

From the standpoint of both the bilateral and multilateral arms control processes, the principal impediment to progress at this time was not Soviet-American militarization per se; it was, rather, the lack of overall coordination within the arms control decision processes of the two major powers and a linked trend toward the political ascendancy of the conservative foes of arms control. As the American ambassador to the CD candidly stated in 1981:

It will not have escaped the notice of members of the Committee that the United States delegation has been relatively silent during our 1981 session. Apart from my April 7 intervention and a recent brief discussion of chemical weapons last month, my delegation has spoken only when spoken to — that is, when it has been necessary to put our position on record. We have thought this to be an appropriate posture, given the fact that the review of United States arms control policy is still continuing.<sup>15</sup>

Western non-nuclear powers feared this trend in American behaviour: the USA, seemingly hors de combat in the Geneva negotiations and disposed toward isolationism. None of them was, however, prepared to step into the vacuum in Western leadership left by the United States. Their arms control energies had been momentarily deflected from CD endeavors toward the creation of a European intermediate range nuclear force (INF) arms control accord. Australia, Canada, Japan, and the Netherlands did attempt to exert gentle pressure on the United States to be more flexible on the establishment of working groups in the CD. Their principal concern was not, however, to achieve rapid agreement over issues high on the CD agenda; it was to give the multilateral forum the semblance of viability as a negotiating process. It was also to offset the public relations advantage which the East was reaping, if momentarily, as a consequence of apparent American obstructionism.<sup>16</sup>

The issues which were uppermost on the CD agenda at that time were nuclear disarmament and a CTB. The East had seized the initiative in

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<sup>15</sup> Geneva, Conference on Disarmament, Verbatim Record 146 (Hereafter CD/PV).

<sup>16</sup> Interviews, February, 1986.