

Issues Viewed by Developing Nations

Third World needs technology and know-how and author sees duty for 'haves' to share

BY K.B. AHMED*

In an historical sense, licensing is a colonial instrument and, combined with the patent practices, it has become a deadly instrument of exploitation.

Today, I am not representing any nation or country. The environment that I work under, I would say, has a common factor of similarity of under-development with two-thirds of this world. We are underdeveloped politically, economically and technologically. It will be unjustified on my part if I only find it convenient to speak in technological terms that many of you will find reasons for and ignore the political and economic implication of technology.

220 Gentlemen, technology, even in your life and standard of living, is not separated from your political pattern and economic planning. Therefore, I am here to start raising doubts and fear in your intention of transferring skill to my part of the world on historical, political and economic grounds.

In your part of the world, technology was ushered in by the industrial revolution about a century and a half ago. The industrial revolution could not be completed in my part for various historical and political reasons.

One thing I personally would appreciate from your industrial revolution is the individual entrepreneurship pattern and intelligence contributed in raising your standard of living.

Technology in my part of the world is required for the growth planning to develop the environment for the benefit of the people and licensing is instrumental in transferring that part of technology at a cost that we can bear. You do not require mass-sophisticated technology to come up in the air and look back at this world and to find the greater divided two worlds, one with polluted structures, technology developed, and the other crowded and exposed to the environment for survival. It is not needed to build another Europe in Asia or another America in Africa. We require that much of technology to raise the human standard at an optimum level and to conserve our environment and plan growth keeping very close watch on the failures and dissatisfaction which was followed by the development program in the West.

The transfer of technology is normally done on commercial terms and the funds available from grants, credits and aid originating from the developed coun-

**Banker and Financial Analyst, Bangladesh.*

tries. These commercial terms predetermines the choice of technology and its abduction. The underdeveloped country has little choice and no control over its abduction.

The time is very opportune for us to think and consider various implications of technology in our standard of living. The world around us has recently been

From LES Italy International Conference

developed by technology, and today, without any doubt and hesitation, we stipulate any development in any area of this world with the help of technology.

Technology, in its own right, has advanced far beyond our stipulation and imagination. It has also become difficult for any pattern of society to absorb technology to its fullest efficiency because the pattern of our living has failed to keep up with the pace of advancement of technology. Besides, technology has divided this world into two separate regions. In international politics, one world is known as the developed world and the other is very politely described as the developing world. The difference between these two worlds is the adoption of technology.

For the developed world, adoption was easier because of many historical reasons and now the developing world, which is attempting to adopt technology, is finding it increasingly difficult to adjust and sustain the efficiency that is required for such adoption. Until now, no nation, no international agency or no political alliance has yet attempted to undertake the enormous task to bring forward those developing nations by assisting with know-how, capital and market and the developing nations have remained developing forever.

Technology includes know-how, application of capital and management and marketing expertise which have now become a monopoly expertise of the West and their own experience for the last 120 years created a common bond among themselves to be aware of their common interest and to identify their common competitors.

Recent Fears

One of the fears that the Western nations have recently developed is that the developing nations, by adopting technology and know-how to create expertise within their own territory, would pose a competitive threat to marketing of Western products. There is a school of thought which firmly believes that part of this world should always behave as consumers, while the other part will have the know-how and the ability to produce. Economically, this theory is no longer valid. The Western nations can no longer monopolize raw

materials which are required for the production of any commodity because the colonial status of the Western nations has been dissolved immediately after the great war of 1942-45. Second, due to unplanned and indiscriminating increase in the standard of living in the West, the cost of production of many consumer goods has gone up to a level that the consumer countries from the East can no longer sustain the buying power. Third, the transportation of raw materials from the consumer country to the developed West and transportation back to the consumer market is posing a great threat to the uninterrupted supply of product as well as being an unreliable factor in the cost of marketing.

Politically, the resources of any territory should be utilized to its highest efficiency to bring benefit to its own people to maintain an immediate optimum level of the standard of living. Admittedly, in many parts of the world, we still find people jumping from the tree, walking barefooted and surviving on the protein of vegetations only, but I hope none of us here wishes that those people should remain so forever.

Today, we have a world with an advancement which can be measured by the achievement of landing on the moon and also with an ability to measure the density of heat in the center of a volcano. Yet we cannot help two-thirds of the world's population living under sub-human level.

Today, we are meeting here to discuss the various know-how available to us and the transfer of that skill to the rest of the human community for their application and for their benefit. Commercially speaking, know-how is not only a factor which has caused a great improvement in the West, it is also a product of the West that they could market in the East. As a matter of fact, know-how would be less inflationary than a lot of products that are manufactured in the Western countries.

One of the ways of transferring skill is licensing. It is an effort by every nation to attain maximum employment within the country and that effort sometimes forced a lot of poor nations to make an allowance for these employment whose benefit would be greater if they could develop their own expertise within their country.

Licensing is not a threat to the continuity of contracts or commercial relationship between two nations. Rather, licensing guarantees a continuity for a definite period. Apart from attaining maximum employment within the country, the poor countries make an effort to be less dependent in this interdependent world. One of the ways that their dependence can be minimized is to create facilities and expertise within their own country by adopting know-how.

Statistically, no new nation, poor nation or developing nation has set up any industrial installation, process plant or manufacturing unit on its own without the help and assistance from the Western countries. The capital has been borrowed from the Western Banks, know-how has been brought from the Western nations, equipment has been produced by the Western fabricators, and marketing benefit has given away to the Western trading companies. This has been the true state of affairs for over half a century. There is no other way these little nations and poor nations could repay their indebtedness and gratitude to the rest of

the world. Personally speaking, they have over-paid. It is not unjustified to ask some of the know-how that we require to be developed within our own territory to fabricate part of the equipment which anyway we have to buy from the Western Nations, to install a machine tool plant for manufacturing spare parts. It is not unrealistic to expect some training to be organized for operators and engineers.

This is the consensus of all poor nations which is frequently ventilated through United Nations and other international agencies and this consensus or mobilization is not for total non-cooperation or cession. It is not a war between two worlds. It is not even a showdown. But it could become a conflict which I believe has already started.

If know-how and technology are not given to us, if we do not get the licensing of the process, and if we do not get the proper training for our expertise, we will have to build our nation on a different level of standard of living which will not be aligned to your values and which will not require your know-how and, above all, your assistance. The world in half or the whole is not, in itself, the end. We may look to you now for help, but if we do not get it we will help ourselves. By that, I mean we will have to build up a different planning method and we have to collaborate among ourselves.

The poor nations helping each other, possibly not with complicated capital investment, but we definitely can go for exchange of product and raw materials for each others benefit. Our people live in such human level that we do not require deep freezes or colored televisions. We sustain our physical existence on wild protein and if we do not land on the moon it will not mean anything to us because we never aspired for it. But one benefit will come to us that we do not have to sell to you anything that we have in our resources, because we are not going to buy anything from you.

The dollars, the deusch marks, sterling and lire that we require is only because we buy the bulk of our capital machinery and our know-how from you. If we do not have to buy them we do not have to sell anything to you. If we fail to sustain our buying power and if we fail to sustain our consumption level, the investment you have so far made in your manufacturing industries, you will have a tremendous production surplus problem which will create and be followed by noninvestment of capital which in one word will mean depression in your economy.

If you choose, you could live within your own world or we could all of us make this world a better one where every human being is given the privilege and opportunity to live as a human being and the facilities extended to them to avail and exploit the natural resources that we have within our environment, utilize services that can be rendered for human effort. This could not be a realistic achievement if it is related to one part of the world only.

Development is a word that is very badly defined. To us, development is a growth planning to exploit our resources for the benefit of our people, to conserve our environment for the comfort of our people and we want to retain our soil in its true dimension. Your know-how and technology for this purpose is very much welcomed. Anything more you have it will be all yours.