

*Reflections  
of cross-currents  
in anxious  
divided world*

made in its procedure: the Committee is brought closer to the UN system by having the Secretary-General name its secretary; the chairmanship will rotate every month among all members and no longer be preempted by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.; and all plenary sessions will be open to the public. One immediate effect of the changes is that France has indicated its intention of resuming its place on the Committee.

So far so good. We have a tidy, logical plan of action, backed by the consensus of the nations of the world. All we need is the political will to implement the plan so that we can move gradually but inevitably towards a disarmed and secure world.

Unfortunately, it is not quite as simple as that. A more careful study of the final document of the special session reveals it as a mirror of the cross-currents of thought and practice in an anxious and divided world, conscious of the threat of nuclear disaster but torn between new perceptions of the implications of an interdependent world community and adherence to traditional ideas of security based on armed force.

For example, in the very first sentence of the introduction to the Declaration we read:

Attainment of the objective of security, which is an inseparable element of peace, has always been one of the most profound aspirations of humanity. States have for a long time sought to maintain their security through the possession of arms. Admittedly their survival has, in certain cases, effectively depended on whether they could count on appropriate means of defence. Yet the accumulation of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, today constitutes much more a threat than a protection for the future of mankind.

Clausewitz would likely have approved the statement. A century and a half ago he wrote:

... war is not merely a political act but a political instrument.

... war is only a continuation of state policy by other means.

War, therefore, as an instrument of policy must have specific ends, based on certain limitations. But nuclear war knows no such limitations, either in the massive destruction it inflicts on the enemy or invites in inevitable retaliation on the initiator of the first strike. As an extension of state policy aimed at guaranteeing security, war in its ultimate contemporary form has lost its meaning.

The logic of this position has been fudged by developments since the Second

World War. The concurrent build-up of nuclear armaments by the two superpowers spurred on by the strategic prescriptions of the Cold War led to a new doctrine of deterrence, according to which the tacit abandonment of nuclear war as a possible extension of foreign policy depended on the very certainty of massive retaliation on the first user of nuclear weapons. But the validity of the doctrine depended on the preservation of a fragile balance of constantly-shifting estimates of strategic parity or superiority.

Moreover, similar considerations of balance and parity dominated the deployment of armed forces and conventional arms by the opposing military alliances in Eastern Europe. The traditional notion of "security" based on juxtaposed armed might is accepted as a necessary consideration in phased disarmament and reduction of armed forces even after it has been discarded as no longer relevant in the nuclear-arms race. The idea is put forward in the Declaration (Paragraphs 19, 22, 29) as well as later in the Program of Action (Paragraphs 81-83). For example, we read in Paragraph 22:

Together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of armed forces and of conventional armaments, *based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security.* [author's italics]

In this "Catch 22" situation, a military policy-maker is likely to include in his estimates of balance — whether at the strategic or tactical level, whether in the case of nuclear or conventional weapons — the equipment in his own pipeline as well as that presumed to be in his adversary's. And this does not contribute to the international atmosphere of trust and confidence that, it is generally agreed, is necessary for a dynamic policy of disarmament.

Prime Minister Trudeau raised this issue very pointedly in his presentation to the special session:

What particularly concerns me is the technological impulse that continues to lie behind the development of strategic nuclear weapons. It is, after all, in the laboratories that the nuclear-arms race begins.

The new technologies can require a decade or more to take a weapon system from research and development to production and eventual deployment. What this means is that national policies are