

Pugwash Group of scientists. He has written tirelessly and expertly on arms control and disarmament issues.

Here Epstein talks about the period from 1959 to 1972, which he calls "the golden years of developing détente," and in particular about the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco under which the Latin American states turned their region into the first and only nuclear-weapons-free zone in an inhabited part of the earth:

"All during the Cold War there was no progress on disarmament. Zilch! Then when Khrushchev came in, things changed a little bit. And we had the International Geophysical Year (1958 to 1959) and that led to the first treaty [that] had anything to do with security in it: the Antarctic Treaty, which banned all military activities there and provided for complete, free, total inspection, by each side of the other side.... In 1959, Khrushchev was invited to the United States, and things began to ease slightly. Then, after years of deadlock, they finally set up in 1962 the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee—five from the West, five from the East and eight non-aligned—and it started meeting in Geneva. I was appointed deputy representative of the Secretary-General.

"There had been some small bilateral moves during the Cold War, like setting up a group of experts on a nuclear test ban or on surprise attacks. But this was the first multilateral effort with so many countries involved. The first agreement they reached was the Hot-Line Agreement in June 1963. Then came Kennedy's June 10 speech in Washington and his unilateral suspension of nuclear testing, which led to the Partial Test Ban Treaty, and that was the first slow beginning of détente. That was given a big move forward by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The superpowers had a strong interest in not letting others go nuclear, an interest which heated up after France exploded a bomb in 1961 and China in 1964. They began to worry about the 'Nth country' problem, and that's when they began to work on non-proliferation, and they finally came up with the treaty in 1968.

"When the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee started, U Thant said to me (because I was his representative): 'The big powers neither need nor want our help except for what they consider setting the table and doing the dishwashing. They don't want it in any substantial matter. But the eight smaller countries on the committee, they need our help. You help them.' So I began my friendly relations with these non-aligned countries: Sweden, Yugoslavia, Mexico, Brazil, Ethiopia and Nigeria, Egypt and India.

"I had better not go into details of how much I was consulted by them; the Secretariat is supposed to act when an organ or a body requests it, not an individual country. Well, all right, let me put it this way. They consulted me because they didn't want to appear to put forward proposals that others might think silly or impractical, and many of them showed me their draft speeches. I was carrying out U Thant's instructions. The eight non-aligned countries remained the same (until the committee was enlarged and was called the Conference on Disarmament [CD]) but of course the delegation leaders changed. I became an unofficial consultant to many of them, and ever since then I have had very close relations with the non-aligned countries.