

EXCURSUS II

André van Dam on The Bamboo Bends Before the Wind

Argentina provides both the hardware and the software of atomic energy to Peru—for peaceful purposes. India cooperates with Egypt and Indonesia in the excavation and conservation of archeological treasures. Kenya assists Ethiopia and Tanzania in the improvement of wheat seeds.

The above examples, selected at random, reflect a newly emerging trend on the world scene: technical cooperation between developing nations. The United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries, held late last year, provided an excellent opportunity to assess both the goals these countries are establishing and the obstacles to the attainment of these goals. On the basis of that conference the objectives can be defined as follows:

1. to lift the consciousness of each Third World nation concerning its own particular technical capabilities and experience;
2. to induce each country to assist others in raising the level of awareness of their own technical skills and assets;
3. to build and fortify institutional links that would allow Third World countries to exploit such assets individually and jointly;
4. to pinpoint specific opportunities in technical cooperation;
5. to establish the infrastructure that would turn technical cooperation into a lasting and geopolitically feasible partnership.

Technical cooperation may be only the tip of the iceberg—a novel dimension of international development. The crux is (a) whether America, Europe, and Japan acknowledge that they cannot overcome economic stagnation without a major demand from the Third World, and (b) whether the Third World realizes that technical cooperation can coexist with the North-South transfer of technology.

Nobody argues that the Third World nations should break their technological dependence on the advanced countries or cut themselves off from the mainstream of technology. On the other hand, it does make sense for the Third World (a) to strengthen its own capacity for research and development, (b) to assess indigenous technical requirements, and (c) to remove obstacles to the development of technologies keyed to local climates and mores.

There is a risk that the technical flow between developing nations will assume the same problems as those triggered by the transfer of technology from the advanced to the underdeveloped nations. After all, the economic and technical gap between various Third World countries is about as wide as that between North and South.

The real dilemma of the Third World nations is

political rather than technical. They want the prestige that goes with the latest technology, yet they resent the consequent dependence upon the rich countries. It is also economical rather than social. They seek to attract modern technology with built-in economic efficiencies in order to compete on world markets, but the labor-saving devices then create widespread unemployment.

Observers are therefore quick to point out that horizontal (South-South) technical cooperation among Third World countries may create the same type of dependency—but this time the poorer countries will depend upon more advanced Third World nations such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, and Malaysia—and that it will not necessarily solve the problem of creating employment. In spite of these reservations the developing countries expect that technical cooperation will strengthen their analytical, institutional, and bargaining capacity. They hope to be able to pool their resources in areas of common needs. They believe that in cooperation there is strength.

Will they succeed? Some additional examples may help us to see the future potential of technical cooperation in an increasingly interdependent world: Mexico provides technical assistance to Ghana in crop research. Turkey collaborates with Afghanistan in the exploration and exploitation of fluorite. China provides technical assistance to forty other Third World nations in “small is beautiful”-type projects—in irrigation, health care, geological prospecting. The Philippines sends experts in coal technology to Rumania, and Rumania assists the Philippines in the development of energy-intensive manufacturing industries. Burma's Central Research Organization invites other Third World research institutes to assist in the development of fibers from indigenous raw materials such as bamboo and reed. Colombia's national apprenticeship service assists neighboring countries in training experts in satellite farming.

Not surprisingly, the “worldviews” of the 2,500 delegates who discussed these issues at the U.N. conference turned out to be as strikingly different as their attire, backgrounds, and development experience. Farsighted economists, politicians, and technicians of opposite latitudes see technical cooperation among developing countries as a possible forerunner of a new global division of industry. It is a logical way (they surmise) of arriving at a less inequitable distribution of the world's resources. It stands to reason that any substantial increase in the *share* of the Third World's production adds up to a major market potential for equipment, machinery, and software—a demand that for the foreseeable future only America, Europe, and Japan can satisfy.

A quite different “worldview” is provided by China. China has admitted that it has a massive need for foreign technology. At the same time, this giant country provides technical assistance to some forty Third World nations. China's technical assis-

tance includes, for instance, water conservation and power generation. In line with China's ideology these are mostly "small is beautiful" projects—whether in techniques of developing rice paddies or in sinking wells. China wants to convince other Third World nations to reach for shorter production cycles, which requires less investment and yields quicker returns.

The U.N. conference searched earnestly for some degree of consensus. The major dilemma proved to be the highly varying attitudes within the group of "77"—the so-called nonaligned nations. After a full week of quite intensive debate and behind-the-scenes bargaining, they wisely struck a pragmatic compromise at the eleventh hour. Fortunately, the agreement was also looked upon kindly by the North—and so the conference ended happily with a blueprint of action.

In a nutshell, the group of "77" concluded: (1) that only in unison could they partake in a fruitful North-South dialogue; (2) that the North would not be convinced of the need for such a dialogue unless and until the Southern countries *demonstrated* that they were capable of mutual assistance; and (3) that technical cooperation was the most immediate and pragmatic avenue of achieving such collaboration.

Notwithstanding the high-powered rhetoric, the North-South dialogue stalled after the ill-fated Conference of International Economic Cooperation (Paris—December, 1975, to June, 1977). If the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) can carry the ball that the world conference on technical cooperation started rolling, the North-South dialogue may lead to very positive action. The wind blowing from the South is getting stronger by the year. America, Europe, and Japan may well heed the age-old Chinese observation that "the bamboo bends before the wind."

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EXCURSUS III

Edward A. Olsen on The Korean Demilitarized Zone as a Nature Preserve

Sitting astride the midsection of the mountainous Korean peninsula is a formidable piece of real estate that symbolizes a divided nation—the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Two-and-a-half miles wide and 151 miles long, lying approximately parallel to the 38th degree of latitude, the DMZ has been in existence since the truce calling a halt to the Korean civil war was signed in 1953. Since that time the DMZ has been a no-man's land dividing implacable and heavily armed enemies. Today these

forces—Americans and troops of the Republic of Korea in the south vs. troops of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north—face each other across this isolated terrain.

Like the Berlin wall, the Korean DMZ supplies graphic evidence of a divided nation's inability to resolve its differences. In many ways the divisive DMZ is highly symbolic of the political and economic strains that afflict the Korean people. Unlike the Berlin wall, however, the Korean DMZ has become something more than an abject barricade. In the span of twenty-five years the DMZ has assumed a new identity. While literally no one was watching, this isolated region reverted to a semblance of its natural condition. With man precluded from setting foot in this approximately 375-square-mile zone, nature has held sway, reclaiming the human artifacts of war.

Though no one planned it in 1953, and few people today recognize it as such, the Korean DMZ now is a very valuable nature preserve. Civil war devastated the former farmlands and forested mountains, leaving in its wake a largely barren and scarred landscape. Left alone in one of the few areas of the world uncontaminated by herbicides and pesticides, flora and fauna have flourished.

In this area, where man cannot encroach to disturb their habitat or take their lives for sport, several species now prosper. Long-abandoned rice paddies and once ugly bomb and shell holes today provide marshy wetlands that play host to a great variety of waterfowl. Most notable are small numbers of two increasingly rare birds: the red and white Japanese ibis (which also survives on Japan's Sado Island) and the white, red, and black Manchurian crane—one of Korea's national symbols. Upland birds, especially pheasants, also thrive in the area in large numbers.

Four-legged creatures too flourish in the zone's overgrown woodlands and thickets. Rabbits proliferate freely in the many crevices left in the land by man and his machines of war. Small Asian river deer dwell in the dense foliage of the wetlands. These and other small mammals thrive in the zone, providing food for their larger neighbors. Though man, the hunter, cannot trespass in the area, the rugged hills of the DMZ are home to Korean tigers and lynx. Left in isolation, with ample small prey, these large cats also prosper.

These and other species exist outside the DMZ too, but only in ever more precarious habitats. Both South and North Korea are committed to being as agriculturally self-reliant as possible. Both too are committed to developing modern industrial economies. Neither government seems overly concerned—yet—about the impact these activities have on their natural surroundings. The impact is unmistakable: The more man encroaches on nature, the more the Korean environment suffers.

There is some concern, especially in South Korea, where the pressures of population and economic growth are greater. But what concern there is does