

Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee

THE present negotiations in the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee, which began on March 15, 1960, are the latest in a series which has been going on for the greater part of the period since the end of the Second World War. Up to 1957, the most important of these negotiations took place in the Disarmament Sub-Committee of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The members of the Sub-Committee were Canada, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the U.S.S.R., in other words, nations were included as members of the Sub-Committee either because they were major military powers or because they had contributed directly to the development of atomic weapons or for both reasons. The Sub-Committee did useful work in clarifying the issues between East and West, and much of the present negotiations can only be understood by reference to the experiences of the negotiations up to 1957. However, the work of the Sub-Committee came to a halt late in 1957, largely because of Soviet dissatisfaction with the unequal composition of the Sub-Committee, in which the Soviet representatives depicted themselves as outnumbered four to one.

In 1958 a new approach was made that involved the discussion of two separate aspects of disarmament, surprise attack and nuclear tests, in separate conferences outside the organizational framework of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The surprise-attack negotiations soon failed because of a basic difference of approach, but the nuclear-test negotiations have continued, so that now, after nearly two years of negotiation, the three participating countries are reasonably close to agreement on a limited treaty on nuclear tests.

A Test Ban

An important connection exists between the nuclear-test negotiations and the general negotiations on disarmament proceeding in the Ten-Nation Committee. A treaty banning nuclear-weapon tests could be of great importance as a first step in the direction of disarmament, particularly as it would embody the first international control system to have been agreed on between East and West. Moreover, it would be an important means of checking the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the four countries that have so far developed them. These effects could have a significant bearing on developments in the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee.

When the foreign ministers of France, the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. met in Geneva in July 1959, they agreed to revive general disarmament negotiations in a new negotiating body, which was to have an equal representation from the East and the West. Thus Canada and Italy were invited to join the United Kingdom, the United States and France to form the five Western members of the Committee, while four of the Soviet Union's allies in the