

INTRODUCTION

One hears often lately the refrain, "peace is breaking out all over." Would that it were so. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute lists in the latest edition of its yearbook, 32 major armed conflicts being waged worldwide in 1989, down from a level of 36 during 1987. Though the trend is encouraging, it hardly justifies the refrain.

What has begun to develop, in terms of East-West relations at least, is the slow realization that there is more to be gained from international cooperation and quiet diplomacy than from sabre rattling and military blustering. This has been reflected in a resurgence of the United Nations (UN) as a widely respected and widely utilized international institution for contributing to the resolution of armed conflicts. Since 1987 five new UN peacekeeping or observer operations have been implemented: the United Nations Good Offices Mission to Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP); the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG); the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM); the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA); and, in Namibia, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). These operations are the first new UN peacekeeping or observer missions to be established since 1981. They are the first UN operations of their type to be established outside the Middle East since 1965.

This revival in the willingness of nations to resort to the UN is significant on one level and on another it is not. In the first instance, it signifies, perhaps, the dawning of a new era in multilateral cooperation to resolve military conflicts. But at the same time the method used, that of peacekeeping, is still subject to the criticism that, rather than contributing to the resolution of conflict, it tends to institutionalize it. In a "new era" it is perhaps time to pay more attention to new methods which will not replace peacekeeping but supplement it.

One new approach to the process of conflict resolution has been suggested by the Canadian Committee for Five Days of Peace. Taking advantage of UNICEF's campaign to immunize the world's children by 1990, this group proposes the negotiation of five-day "humanitarian ceasefires" in zones of conflict in order to immunize the children living there.