

the last, world-wide forum devoted to disarmament and arms-control issues. Such gatherings have had a long and rather uneven history. They represent, however, a certain departure from the past. The non-aligned countries (most of which belong to the Third World, or, at the United Nations, the "Group of 77"), have exerted a major influence on the agenda of the special session, and were prime movers in its realization; the decision to hold the gathering is the culmination of over ten years of effort, beginning with the Belgrade "non-aligned summit" of 1961.

Frustration

The sense of frustration (and perhaps powerlessness) shared by many of the non-aligned countries towards what they see as lack of progress in arresting, or at least reducing, the waste inherent in East-West military competition (not to mention the danger it represents) is very strong. A sense of grievance that has been added in recent years is evidenced in the extensive debate on economic relations between the developed and developing countries. Consequently, many in the Third World regard this special session of the UN General Assembly (the eighth) as the direct and logical extension of the sixth and seventh special sessions on the New International Economic Order (NIEO). Canada, which endorsed the call for a special session on disarmament, has tended to regard it as an opportunity to seek progress in arms control and disarmament for their own sake.

Canada has recognized and supported a broad range of Third World economic objectives, and has, indeed, undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at reducing some of the economic causes of tension in the North-South relation, as was demonstrated not only at the United Nations but also by the Canadian contribution to the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC), of which Alan MacEachen was co-chairman. Yet, while deeply sensitive to Third World concerns, Canada has continued to emphasize the security aspects of arms-control and disarmament measures, especially in the East-West context. The process of *détente* (which has taken place, by and large, outside the United Nations system) is of prime importance for the successful realization of East-West arms control. Equally, should progress towards disarmament fail, so ultimately will *détente*. The terms, though not co-equal, overlap – and the former is the touchstone of the latter.

In the world community, then, there is a divergence of perspective on the significance and purpose of arms-control and

disarmament measures. In the East-West context, the pursuit of arms control and disarmament is an integral part of the continuing elaboration of the process of *détente*. There is at least as much emphasis placed on negotiating forums, such as SALT and MBFR, outside the United Nations framework as within it. In the North-South context, however, arms control and disarmament, while indeed ends in themselves, are closely associated with the economic dimensions of redressing the unequal relations between North and South, between the First and Third Worlds, and far more stress is placed on broadening and enhancing the authority of the United Nations to deal with arms-control and disarmament matters.

This being the case, the special session will be, in the words, of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, "in all probability the largest, most representative gathering ever convened to consider the question of disarmament in all its aspects".

Despite the enormous range of subject matter covered by the special session, debate will focus on three broad topics: nuclear-arms control, control of conventional weapons, and negotiating machinery. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in effect divides the problem posed by the spread of nuclear weapons vertically and horizontally. There is, however, an interrelation between these two aspects, since the ability of the super-powers, in particular, to report progress on limiting further vertical proliferation will have an effect on efforts to contain horizontal proliferation. Indeed, the efficacy of the NPT as a major instrument for inhibiting horizontal proliferation is assessed by many countries in this light. The problem is further complicated by the fact that two nuclear-weapon states, France and China, are not parties to the NPT. Nor are several potential nuclear-weapon states.

Good faith

In the eyes of many, the test of the good faith of the super-powers resides in demonstrable progress in two sets of arms talks – the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., and the trilateral (U.S.-Britain-U.S.S.R.) talks leading to a Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty

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NPT divides nuclear problem horizontally and vertically