

Reflections on 25 years of frustration
and hope in the struggle to turn
nuclear swords into plowshares

Into the Disarmament Decade: A Semi-Personal Memoir

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In April, 1952, I traveled to Lambarene, then in French Equatorial Africa, to try to enlist the leadership of Albert Schweitzer for the cause of world peace. I was disappointed to find him basically unconcerned about world politics, skeptical of the United Nations, indifferent to disarmament, and unwilling even to lend his name to peace efforts. A decade later, in June, 1962, I saw Schweitzer for the last time. He was then a world leader in nuclear disarmament, and my task this time, also unsuccessful, was to discourage his indiscriminate endorsements of some peace efforts which I believed misguided.

His being awarded the 1953 Nobel Peace Prize was crucial to this dramatic change in the latter years of his long life. He became an avid student of world affairs and grew progressively more radical. In 1962 he told me with great intensity: "One must bark out against atomic tests and atomic war—like a dog in the African night."

Over the years the barking of individuals and nations against the arms race seems to have been about as effectual as the barking dogs against the African moon. The very first resolution adopted by the U.N. (Resolution 1[1]) dealt with disarmament. But in the quarter century since 1946 little progress has been made toward that goal. Indeed, after more than twenty-five years of almost constant negotiation through numerous forums, the first real disarmament treaty was ready for signature in the spring of 1972. This convention on abolishing biological weaponry is itself limited, and the largest admitted stockpiler of such weapons, the United States, announced months before the treaty was negotiated that it would unilaterally destroy its biological armory. In

addition, China has already given stern warning that it will not be party to the treaty.

The dream of disarmament antedates Micah's "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The dream survived religious leadership which over the years declared some wars "just," and since Hiroshima disarmament demands have assumed new urgency. Yet disarmament negotiations have, as often as not, been used to serve narrow national interests and even preparation for more war.

As statesmen have talked disarmament but stockpiled arms, both the arms and means of disarmament have become increasingly complicated. Today disarmament is the queen of practical international politics, being the sum of a dozen disciplines, from atomic science to political science. Yet more and more people feel they know less and less about disarmament. It sometimes seems to be discussed mainly by esoteric specialists hovering in and out of governments and by sentimental religionists always far from the exercise of power. Yet of all the crises that afflict us—environment control, resources control—none is as immediately crucial to human survival as arms control. A group of experts told U Thant in 1971: "The threat of ultimate disaster [that the arms race] has generated is by far the most dangerous single peril the world faces today—far more dangerous than poverty or disease, far more dangerous than either the population explosion or pollution."

I recall U Thant, then Permanent Representative of Burma to the U.N., at the first meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Non-aligned States in Belgrade, September, 1961. Tito, Nehru, Nasser, Nkrumah, Sukarno and others were trying hard to defuse the cold war and stop atomic tests. On the final day of the conference the London *Observer* re-

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ported from Belgrade that U Thant was a favored candidate to succeed Dag Hammarskjöld, whose term as Secretary-General of the U.N. would soon expire. In talking with U Thant that evening he asked me who might have written such a story. I suggested it might be Colin Legum, who just then entered the room, and I introduced them to each other. Several weeks later Dag Hammarskjöld was dead in a plane crash in Africa and U Thant became the Secretary-General.

His ten-year term was marked by his initiative and objectivity in trying to end the arms race. Again and again his Annual Report proposed disarmament initiatives which were supported by some member states. He also got the General Assembly to endorse a series of four studies by consultant-experts on various phases of the arms problem. Thus, the past decade has produced significant U.N. reports on the economic and social consequences of disarmament (1962) and of armament (1971), on the effects of nuclear weapons (1968) and of chemical and biological weapons (1969). (Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim is now asking a group of experts to study the effects of napalm.)

In the early 1960's the developed nations were anxious about what would happen to their capitalist (or mixed) economies if peace broke out. U Thant's experts (Russian as well as American) found, in 1962, that the world was spending \$120 billion annually on the military, or between 8 and 9 per cent of the world's annual output of goods and services and two-thirds of the entire national income of all the developing countries. The same researchers demonstrated that a war economy could be converted into a peace economy without great economic dislocation. That was a decade ago. In 1968 the experts described in detail "the threat of the immeasurable disaster which could befall mankind were nuclear war ever to erupt, whether by miscalculation or by mad intent." In 1969 the experts concluded that were chemical and biological weapons "ever to be used on a large scale in war, no one could predict how enduring the effects would be and how they would affect the structure of society and the environment in which we live."

The latest experts' report, released in the autumn of 1971, shows that the world military budget has increased in the past decade to over \$200 billion annually. But that is only a beginning:

The arms race makes more acute the very international strains to which it relates. Political differences become sharpened by the fear and suspicion which the amassing of armaments generates. International trade, already impeded by other factors, is slowed, particularly in the products of advanced technological industry. Military expenditures contribute to acute imbalances in the international

payments. Cultural exchanges stagnate. In short, armaments, which are supposed to provide security, provoke the very political differences which nations may assume they will help dissipate.

The cost of the arms race is enormous, and because of it, resources have been denied almost every other field of social activity. In total, it consumed nearly \$1,900 billion from 1961 to 1970. If annual military expenditures continue to absorb their present percentage of world GNP, they could well reach the level of \$300-350 billion (at 1970 prices) by the end of the decade, with a total outlay for the decade of some \$750 billion more than was spent from 1961 to 1970.

The military expenditures which cast the greatest shadow over the world are those of the major Powers, which between them account for the bulk of all such spending. Arms races between the developing countries are, however, no less dangerous. . . .

Since 1945 the U.S. and the USSR have usually been completely out of phase on the question of disarmament. When one wanted disarmament, or a specific disarmament measure, the other felt threatened and gave in to countervailing forces. Both superpowers have to contend with a military-industrial complex, and both have used disarmament negotiations for self-serving purposes quite unrelated to disarmament.

The U.N. Charter emphasizes disarmament less than did, for example, that of the League of Nations, but we remember that it was written in ignorance of the atomic weapons to be exploded only a few months later. In 1946 the U.N. created an Atomic Energy Commission to negotiate agreements on atomic energy, and several months later the U.S. proposed the Baruch Plan under which an international atomic development authority would own, operate and manage all atomic facilities. The Soviet Union rejected the proposal and urged instead the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Soviet-inspired peace organizations mounted a worldwide ban-the-bomb campaign, partly in an effort to disarm the U.S. and partly to give the USSR time to catch up in developing her nuclear armory. A new Disarmament Commission was created by the U.N. in 1952.

In the U.S. there was some positive movement under the General-turned-President, Dwight Eisenhower; he appointed Harold E. Stassen as his disarmament advisor, advocated the atoms-for-peace plan (leading to the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency), and, at the end of his tenure, warned against the military-industrial complex. Under President Kennedy the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) was created, an innovation for any nation, but the Department of Defense appeared always to hold the reins. For a long time "arms control" was the theme

of ACDA and "disarmament" little more than a swearword. The U.S. commitment to disarmament seemed less than sincere.

The Soviet Union and other Communist nations more clearly recognized the desire of the world's people for disarmament, but, unfortunately, this felt need was also more hypocritically employed.

In 1957 I attended the annual World Conference Against A- and H-bombs and visited the Atomic Survivors Hospital in Hiroshima with my twelve-year-old son. He was born the month that city was bombed, and I watched him playing with the twelve-year-old child victims of that horror. And I witnessed the cynicism of Japanese Communists, who proclaimed that American bombs are evil, but "Soviet atomic bombs are for peace."

Nonetheless, this was a period of intense public opinion favoring disarmament. In both the U.S. and the USSR public opinion reinforced official changes in defining the national interest, and a major disarmament plan was almost approved in 1955. Both opinion and policy were further influenced by the radioactive fallout from the 1954 U.S. atomic test in the Bikini Atoll.

By the spring of 1957 public concern mounted sharply against nuclear weapon tests. In May, almost simultaneously, two groups emerged in the U.S.—the Committee for Non-violent Action (CNVA) and the more traditional National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). A. J. Muste, the veteran religious pacifist, led the first of its early projects, trying to sail "The Golden Rule" into the testing area in the Pacific. Norman Thomas, Lenore Marshall and Norman Cousins took the lead with SANE (Erich Fromm had come up with the name). That summer of 1957 I went to London for SANE to observe the disarmament negotiations and to make contact with the British group emerging as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (this is the group that created the worldwide "peace symbol").

In 1962 Erich Fromm and I spoke to a disarmament conference in Moscow convened by the World Peace Council. President J. D. Bernal kept his word and we were allowed to speak in behalf of a group of Americans, including Norman Thomas, Clarence Pickett, Norman Cousins and Lenore Marshall. When we denounced U.S. atomic tests, two thousand delegates from all continents cheered loudly; when we denounced Soviet tests, they sat in silence. "How dare you criticize the peace-loving Soviet Union—and from a podium inside the Kremlin?" Later that week we carried a sign in Red Square denouncing *all* nuclear tests; it was confiscated by the KGB within thirty seconds.

I had heard that America's foremost baby doctor was concerned about peace and disarmament and so invited him to join the board of SANE. He answered that, as much as he would like to accept, the mothers

of America would not understand his public association with an issue on which he had no professional competence. I refused to accept his refusal and sent him a quotation from Einstein's writings in which the Nobel Prize winner explains why he felt compelled to take sides on public, nonscientific issues, especially in the struggle for world peace. The return mail brought Benjamin Spock's agreement to join SANE's board, and within a year SANE advertisements in American newspapers were featuring a full-length picture of the anxious doctor with the message, "Dr. Spock is Worried" about Strontium-90 in baby's milk.

The crash of a U-2 "overflight" destroyed one disarmament forum, but did not prevent Ambassadors Zorin and McCloy from working out the historic principles on disarmament negotiations. Later, Ambassadors Zorin and Stevenson put together the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC). The goal of general and complete disarmament was seriously proposed by the Soviet Union and endorsed by the U.N. Actual treaties were drafted. While large atomic tests in the atmosphere continued, so did test-ban negotiations.

The Vietnam war diverted the attention of the White House from disarmament

On another level Norman Cousins was playing the role of courier between President Kennedy, Premier Khrushchev, and Pope John XXIII, and it was during these months that negotiations for a test-ban treaty were successfully completed, despite the intervention of the Cuban missile crisis. The partial test-ban treaty was signed in August, 1963, but the euphoric moment did not last long. Pope John had already died. President Kennedy was soon to be assassinated, Premier Khrushchev deposed, and China to explode her first bomb—all before the end of 1964.

The period beginning with the mid-sixties was not healthy for disarmament. The Vietnam war diverted attention from disarmament within the White House. China and the Soviet Union traded ideological blows, sometimes over disarmament. The missile race accelerated, as did underground tests by the U.S. and the USSR, while France and China—non-signatories of the partial test-ban treaty—tested in the atmosphere. By the end of 1970

the test scoreboard read: 539 for the U.S., 242 for the USSR, 25 for the U.K., 38 for France, and 11 for China.

One domestic result of the Vietnam war, however, was a new readiness in Congress and elsewhere to challenge the Pentagon. Perhaps this is related to the fact that, in this period, three partial disarmament measures were negotiated in Geneva: the non-proliferation treaty, the sea-bed treaty, and the biological weapons convention. But progress remained slow. In 1969 eight states were added to the eighteen, creating the twenty-six-nation Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD). Some non-aligned nations offered initiatives and compromises, led by Ambassador Alva Myrdal of Sweden, Ambassadors Burns and Ignatieff of Canada, and Ambassador Robles of Mexico. Secretary-General U Thant persisted in his own initiatives. Nonetheless, all three treaties remained partial rather than comprehensive.

After long delay the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) began in 1969. So far they have been cloaked in extraordinary secrecy, which is ironic, for obviously the U.S. and the USSR are revealing to each other the military secrets they are concealing from the world (and from the U.N.). Such secrecy is especially disadvantageous to those in the West who could make informed criticisms, if necessary, of Washington's position in order to advance agreement. Again, however, these bilateral talks are important, if only to sustain the general détente between the superpowers.

In the summer of 1971 the Soviet Union dusted off U Thant's proposal for the five nuclear powers to negotiate disarmament. When China refused to participate, the Soviet Union then resurrected the non-aligned proposal for a world disarmament conference. No sooner had Peking taken its seat in the U.N. than it rose to condemn the world disarmament conferences. Further progress in disarmament appeared to be stymied more by the Moscow-Peking cold war than by tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

In the face of all this, the U.N. General Assembly named the 1970's the "Disarmament Decade." At the end of the second year of the decade it is useful to look at the balance sheet of disarmament from the beginning of the atomic era to the present.

Although nuclear weapons were used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they have not been used since. However, there have been atmospheric and high altitude test explosions, underground explosions (some of which have vented), accidents (with bomb-bearing aircraft), and near-accidents. Knowledge about disarmament and the process of disarmament negotiations has significantly increased. Peace institutes, such as the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), have been created; there are im-

portant exchanges among experts, such as the annual Pugwash conferences; governmental agencies, such as ACDA in the U.S., have been established. In addition, we now have a number of multilateral negotiating forums (e.g., the CCD) and one bilateral one (SALT). Now we have only to match scientific, political and organizational sophistication with political will.

The nations of the world have reached formal consensus about at least the goal of a disarmed world. The Chinese and Albanians do not quite agree that the aim is "general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control," but the Chinese goal (quite apart from implementation) may not be too different.

A final item on the positive side of the balance sheet is the diffusion of political power. Instead of only two superpowers, Japan, China, India and Western Europe are rapidly emerging. Polycentrism may complicate immediate disarmament negotiations, making for unpredictable political combinations, but in the end it may facilitate disarmament. Apart from the continuing détente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union new détentes develop between Western Europe and the Soviet Union and between the U.S. and China. The conflict is most dangerous between the Soviet Union and China, with the tension between India and China and between Japan and China of a lesser, although serious, magnitude.

On the negative side, the armory of weapons—nuclear and non-nuclear—is proliferating horizontally and vertically. Once there was one military atomic power; now there are five military nuclear powers. There are many more civilian nuclear powers, and some (Japan, India, Israel, West Germany, Sweden, Canada) could quickly become military nuclear powers. Nuclear weapons also spread upward, so that both the U.S. and the USSR have unbelievable overkill. Non-nuclear weapons, and their sophistication, spread in all directions, culminating in the so-called "electronic battlefield," in which electronic sensors take the place of infantry. These non-nuclear weapons are not only tested, produced, and stockpiled, but many have been used (and "perfected"), especially in Vietnam.

There has been no progress in establishing machinery for peacekeeping. Unless the U.N. begins to evolve strong institutions to keep the peace, it will be hard to convince the peoples, let alone the nations, that arms are not the prime ingredient of security.

A final item on the negative side of the ledger is the lack of an inclusive forum for disarmament negotiations. With Peking seated at the U.N., the First Committee of the General Assembly might be such a forum, but something is needed for deeper (and more leisurely) negotiations. France has not attended the ten-year-old ENDC/CCD, and China has informally indicated it will not attend. Thus CCD must

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be greatly revamped or a new negotiating forum established to include these two powers. Perhaps a U.N. disarmament conference is in order and, if China can be induced to attend, out of it might come a new (and smaller) negotiating forum that will merit participation by all key military powers.

What we have learned about disarmament and about negotiating disarmament has not yet resulted in major agreements, but it is a necessary prelude to agreement. Unfortunately, we tend to forget. We forgot, for example, that the first disarmament negotiation approved by the League of Nations, in 1922, concluded that "Disarmament to be successful must be general," meaning that it must be accepted by all nations and limit all types of weapons.

The first codification of such learning since World War II was the Joint Statement of Agreed Principles worked out by Soviet Ambassador Zorin and American Ambassador McCloy in 1961. This historic document was the basis for a decade of multilateral disarmament negotiations. The principles are still relevant, and some of the more important can be paraphrased:

1. The goal is general and complete disarmament, with war no longer an instrument for settling international problems. Such disarmament must be accompanied by the establishment of reliable procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

2. All measures should be balanced so that at no stage could any state or group of states gain military advantage.

3. All measures should be implemented under strict international control; the international disarmament organization should be assured unrestricted access without veto.

4. Progress in disarmament should be accompanied by measures to strengthen institutions for maintaining peace; an international peace force should be able to deter or suppress any threat or use of arms.

5. The widest possible agreement should be achieved and implemented at the earliest possible date.

Something of the complexity of such affirmations is evident in the further agreements listed by William Epstein, longtime director of the U.N. Disarmament Affairs Division, in a recent publication.

They are all of a "chicken and egg" nature.

1. Should nuclear or conventional disarmament come first? While the U.S. originally urged the primacy of conventional disarmament and the Soviet Union urged nuclear disarmament, now it is generally agreed that both must proceed in balanced fashion.

2. Should control or disarmament come first? The West advocated the priority of effective control and the Socialist states emphasized concrete disarmament measures. The French disarmament expert, Jules Moch, concluded: "There must be no control without disarmament and no disarmament without control."

3. Should political settlements or disarmament come first? The U.S. argued for initial political settlements while the USSR advocated initial disarmament measures. Now the trend has been to pursue both concurrently.

4. Should security or disarmament come first? Today the effort is to deal with both questions simultaneously.

5. Should technical studies or agreements in principle come first? The Western powers have emphasized the need for technical studies whereas the Socialist ones have urged that agreements in principle be initially reached. Now there is recognition that some technical attention must be given before specific agreements can be made.

Such statements as the above may seem to settle little. The reader may suspect that, for all the words, not much is said. After fifteen years of observing disarmament negotiations, I could not prove the contrary. It is certain, however, that we cannot despair of the task, and occasionally there is an encouraging switch from the seemingly interminable equivocations. In 1969, for example, the 24th General Assembly, declaring the Disarmament Decade, asked CCD to work out "a comprehensive program, dealing with all aspects of the problem of the cessation of the arms race and general and complete disarmament . . . which would provide . . . a guideline to chart the course of its further work and its negotiations." And in 1970 some nonaligned members of CCD did just that, coming up with a draft "Comprehensive Program." It was submitted to the General Assembly, which, in turn, sent it back to CCD with the instruction that it "be taken into account." While there is not space here to detail all the provisions of the

document, it is what it presumes to be, a comprehensive program. Now three years old, the Program needs revision, not least because China is unhappy with some of its priorities. (China wants the whole process to begin with a convention against the use or first use of nuclear weapons.) The Comprehensive Program is a real achievement, however, for it sets forth with care and a keen sense of realism the step-by-step disarmament agenda for coming years.

International disarmament talks have been going on for many years now, innumerable meetings have been held and innumerable declarations, statements, and agreements have been published. The U.N. has passed a great number of resolutions. Although many member states have favored these resolutions out of good intentions and in the hope that they may give an impetus to disarmament, the hard facts are that these resolutions remain but empty papers that . . . hoodwink world opinion.

. . . We should sum up the historical experience of the past twenty years and more and draw the necessary conclusions. We should not allow the U.N. to become a tool for implementing the policies of certain big powers. To meet their political needs of a given time, they resort to various means to secure a majority for the adoption of some high-sounding draft resolutions. However, after the resolutions were adopted, the superpowers have continued and even intensified their arms expansion and war preparations. The result of this can only be: the greater the number of resolutions adopted, the lower the prestige of the U.N.

These are the words of the head of the Chinese delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, November, 1971. China, however, is not above acting in the very way China condemns. To meet its political needs, as a nuclear power with still a small nuclear arsenal, China appears to be trying to delay serious disarmament negotiations by advocating "high sounding" proposals until China can enter such negotiations from a position of nuclear strength. This is the game played by the Soviet Union many years ago. When China is ready to enter the negotiations, all obstacles to disarmament will not dissolve immediately, but the prospects will be better than they have been for at least ten years.

Such long-range hopes, however, are responsive neither to our impatience nor to the global danger posed by a continuing arms race. I should, therefore, mention some of the proposals that have been made as alternatives to the tortuous process of negotiations to date.

Philip Noel-Baker, the only person to win a Nobel

Peace Prize for work on disarmament, has always advocated larger rather than smaller disarmament measures. It is more difficult, he contends, to achieve agreement on small measures than on a large package. Also, the Soviet Union, he contends, for a period advocated serious negotiations for general and complete disarmament rather than smaller, collateral measures. Certainly the collateral measures adopted since 1959—beginning with the Antarctica Treaty—have not produced the "confidence" necessary to break the disarmament log-jam; to the contrary, these half-dozen measures have allowed some governments to arm at an ever faster pace while mollifying public opinion.

Thus Philip Noel-Baker today urges that the U.N. Secretary-General appoint consultant-experts to devise a "Skeleton Draft Treaty on General and Complete Disarmament," but without inserting any figures in the three two-year stages. This plan could then be debated and improved by the General Assembly and then given to a Preparatory Committee for negotiations with member states on actual figures of arms-level. Then a world disarmament conference would be held to adopt the treaty. Noel-Baker insists that top governmental ministers be involved in the process, not junior bureaucrats, and that the negotiations be open to the press and public.

Yet another alternative approach is unilateral disarmament. It is an attractive route, even in our post-Gandhian era. Indeed, Premier Khrushchev advocated disarmament by "mutual example." The U.S. acted unilaterally in destroying its stockpile of biological weapons in advance of the multilateral convention. A large power can take the lead in disarmament, as in other matters, and do so out of strength rather than weakness.

A third approach promising faster progress is to give greater attention to world public opinion. The convening of a world disarmament conference might effectively focus world public opinion on the arms crisis. This is the hope behind the proposed international conference on disarmament in Geneva in September, 1972, for representatives of nongovernmental organizations. The people of the world want disarmament; they pay for the arms race through a lower standard of living, in some cases through less bread or rice. Yet their hopes have, with rare exceptions, gone unvoiced and thus ignored by the governments.

In the end, progress in disarmament depends not upon new ideas or new forums, but upon new political will. Peking Radio declared in 1964: "We are convinced that nuclear weapons, which are after all created by man, certainly will be eliminated by man." One hopes that unprecedented human disaster will not be required to produce the political will that can exorcise man's misbegotten creation.