

Disarmament ambassador says nuclear treaty is no small feat

BY NANCY WALSH
Of The Evening Telegram

The world should not minimize the significance of the upcoming signing of a treaty eliminating intermediate and shorter-range nuclear missiles in the United States and Soviet Union, according to Canada's ambassador for disarmament to the United Nations.

Douglas Roche says the world will be celebrating when American President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sign the agreement at the Washington summit next week. The U.S. and Soviet Union are reflecting a genuine desire to limit nuclear weapons through such an agreement, he says.

Mr. Roche, the first Canadian to be elected honorary president of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, represents Canada at international meetings on disarmament and is the special adviser to the federal government on arms reduction issues.

NOTE OF CAUTION

Although his Tuesday speech to the Northwest St. John's Rotary Club was optimistic about the future of arms reduction, Mr. Roche had a

note of caution. The signing of the treaty will eliminate only three per cent of superpowers' nuclear weaponry. That's not much, but it's important because of its political significance, he said.

"East-West relations are more reflective of our common vulnerability to the effects of nuclear war. . . Three years of negotiations have finally turned escalation into deceleration," he said.

Both countries have matured enough to realize that security is not brought about by escalation of nuclear weapons, Mr. Roche said. Last year's summit in Iceland saw both leaders project a vision of a nuclear-free world that would enable countries to focus their energies on global food production, peace and economic stability.

MUTUAL ADVANTAGE

The signing of this treaty, combined with the possibility of eliminating 50 per cent of strategic nuclear weapons during next year's summit in Moscow, would be advantageous to both leaders, said Mr. Roche. The Reagan administration needs it to boost its image and ensure the president's place in history books, while Gorbachev needs an international

success such as this to prove his desire for democratic reform within the U.S.S.R.

Gorbachev has realized he has to divert arms spending into economic development, Mr. Roche said. The Soviet Union spends about 14 to 20 per cent of its gross national product on its military forces, compared with seven per cent of the GNP in the U.S.

"He can't afford it and he knows it if Russia is to become competitive in this world of economic interdependence."

The process of verification of the treaty, which would see each country monitoring the other for nuclear weapons, must also be worked out now in order to "build a spirit of trust in arms control."

NOT ALL ROSY

But Mr. Roche said he doesn't have an unrealistically rosy picture of the future just because of this agreement. The superpowers' stockpiles of nuclear weapons may be on a downswing, but the nations still spend 80 per cent of their \$1-trillion military funding on conventional weapons such as chemical weaponry, which was "used in many wars since the Second World War and has scarred the face of the world."



DOUGLAS ROCHE

Other countries that own nuclear weapons, such as India, Pakistan, France and England, have not yet been approached to determine if they are willing to reduce their arsenals.

Furthermore, there are entire towns in the United States, and in all likelihood in the Soviet Union, which are dependent on military contracts for their economic survival. Whether or not these areas are transformed into producers of industrial goods depends on the political will. In some more conservative parts of the United States which favor nuclear proliferation, this may not be encouraged.