

' Looking at Disarmament Talks With Ideological Blinkers On '

The Indian journal, New Wave, widely read by intellectuals of all parties in India, has begun a discussion of why the Third World must support a new SALT accord. New Wave's intervention comes in the form of an article titled "Looking at Disarmament Talks With Ideological Blinkers On," in its Feb. 26 issue:

The regional colloquium on disarmament and arms control held in New Delhi last week is presumably a part of the preparation for the UN special session on disarmament to be held this summer.

The UN sessions have undoubtedly played an important role in creating world public opinion on some crucial issues concerning the survival of mankind which continues to be the prime concern of humanist forces the world over. At the same time it must be stated that the success or failure of any UN move, in its turn, has been determined by the global strategic considerations of the two superpowers.

India's farsighted leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon did not approach the problem of war and peace either from the view point of woolly-headed pacifists or sabre-rattling cold warriors. Nor did they ever approach the question of disarmament from counter-technology or anti-science standpoint. On the contrary, they considered technological breakthrough in harnessing fission-fusion energy and the exploration of space as the only way of improving the standard of living of billions of people who are condemned to a subsistence level of living as also of ensuring peace on earth. They also assumed that scientific and technological advance on the scale it is taking place would create objective conditions for eliminating the atmosphere of confrontation and its substitution by a new process of entente among the technologically advanced countries, primarily the two superpowers, provided the secondary but otherwise vicious forces of moribund capitalism and monetarism which thrived in conflicts and wars, were isolated and rendered ineffective. That is why Nehru repeatedly spoke of the heavy moral and political responsibility of the USA and Soviet Union not only in ensuring world peace but also a much higher standard of living and culture to the entire mankind.

Any attempt to sidetrack attention from this absolutely indispensable precondition to universal peace, namely the success of SALT negotiations, is bound to land one in the quagmire of pacifist disarmament in which some second rate powers like Britain and allied elements in Europe and America are deeply interested in order to create conditions for their own re-emergence as managers of the homes and hearths of millions of people belonging to the under-developed and developing sectors. The tendency to counterpose disarmament to SALT will not only be counter-productive; it may push the world faster towards disaster. To the extent that the UN disarmament session helps SALT negotiations, it will be a positive gain for the world community. However, there are reasons to feel concerned at this moment.

As the UN special session draws nearer, concerted

attempts are being made to ignite local wars in Africa, Middle East and Southeast Asia to render a discussion on disarmament an exercise in futility. Secondly, the British, who are still nostalgic about 'Britannia rules the waves', have mobilised pseudo radicals of the Maoist brand and arch reactionaries of the Strauss, Luns and Kissinger type to deploy neutron bomb and resurrect cold war atmosphere in NATO countries with a view to creating a situation of confrontation between the USA and Soviet Union that might take the world closer to universal holocaust. The deliberately manipulated war between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn of Africa and the consequent involvement of some Islamic countries on one side, and African countries, mostly Christian, on the other, is a case in point. To divide people and nation on racial and religious grounds is an old and tried British technique to preserve and advance its own long-forgotten imperial permanency of interests.

The New Delhi colloquium, viewed from this standpoint, smacks of pacifist-technocrat attitude that does not seem to take into account the realities of the world power game. It has also failed to come to grips with the prevailing world strategic situation, and the way it is being manipulated by Anglo-American intelligence-cum-diplomatic agencies in the direction of confrontation and war. The summary of the colloquium, as published in a section of the press, also demonstrates how the seemingly independent posture of the participants verged on accepting the divisive Chinese theory of the so-called three worlds which, in practice, aims at hotting up the cold war in collusion with the most reactionary and militarist elements of West Europe and America.

A glaring weakness of the colloquium seems to be its failure to correctly assess the global strategic situation and the role of some key powers like Britain, China, Japan and of West European and American Atlantists in the emerging scenario.

The colloquium participants have stopped short of demanding that all the nations of the world should be invited to SALT negotiations; they have asked to be constantly informed of the progress of the talks. This apparently sound demand has a nasty catch in the sense that it underestimates the threat that the advocates of larger participation in SALT negotiations pose to the whole process of detente. The lessons of the League of Nations and its disarmament talks should not be forgotten if genuine progress were to be made toward peace.

The pacifist model of the colloquium comes into sharp focus in its neutral posture on the issues involved in the Horn of Africa, in the absence of an assessment of the situation in the Middle East and in the observation "whether any agreement between the two super powers (on their presence in the Indian Ocean) can necessarily be considered a step towards.....the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace."

The subtle shift from Nehru's world strategic concept in which detente has a pivotal place, is evident from the proceedings of this colloquium.