

Diagnosis and prescription

By William Epstein

The United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD) was called on the initiative of the non-aligned countries, which were dissatisfied with the lack of progress on disarmament and feared that the spiralling arms race (now costing \$400 billion a year) could lead to a nuclear war and, even without war, would frustrate their hopes of achieving a new international economic order. The session was not a plenipotentiary conference convened to agree on specific treaties or concrete measures, but was intended as a means of reawakening interest and stimulating real progress on disarmament. The purpose of UNSSOD was to diagnose the nature of the disease of the arms race and prescribe for its treatment and cure.

It was no small accomplishment for 149 nations, with deep divergencies in their perceptions of the world and of their security requirements and with conflicting

approaches to arms limitation and disarmament, to reach consensus on a Final Document containing a detailed declaration of goals, priorities and principles, an elaborate program of action, and new or improved machinery for achieving it.

The main achievement of the special session was the agreement reached on the machinery for deliberating and negotiating disarmament. The agreement included three main points — that the Geneva Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), which functioned outside the UN under U.S. and Soviet co-chairmen, would be replaced by a new negotiating body that would be closely linked to the United Nations. The co-chairmanship of the CCD, which had led to charges of American-Soviet domination, was replaced by a chairmanship rotating on a monthly basis among

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Disappointments and satisfactions

By Albert Legault

For over a month, 119 countries and agencies met in New York in a special session of the United Nations General Assembly to discuss disarmament. As in 1945 before this same body, the main items on the agenda concerned nuclear disarmament and reduction in what are known as conventional weapons. As in the League of Nations and at the Hague Conference, nations continued to seek ways of putting an end to the arms race, which now gobbles up an amount that will soon reach \$400 billion every year.

What about the results of these discussions? They are disappointing in some respects and satisfying in others. Disappointing because the states did not feel at all bound to reduce their military expenditures. Disappointing because the final document and the statements accompanying it did not constitute a disarmament plan but instead contained broad guidelines on the principles

that should govern future disarmament. And disappointing because the final document had to be stripped of most of its binding clauses in order to provide a common denominator for all.

But it is satisfying to see member countries continue to prefer words to weapons; so long as the guns are silent the virtues of diplomacy can continue to work. It is satisfying because there was general agreement that a new negotiating organ, the Disarmament Committee, should be created — a step that will mark the return to the negotiating table of France and China, neither of which has taken part in recent major negotiations on disarmament, the first by choice and the second for historical reasons. And it is satisfying because now the United Nations will have its own Disarmament Commission. As opposed to the Disarma-

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Disarmament or disaster

By Murray Thomson

During the final days of the six-week United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, two tired diplomats approached the escalator that leads up to the United Nations General Assembly Hall. "Well," said one to the other, "what do you think it's going to be, disarmament or disaster?"

The hard either-or choice put by the question did, indeed, reflect the essential problem facing the delegates. Every single one of the 120 representatives who spoke during the opening three-week debate had agreed that the arms race was either too expensive (at \$400 billion a year), too destructive of the economy, too wasteful of human and natural resources, or too damaging of social values and relations to be tolerated much longer. Almost all speakers called it a threat to human survival.

These conclusions were re-emphasized in the talks

given by 30 representatives of non-governmental organizations and peace-research institutes, by the UN Secretary-General and by the heads of four UN Specialized Agencies.

The last three weeks of the special session were a fascinating exercise in consensus-building, a process that eventually produced a Final Document of 129 paragraphs. (Only Albania rejected the consensus by which the Final Document was adopted).

Most participants, I believe, found the special session to be both an encouraging and discouraging experience. For me, the encouraging aspects included the following:

— The *speeches*. Despite their number, length and repetitiveness, the speeches generally were of a high intellectual calibre. They were given by top decision-

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