

17th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs
Ronneby, Sweden, 3-8 September 1967

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INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION AND THE GAP BETWEEN
RICH AND UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Many years ago it was usual to regard the world as composed of two main groups of peoples: the rich, civilized peoples, the conquerors and builders of empires, on the one hand; and the poor, backward peoples, those who did not have or could not develop means of effective defence against conquest, the political and/or economical colonies.

I believe that it was just after the Second World War that a new nomenclature was invented in order to give more dignity to representatives of newly independent countries together with those of the older, also backward, ones: the world was to be regarded as composed of developed nations - the rich and civilized peoples - and of underdeveloped nations - the backward peoples.

After the creation of international agencies for the purpose of aiding the underdeveloped countries, after several years of experience in bilateral and multilateral programmes of co-operation among rich and poor nations, it was found convenient to change the nomenclature once more: the world came to be considered as composed of developed nations on the one hand, and of developing countries, on the other hand.

An increasingly large number of papers have been written in the last few years, devoted to the analysis of the many and complex problems of underdevelopment. And in 1963 an International Conference on the applications of science and technology to the benefit of less developed areas was promoted by the United Nations in Geneva; this Conference was followed by regional meetings on the same subject, such as the Conference on research organization and formation of personnel in Africa, held in Lagos in 1964, and the UNESCO Conference on the applications of science and technology to the development of Latin America, in Santiago in 1965. Thus, besides the economic, social and political aspects of the complex conditions which characterize underdevelopment, the importance of investigating the question of applying and stimulating science and technology in the underdeveloped areas themselves was finally acknowledged by men of government and by international organizations, even by those, such as the United Nations Special Fund, which were more or less hostile to investment in basic scientific research and education.

If one examines carefully, however, what has been accomplished for real progress of the underdeveloped nations and areas, one is led to the conclusion that the advance has been more substantial on nomenclature.