

II

POLITICAL AND SECURITY

Disarmament

As the year opened, shortly after the unanimous co-sponsorship of an important General Assembly resolution on disarmament, there were high hopes that progress could at last be achieved in this most important field. World attention centered in the early part of the year on the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee (Canada, France, Italy, the U.K. and the U.S.A.—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, and the U.S.S.R.), which met in Geneva from March 15 to June 27, with a recess in May during the period of the abortive Summit Conference. In that Committee the Soviet side first pressed for adoption of the plan for general and complete disarmament which Mr. Khrushchov had advanced at the fourteenth session. Dissatisfied with several features of this plan, notably its unrealistic insistence on a four-year time limit, its vagueness in regard to the crucial question of international control and its inherent imbalance as between conventional and nuclear arms, the western side advanced an alternative set of proposals on March 16.

Effective negotiations between the two sides were, however, inhibited by the failure of the West to engage the East in detailed consideration of individual disarmament measures and their related control systems. The Soviet side declined to do this unless the West would agree that the aim of the Committee was to draft one comprehensive treaty embracing all disarmament measures, none of which could be implemented until all countries had ratified the agreement. The Western side saw in this approach the introduction of unnecessary and perhaps dangerous delay in the implementation of those initial measures on which the ten countries should be able to reach early agreement, thus fostering confidence for more far-reaching steps in the development of a comprehensive programme of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

When the Committee reassembled after the breakdown of the Summit Conference, the Soviet side introduced a new plan on June 2. Although this appeared to contain some encouraging elements of concession to the western viewpoint, there were still a number of features in regard to which Soviet intentions were not clear. Moreover, the new Soviet plan ignored the principle of balance in concentrating in its first stage on nuclear disarmament to the complete exclusion of complementary measures in the conventional field.