

# ARMAMENTS VERSUS DEVELOPMENT

## ROUNDTABLE \* ON DISARMAMENT

Present military equipment in the world is already sufficient to kill every human 40 times over. And yet, every day, well over a billion dollars will flow into the world's armaments race. This corresponds to the total income during that same day of the 36 poorest nations of the world, with a population of some 1,800 million. Half of these people will be living in utmost poverty, their children hungry. In the industrialised countries, during this same day, over 400,000 engineers and scientists — about half of all there are in the world — will be devoting their skills to developing more deadly military equipment.

However complex, there is an interrelationship between the armaments race and our efforts to ensure balanced global development. In that context, a report was presented in 1977 to the United Nations General Assembly on the economic and social consequences of the arms race (*Economic and Social Consequences of the Armaments Race and its Extremely Harmful Effects on World Peace and Security*). The report confirms that the trend in arms development and production persists, involving continuous and growing demands for resources desperately needed for social development purposes. "Genuine security", the report says, "cannot be assured by the accumulation of armaments but only through disarmament, co-operation and the growth of exchange and interdependence in a world of diminishing inequalities."

These issues were the subject of a *Development Forum* roundtable discussion recently organized by the UNs monthly development journal in the Palais de Nations in Geneva.

**NOEL-BAKER:** I hope and believe that the Special Session of the General Assembly is going to initiate a world treaty on disarmament. This could follow the drafts prepared by the Soviet Government in 1962 and very shortly afterwards by President John F. Kennedy. I regard them as the high point of armament debate over the last 100 years — the direct outcome of 40 years of continuous debate on armament problems in the League of Nations and in the UN after 1945.

I hope for such a treaty in three stages, of perhaps two years each, because I think the less affluent nations of the world are now thoroughly launched into the arms race. The percentage of their armaments expenditure has risen from about 6 per cent less than 10 years ago to 15 per cent today.

Military dictatorships will fight against disarmament, but if there is a world treaty, their resources as well as the help they receive from the rest of the world could be used not for armament but for development. As in the affluent, industrialised nations, they need a social revolution and redistribution of wealth by taxation. That has

got to happen on a world scale, and I believe it will only happen if there is a great reduction of the arms expenditure.

**VERESHKOVA:** Soviet women supported the decade for women proclaimed by the U.N. We believe that the proclamation of this decade can serve as the recognition of women's contribution to development and peace. The fact that such a decade was proclaimed at all testifies to the discrimination that still exists against women in work, education and professional training.

In the course of International Women's Year it was very evident that women felt concern for the great sums being spent on armaments and thought about how it would be important to use these finances for the solution of such problems as elimination of illiteracy and doing away with illness.

I belong to a group of people who have been lucky enough to see the earth from space. It takes only one and a half hours for a spaceship to make a complete revolution around the earth. When you are flying in space what strikes you most of all is the realisation that the earth is so small and very beautiful. Making it more

beautiful depends on all the people who live on earth — and the efforts of every individual.

**MACBRIDE:** The impact of the arms race is a colossal waste on the development of the world. It has now surpassed \$400 billion annually. As the Prime Minister of India points out, this is equal to total world-wide expenditure on education and twice as much as government expenditure on health.

But there is another aspect I want to emphasise. My understanding of a nuclear war under present conditions would be that there is no area of the world that would be spared from such a war. Fall-out and radiation will not stop at nuclear-free zones even if you do exclude nuclear weapons from certain areas. Disarmament is of direct concern to every country in the world.

**DE ALWIS:** I would like to endorse the inter-relationship between development and disarmament. Not only does the enormous expenditure on armaments severely reduce the resources available for development, where the lack of resources is a critical constraint, but it also depletes the earth's scarce critical natural resources. Further, our energies in research and development are being diverted to destructive purposes at the expense of improving the physical quality of life of the people. Not only material resources but human resources are also being diverted with the highly qualified professionals being lured by the attractive terms of work resulting in a brain drain of experienced personnel from developing countries

The pressing issue of disarmament will be thrust again to the centre of world attention at the eighth Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York from May 23 to June 28.

Final preparations are underway for the Session which will bring together representatives of all member states of the world organization. In the words of Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, it will, "in all probability be the largest, most representative gathering ever convened to consider the question of disarmament in all its aspects."

to fill the void in other fields of industry.

Again, by comparison, a recent UNCTAD study estimated that the Third World's debts will total \$253 billion by 1980. What will be the impact of this? It means that debt servicing problems will lead to a cut down of imports of essential raw materials resulting in restricting economic development. In turn it would create problems of political instability, paving the way for the emergence of dictatorships and the break up of the democratic process, where some are kept in power by resort to arms.

Everyone recognises today that there is an adequate deterrent in the arsenal of the major powers which can maintain the balance of power. One does not need to use a sledge-hammer to kill a mosquito.

Again we talk about the population explosion. But how best can you control population explosion except through reducing illiteracy and improving life expectancy? In Sri Lanka we have been able through increased resources in education and health services to reduce the population growth rate from 3.2 per cent to 1.6 per cent because we have raised our literacy rate to 87 per cent and our average life expectancy to 67.2 years. Recent studies have shown that through literacy a poor family in a developing country knows the advantages of having a small family unit and if you are reasonably assured of a long life expectancy for your children you need not take an insurance of seven children to ensure having three children to help you run your farm.

It has been said that there is an increase in the arms expenditure among the developing countries. Yes, but I do not think it fair to make a general observation for all developing countries because most of the arms sales are to a very few developing countries which are in a *de facto* war situation. Certainly most of us recognise that this is something we can ill afford to indulge in.

Furthermore, every time you create more sophisticated weapons you are forcing countries in a war situation to keep up with the others in military hardware. This compels them to continue buying more and more sophisticated weapons.

One should bear in mind that there are two parties in the trade in arms.

**BURHOP:** I think that the proposal from the Soviet Government some time ago to devote 10 per cent of the arms expenditure of the permanent members of the Security Council to development is a very wise and useful one. But before this can be done there is a tremendous task to be done in preparing public opinion in the developed countries. If my country (Britain) disarmed today and offered that £6000 million, not one per cent would go to the developing countries, such would be the clamour for tax reductions and to get the money ploughed back into the British economy.

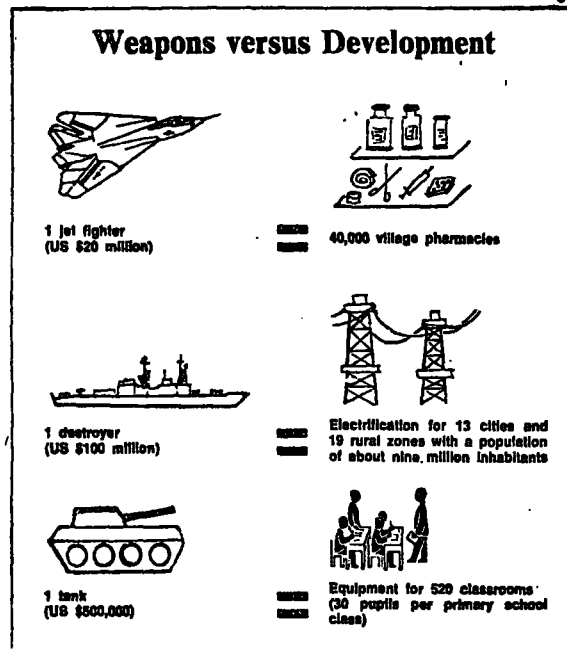
The biggest task today with regard to development is to form public opinion and make it accept that in our own interest we have

Technology for Development). To the villager living in Pakistan not knowing where his next meal is coming from, the ideas of stopping nuclear weapons seem very remote and disarmament is something he does not feel very concerned about. On the other hand, also in the developed countries, development is something that we need a great deal more information about. Why cannot we integrate these two great efforts of the UN this year and next year? It is clear how closely both are connected.

**NOEL-BAKER:** Let me return to the question — how do we prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons without depriving the world of peaceful nuclear power.

My private belief is that nuclear energy is one of history's great mistakes. Had it been discovered in the year 2150 rather than in the year 1930 we might

by then have got rid of war and armaments and then the atom could not have done us very much harm. I remain deeply convinced that for the present — fossil fuel, wind, coal, oil, rivers, waterfalls and tides can provide for all the energy needs of the world. The energy of the future is the sun — unpolluting and inexhaustible. I therefore hope very much that the developing countries will concentrate on wind, sun and water power and put their eminent scientists on to a crash programme for solar energy.



a tremendous responsibility to bring about development in the Third World.

It is one thing to suggest that if we have disarmament all these great things would materialise. But unless developed countries are made aware of the advantages to themselves in doing it, I do not think this will happen.

The two major efforts of the United Nations in 1978 and 1979 are the SSD and UNCSTD (Special Session on Disarmament and the UN Conference on Science and

**DE ALWIS:** I think Mr. Burhop made a very valid point when he asked how we ensure that people who agreed with disarmament would agree to divert these resources into development.

I think you could put the question the other way around. How many would agree to disarm purely for the sake of development in the Third World? We are today living in a world of interdependence and the crisis in the developed countries is one of stagnation. The answer perhaps lies in

creating markets in the developing countries through economic growth which could stimulate economic activity in the developed countries. This would give the international economy a fresh burst of life.

**EVANS:** Would it be practical, seeing that in 1980 the United Nations is going to declare the Third Development Decade, simultaneously to declare an international disarmament strategy specifically linking the two strategies together so that you are in fact reallocating resources from the arms race to development — say five per cent per annum under some kind of supervised budgeting control?

**DE ALWIS:** Let me return to the point I made earlier, that creating sophisticated weapons creates a market for them. How can we put an end to this? Some multi-national corporations are engaged in the arms industry and we seem to be able to make very little headway in stopping the sale of weapons which are detrimental to the economic development of the Third World.

I believe that for these multi-nationals, the arms business is a safe and ready source of profits. If one could find the alternative or explore adjustment possibilities, these multinationals may be persuaded to consider them.

**MIKTON:** Why do these multi-nations go into the arms business? The reason is because the profit they make in the initial production runs (which covers the costs of research and development) was guaranteed them by their own government. So the first 100 units of production covers research and development and stays in the country because it was ordered by the government.

This means that the "profit motive" is more or less in the hands of the government. In other words, the government assures the company of its profit — so by working in the government you can probably persuade the company not to go into arms. But unless you do this on the long-term basis these companies cannot plan the restructuring of their labour force and diversification into other fields, to employ their large labour forces. From observing the experience of large US corporations, I know many have this long-term corporate objective to reduce reliance on arms sales. First, it is not very

stable. Second, it does not have any direct spin-off benefits for other production lines. Third, it is very capital-intensive in terms of the time and grey matter needed, and they cannot switch this personnel easily to other commercial projects.

We hear of companies like Boeing and Lockheed whose military sales are declining as a percentage of their overall sales.

I think you have to attack these problems from within the companies and the labour force. I do not think we are going to convince governments how to behave — but I think we might be more successful working through the management and labour force.

**DE ALWIS:** You speak of labour unions. I will give you another example. When the developing countries ask for a new international economic order the first question the labour unions ask is: "What will it do for our people on jobs? Does it mean that the industries will close down and our people lose their jobs?" The whole attitude of the worker is very simple: "I work for a living". He is not interested in what he produces. He wants a living. If you offer him the same terms and conditions in any other field, he will accept it.

**EVANS:** But some workers say they do in fact care about what they produce — like the Lucas Aerospace workers in England. They are trying to persuade, through the trade union movement, to work out alternatives for civilian use instead of the armaments they produce. The workers themselves are satisfied it is feasible.

**MACBRIDE:** Let me finish by answering the question put to me earlier — what can the general public, represented by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) do in promoting the special aims of the Special Session of the General Assembly?

First, we have to create a public opinion which will insist on results from governments. Second, we must be positioned to formulate proposals that have a chance of being taken seriously by the Special Session.

The greatest problem with disarmament is that government arms policies are determined by the military establishment. Invariably, questions on disarmament are referred to the defence department,

which prepares the papers that the diplomats will need. This is why the NGOs are so important — they offer the only input that does not first go through the dark glasses of the military establishment, whose profession is to build armies and to obtain the biggest and most dangerous weapons in the world. That is what they are being paid for.

Now, in respect to public opinion, there has been a tremendous revolution in science leading to high standards of education and a tremendous progress in the mass media. It is now possible to inform the public as never before through the press, the radio, television and the cinema.

In addition, public opinion is now in a position to make itself heard. The centre of gravity is moving from the secret diplomacy of council chambers to the public. The first startling example we had of this was the Vietnam war — which was the first time in history that a war was stopped in mid-stream by public opinion. Until then it was "my country, right or wrong" and if you did not back it, then you were put in jail.

Would it have been possible, ten years ago for dissidents to hold press conferences for amnesty to set up a group of members in the Soviet Union, operating publicly? This is the result of public opinion. I think that we are beginning to create a public opinion which will reject armaments.

#### **THE PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED**

Philip J. Noel-Baker, former British minister, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, author and lecturer.

Valentina Tereshkova, Soviet cosmonaut, President of the Soviet Women's Committee, member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR.

Sean MacBride, winner of the Noble and Lenin Peace Prizes, former UN High Commissioner for Namibia.

Susantha de Alwis, Ambassador, permanent representative of Sri Lanka to the U.N. and its agencies in Geneva.

Eric Burhop, nuclear physicist, London University professor, member of the Pugwash Conference.

Richard Mikton, business consultant.