

TIMES-COLONIST Wednesday, December 16, 1987

# Ecological holocaust 'threatens billion'

By Nancy Brown  
Times-Colonist staff

The threat of nuclear annihilation and the destruction of the global environment are only two of the major problems that threaten world peace, the visiting Canadian ambassador for disarmament at the United Nations told a Victoria audience.

"In many ways the cutting, burning and bulldozing of tropical rainforests reflect a calamity that has already arrived: it threatens the lives of a billion people, as their water resources dry up and their land turns to dust," Douglas Roche told a gathering at the University of Victoria Tuesday night.

"The issues that claim humanity's full attention are evident: the threat of nuclear annihilation, regional wars using conventional weapons, the gap between developing and industrial worlds, the danger of over-population, and the despoilation of the global environment," said Roche.

He listed the evidence of global crisis:

- Global military spending of \$1 trillion a year, five times greater than spending on the Second World War.

- Enough nuclear weapons scattered over the globe to kill everyone on earth at least 12 times.

- Regional wars in which more than 20 million have been killed since 1945.

- Poverty which leaves 780 million people, undernourished every year, and 1.5 billion without access to medical facilities.

- Fourteen million children under five killed each year by dehydration, diarrhea and malnutrition.

- Each week, 280,000 children killed by frequent infection and malnutrition—more than twice the number of casualties from the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

- Destruction of 11-million hectares of forest and transformation of six-million hectares of productive

land into desert every year.

"Any outbreak of euphoria over nuclear arms reduction is premature, he said. But changes in attitude are in the air, even though global problems of war, poverty, environmental destruction and population explosion are immense, he said.

In a University of Victoria lecture sponsored by the United Nations Association of Canada, Roche said the recent United States-U.S.S.R. agreement to eliminate all medium- and shorter-range missiles is a breakthrough in building East-West relations.

"The bilateral negotiating process has, in fact, achieved a concrete result."

The agreement, coupled with the hope of a 1988 agreement to eliminate half of the existing strategic nuclear weapons stockpiles are a success for countries like Canada that have been pressing both superpowers for arms reductions.

An historical process of disarmament is actually underway.

Roche said economic reforms and foreign policy initiatives from the U.S.S.R. go well beyond



■ ROCHE