

*Unlikelihood  
of diversion  
of saving  
to development*

special session, and President Giscard d'Estaing even suggested the creation of a special disarmament fund. However, economic experts do not have many illusions on this point. A moment of thought reveals the difficulties inherent in such an undertaking; assuming that military expenditure were, in fact, reduced, why would the funds made available automatically be earmarked for development? Rather, pressure from taxpayers and public opinion in general in each country would lead to the use of the funds thus saved to improve national standards of living — to fight unemployment, increase health and education budgets and so on — unless the desire for more consumer goods meant that they were simply diverted to production and marketing channels. On a national scale, only a government capable of withstanding the temptation to seek voter popularity could succeed, especially in a period of recession, in allocating to the development of other countries funds that might be used to improve the domestic situation. It is even less likely that transfer operations presided over by a new international agency would be successful. Furthermore, a sort of negative tax on the savings achieved through disarmament would tend to discourage any efforts in that direction. Once again, the idea is appealing, but it is still concerned with ends and does not provide the means of altering behaviour.

Thus, the fact that the special session was disappointing should be no cause for surprise. Apart from a few resolutions that cynics might characterize as pious wishes, the implication being that they will have no effect, the only concrete result lies in the creation of a committee on disarmament to replace the Geneva Conference, which will make it possible to satisfy both the Third World countries, hostile to the co-chairmanship of the two super-powers, and France, which will now be able to take its place at the negotiating table once again without losing face.

When basic progress is impossible, people often take refuge in procedural questions, giving a new agency the responsibility for studying the problems they have been unable or unwilling to resolve. But, if this is what happened here, is it not because the international community is still mistaking effects for causes?

**Cause and effect**

That the accumulation of arms is wasteful and a source of insecurity all honest men are willing to agree. As early as the first peace conference at The Hague in 1899, the delegates stated in the final document that limiting the current burden of military

expenditure in the world was most desirable in the interests of the physical and moral well-being of humanity. Although the size of the problem has changed since the beginning of the century, its nature has not.

But is the struggle for disarmament really significant as long as the roots of the problem are not touched? What would one say about the services of a doctor who fought a dangerous infection merely by treating the symptoms — by temporarily bringing down the fever, for example — without attempting to treat the cause of the illness?

Yet that is the procedure followed by our modern sorcerers' apprentices in the guise of politicians or political experts. Certainly the accumulation of arms is in itself dangerous, since it is a continual temptation to irresponsible adventurers. But the danger is not in proportion to the quantity of weapons accumulated. Everyone knows that there are already enough to destroy, several times over, every human life on the planet. That is the symptom rather than the cause of the basic problem, for there is every likelihood that the arms race will continue and that a more and more dangerous balance will be sought so long as the causes of international disorder have not been eradicated. Minor violence continues to break out in the world every day, using minor weapons but nevertheless with deadly results, wherever there are unsettled conflicts.

The real struggle, then, for disarmament is the fight to eradicate the causes of the arms race and the arms trade. Obviously, the two things are related, but they cannot necessarily be remedied in the same way.

The arms race is born of fear. It is because governments distrust the intentions of their neighbours, and even more those of their rivals, that they attempt to guarantee security through military strength. Stocks of arms would rapidly disappear if confidence could be re-established or (more properly) established between nations. Unfortunately, trust cannot be legislated, and it is utopian to suggest that it can be produced to order. Rather, an attempt should be made to create an atmosphere in which confidence might be reborn. This is a huge and unending task. It involves not only taking stock of existing conflicts but also detecting those that are smouldering beneath the surface; above all, it involves putting an end to such conflicts by destroying their roots. Conflicts arise because of injustice, domination, violation of individual or collective rights, inequality among men or social and na-