

Of course, those powers have as yet done nothing to reduce their own vast stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Steps have, however, lately been taken by two of them to reduce the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes and by a third to decrease its planned rate of increase in the output of such material. Those are welcome indications of restraint.

In the foreseeable circumstances of the next ten years, there may be as many as a score of states which could, if they were to make the necessary political decision to do it, acquire an independent military nuclear capability by manufacturing their own nuclear weapons. It seems axiomatic to me that, if these nations are to be expected to continue their voluntary abstention, if they are expected to go even further and make a formal international commitment to refrain from producing them in future, then the military nuclear powers must accept responsibilities of their own. They must not only demonstrate increasing restraint in the nuclear field. They must also make renewed efforts to achieve early progress in the direction of general disarmament, including the reduction and, eventually, the elimination of all national stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

Canada is one of the countries that have the resources and the technical and industrial capability to manufacture nuclear weapons. I should like to believe that our abstention from the pursuit of a military nuclear programme may have served to encourage other non-nuclear states in following a similar policy. In the event, no middle or smaller powers have embarked on a programme of that nature and the expensive investment it would involve in nuclear-weapons carriers of one sort or another. The world cannot, on the other hand, be certain how long that state of affairs will continue.

Under the circumstances, it is encouraging to observe that some non-nuclear states have come forward with proposals for agreement on the non-acquisition of nuclear weapons, either generally or on a regional basis. Proposals on these lines have been developed in Africa and Latin America, two vast continents where there has so far been no domestic production, or national possession, of nuclear weapons but where nuclear science may be expected to contribute significantly to economic development and social progress.

These proposals are to be welcomed as offering a fresh prospect of limiting the further spread of independent military nuclear capability. The idea of non-acquisition is not, however, free of difficulty. In particular, I think there has been a growing awareness that it may not be practical to try to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons through the agency of a non-acquisition agreement in those areas of the world where non-nuclear states are apprehensive of the aims of a neighbouring nuclear -- or potential nuclear -- power.

Accordingly, it may be necessary first -- or simultaneously -- to guarantee the security of such non-nuclear states, at least against nuclear attack by the nuclear state concerned, if they are to be expected to forego the option of becoming nuclear powers of their own at some future date.