almost strange, but the founders of the United Nations as well as the architects of development policy were inspired by the vision that the globalization of the market would guarantee peace in the world. Instead of violence the spirit of commerce was to reign on all sides; productive power rather than fire power would be decisive in the competition between nations. Global order was conceived, after the Second World War, in terms of a unified world market.

With a naivety hardly distinguishable from deception, the prophets of development polished up an utopia envisioned in the eighteenth century, as if time had stopped and neither capitalism nor imperialism had ever appeared on the scene. After Montesquieu, the Enlightenment had discovered commerce as a means of refining crude manners. In their eyes rational calculation and cold self-interest, precisely those attitudes which make the passion for war or the whims of tyrants appear self-destructive, would spread with trade. And trade creates dependence and dependence tames.

This is the logic which runs from Montesquieu through the UN down to the `New World Order'. It can hardly be denied that, at least after World War Two, this logic was to some extent validated: as European integration and the Pax Americana illustrate, the conquest of foreign territories by bellicose states has yielded to the conquest of foreign markets by profit-seeking industries. Nevertheless, in the age of multinational banks and corporations, it has become evident that a fixation on this `yesterday's utopia' leads into all kinds of pitfalls.

The world market, once brandished as a weapon against political tyranny, has itself become a closet dictator under whose dominion both rich and poor countries tremble. The fear of falling behind in international competition has become the predominant organizing motive of politics in North and South, East and West. It drives developing countries further into self-exploitation, for the sake of boosting exports, and industrial countries further into the wasteful and destructive mania of production. Both enterprises and entire states see themselves trapped in a situation of remorseless competition, where each participant is dependent on the decisions of all the other players.

United in Spaceship Earth

What falls by the wayside amidst this hurly-burly is the possibility for a policy of self-determination. All attempts to organize society creatively are repeatedly thwarted by the need to compete in the world market. Some countries cannot do without agricultural exports, others cannot drop out of the hi-tech race.

There is scarcely a country today which seems able to control its own destiny; in this respect the differences between countries are only relative. The United States certainly enjoys more scope than India, but itself feels under intense pressure from Japan. For winners and losers alike, the constraints of the global market have become a nightmare.

Since the late 1960s, a further image of 'one world' has edged its way into our consciousness: the globe in its physical finiteness. From creeping desertification to impending climatic disaster, signals multiply and ring out in shrill concert that life processes on earth are going askew. Local acts such as clearing forests or driving cars add up to a global disaster. The unity of humankind is no longer an Enlightenment flight of fancy but thrusts itself upon the people of the world as a bio-physical fact.

What used to be conceived of as an historical endeavour -- to establish the unity of humankind -- now reveals itself as an illboding fate; instead of hopeful appeals, sombre warnings provide the accompaniment. The formula 'one world or no world' captures this experience; the destructive power of human beings has become so great that they must curb themselves and take on their global responsibility on pain of self-destruction. Seen in this light, humanity resembles a group of individuals thrown together by chance in a lifeboat, where no one person can rock the boat without causing all to be united immediately -- in their collective destruction.

Amidst the wailing sirens of this kind of lifeboat ethics, things do not look too rosy for the patchwork quilt of cultures that is our world. For the appreciation of variety will swiftly vanish as soon as world wide strategies are implemented, even in remote villages, in order to prevent the boat from capsizing. Can one imagine a more powerful motive for forcing the world into line than that of saving the planet?

It is perfectly conceivable that the urge for efficient consumer behaviour and extensive resource planning — where possible assisted by satellite observation and computer models — will push diversity further into the shadows. An ecocracy which acts in the name of 'one earth' and aims to get the world out of its criminal run and make it fighting fit can soon become a threat to local communities and their life-style.

But this insight does not help us out of the dilemma which will have a determining influence on the coming decades: it is self destructive both to think in categories of One World and not to think in categories of One World. On the one hand, it is sacrilege in our age of cultural evaporation to apprehend the globe as a united, highly integrated world. On the other, if we see the globe as multitude of different and only loosely connected worlds, we still cannot dispense with the idea of unity in the face of lurking violence and the destruction of nature.

It was certainly an epochal mistake in the period of development to endeavour to keep the world together by means of westernization. The promise of unity turned into the threat of uniformity. But will it be enough to see the 'one world' as a dialogue between civilizations?

Chapter Seven

Development ended in Kuwait

Heraclitus is the name of the philosopher of Ephesus who bequeathed the two phrases to the West's heritage of quotations. 'All things flow: nothing abides' was the formula he used to describe the continuous coming and going of existence. However, as history does not always flow slowly and quietly but sometimes surges forward impetuously, Heraclitus coined the other phrase: 'War is the mother of all things'.

Heraclitus was referring to the clash between opposites in general, but there is considerable truth in the meaning that people generally give it: wars very often accelerate history, precipitate events and create new perspectives. My opinion is that the Gulf War marks the final curtain on the era in which the relationships between the North and South of the world could be considered in terms of 'development'. In its place, a new era is dawning in which relationships with the Third World will be dominated by the concept of 'security'.

The war made clear one essential fact: the terrifying technological divide that today, more than ever, separates the richer countries from all the others. This is a divide that expresses itself in macabre statistics: 115 American soldiers lost their lives as opposed to 1,00,000 Iraqis, a 1 to 1000 ratio which must be unique in the history of war. In spite of the inhuman efforts which Iraq made to arm itself to the teeth, its army was wiped out because, technologically, it had remained at the level of the 1970s. The defeat of Saddam Hussein, however desirable it might have been, became the symbol of the speed of innovation in the First World and of the powerlessness of the Third.

It is no longer possible to deny it: the idea that all the countries in the world were marching along a common road was but a post-Second World War mirage. It is no longer possible to say that everyone is moving in an interdependent economic space. On the contrary, the international super economy of the North and the poor economy of the South are separated by a wall.

Much time has passed since, as in the Brandt Report of 1980, the North was considered the South's engine of growth. It is still longer since the North was dependent on raw materials, agricultural commodities and cheap labour — all things that a highly technologized economy can substitute with increasing ease. The North no longer needs the South; it can prosper on the exclusion of the rest of the world. The world is no longer divided between capitalism and communism, but between fast economies and slow economies — to quote Alvin Toffler. In the wake of the Gulf War it has become obvious that the nations of the world are not at different points on the same road, as the image of 'development' implies, but are rigidly separated in a situation of planetary apartheid.

The way the peoples of the South are perceived is changing as a result. For Truman, Third World societies were indeed poor, but also full of potential. They were 'young' nations and 'emerging', whose future was to shine more splendidly than their present. Such optimism is implicit in the very idea of development: where should the road of progress lead, if not to the promised land?

In a situation of world apartheid, this concept collapses. No one speaks any more of a radiant tomorrow; the future appears grim and the South is seen as the breeding ground of all crisis. In a world divided, the countries of the South

are no longer looked at with hope but with suspicion. In the cynical eye of the privileged, development aid is done for and the job at hand is to keep a latent explosive force under control.

The Gulf War made it clear, once and for all, that Third World countries are now risk zones. All kinds of dangers are to be found there, as the newspapers and television keep telling us: violence keeps exploding, the mafia is in command, epidemics are spreading, deserts are advancing, ideologies are rampant, and everywhere the demographic bomb is looming. And even the stronghold of the North is not immune from the threat of immigration, the greenhouse effect, drug traffic, terrorism and war: the 'one world' is discovering the boomerang effect of degradation. The more the threatening dangers strike fear into people's minds, the more the image of 'The Other' takes on a different colouring. During the centuries it has been identified with the pagan, then with the savage, then with the indigenous and finally with the poor, which today embodies the 'risk factor'.

In these circumstances, the 'development' concept loses its reassuring connotations for the future: slowly it is being substituted by the concept of 'security' — from the North's viewpoint, naturally. There are already many development projects which have little to do with taking a country along the road to progress and which simply content themselves with trying to prevent the worst on a once-only basis. Once, the order of the day was to 'catch up' with the North. Now the aim must be to avoid being engulfed by disaster and to engage in 'security for survival'.

At the international level, too, the change of theme has been under way for some time. Whereas, in the past, the discussion at conferences was about how to give the South more opportunities to enter into the world's economic growth, today conferences analyze how to keep the excesses of such growth under control. Governments are concerned about the signs of weakness in the biosphere — pollution of the seas, the ozone hole, global warming. Who should eliminate emissions, and how much, and in what time span? Who can claim what compensation? The focus of international negotiations has changed; the division of wealth has been replaced on the agenda by the division or risks.

Amidst all this, the way that the North perceives itself has had to change too. Truman was proud to consider US dominance not from a colonial viewpoint, as the trustee of peoples who are still under age, but rather in terms of the economic prosperity of the whole world. It was in line with this that institutions for 'aid' and 'co-operation' were set up.

Little has remained of all this under planetary apartheid: today, for reasons of self-defence, the North must stop itself being pulled down by the collapse of the South. From now on, the North will claim that it is obliged to dominate so as to protect the stability of the world system.

On 1st April, 1991 Time magazine dedicated its front cover to fears about security, showing a uniformed body wearing a sheriff's badge marked 'Global Cop'. The new attitude has its military expression in the present planning of a multinational intervention force. Whether this belongs to the Western European Union, NATO or the UN is of secondary importance. What is under way is an epoch-making reorientation of the military apparatus towards war of low and medium intensity in the South of the world (and in the East, which is slowly slipping towards the South).

In a more charity-oriented variation, troops are being sent to relieve people who are struck by natural disasters as in Bangladesh and Kurdistan, while one is beginning to hear talk of 'green helmets' to intervene in case of ecological disasters. And people are talking about the planetary environmental crisis in terms of 'ecological security'. Ecology, once the rallying cry for new public virtues, has become a problem of security policy. Satellites are launched that keep an eye on far-away countries — veritable environmental spies.

Global security is beginning to justify anything -- just as it united the international community against the dictator of Baghdad. Rich countries are now increasing their diplomatic, charity and military instruments for risk prevention. But where there is no justice, there cannot be peace. Security has replaced development as the global guiding light — another tragic consequence of the continuing arrogance of power.

