Conference Report

After the summit

TONY DELAMOTHE

Last year's Moscow congress of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) was preceded by the unscheduled arrival of a Cessna 172 in Red Square, piloted by a 19 year old German with a yearning for world peace. This year's IPPNW congress in Montreal was preceded by the scheduled arrival of Air Force One at Moscow's Vnukovo airport, inside it a 77 year old American fired by a similar emotion. While Mathias Rust, the young German pilot, is serving a four year sentence in a Soviet labour camp for "malicious hooliganism" the jury is still out on what President Reagan's mission to Moscow meant.

Coming as it did so soon before the congress and carrying with it hopes that have been central to IPPNW, the summit inevitably dominated the congress.

Strike the evil empire

According to President Reagan's message to the congress, the intermediate nuclear forces (INF) treaty marks the first time in history that an entire class of American and Russian nuclear missiles have been eliminated. The treaty also contains the most comprehensive verification provisions in the history of arms control. But, as the conference was told by United States Senator Claiborne Pell (who "floor managed" the treaty's ratification by the Senate), the treaty will not make much difference to the threat posed by the nuclear arsenals—only about 5% of nuclear weapons currently deployed are being removed. Only land based missiles with ranges between 500 and 5500 kilometres are covered. Every military or civilian site that is no longer targeted as a result of the treaty may be retargeted by sea or air based missiles or land based intercontinental ballistic missiles not covered by the treaty. Although the warheads from the destroyed missiles will be sent to storage sites, they may be reused in new missile systems.

In the congress's opening session both Dr Bernard Lown, IPPNW's copresident, and Inga Thorsson, chairman of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, emphasised that, although the intermediate nuclear forces treaty may have marked the end of the quantitative arms race, the search for qualitative superiority by the superpowers continues. For example, nearly 50 major weapons systems are scheduled to move from prototype to production in the next three years.

There was more agreement at the conference on the psychological gains that the INF treaty represented. The "evil empire" had finally been exorcised. The pattern of thought that could so dehumanise an enemy as to make its extermination a possibility may have been broken. As the Soviet deputy foreign minister, Vladimir Petrovski, told the congress, part of the treaty's importance lies in its "confidence building" effect on the arduous path to nuclear disarmament.

Motivating our efforts is the fundamental concept that nuclear weapons and human beings can not long coexist on this small beleaguered planet. Sooner or later, one must give way to the other. This is not a theologic article of faith but a cold blooded scientific assessment. We are therefore unashamed and uncompromising abolitionists.

Our starting point as physicians derives from a moral commitment affirming the right to life and health as inviolate whatever the dictates of political fashions of the moment. A profession such as ours, dedicated to assuring the conditions of life, has a sworn duty to work for the eradication of agents threatening mass death, whether infectious or atomic. For us nuclear abolition is a medical as well as moral categorical imperative. Overt flirtation with mass extermination is to be rejected whatever the ideologic high sounding pretensions. There are no conceivable circumstances which can warrant the use of genocidal weapons.

Dr Bernard Lown, copresident of IPPNW.

Healing our planet: a global prescription

What right has a group of doctors, even if it does have 200 000 members world wide and won the 1985 Nobel peace prize, to expect to have its deliberations over verification, deterrence, and disarmament taken seriously? In the eight years since it was formed IPPNW has seen its message—that the medical effects of nuclear war would be so appalling that nuclear war should never be countenanced—accepted by most people. Having achieved this goal, a totally appropriate one for a medical pressure group, is it not time that IPPNW's members returned to the world of the here and now, which surely has enough medical problems to be getting on with?

The year's theme, "Healing our planet: a global prescription," and the first words spoken at the congress, "While the rich nations stockpile weapons the poor have no safe water," show that the preoccupations of IPPNW are with the world as it is. What IPPNW is at pains to point out is the interdependence of the arms race and many of the preventable medical problems the world faces.

According to Dr Bernard Lown, "the armaments race is already forcing large parts of human kind to live in the rubble of world war III. Expenditures exceeding \$2800m daily divert finite fiscal, material, and intellectual resources from the dire needs for the developing world. Premature death, disease, hunger, illiteracy, and hopelessness, everywhere on earth not only in the Third World, are the direct consequences of militarisation of social priorities. Development and disarmament are indissolubly linked. One cannot achieve the former without accomplishing the latter."

Global military spending each year now amounts to almost \$1 000 000m, 6-8% of total world output, and during the 1980s global military spending has been growing at a faster average rate than in the second half of the 1970s. Military spending has been growing faster than gross national product during the past 25 years: the result, according to the United Nations Declaration on Disarmament and Development, has been that dozens of developing

countries have lost a decade or more of development, and some of the economic and social achievements of the past 20 years are in danger of being lost.

To those doctors wondering whether the arms race is any of their business Dr John Pastore, secretary of IPPNW, says, "As physicians we have the moral obligation and the medical data necessary to drag humanity to the mirror and show it the horror of what it spends on armaments while 40 000 children die each day because of diseases that are preventable or curable. Surely these expenditures cannot be justified before God or our children."

Not only the poorest countries have been affected by the arms race—the United States, the current winner, ranks fifth in the world in rates of literacy, eighth in life expectancy, 18th in infant mortality, 18th in population per physician, and 20th in school age population per teacher. One in 12 of its people go hungry, one in four of its preschool children live in poverty.

Cease fire '88

The goal of IPPNW is the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and since January this year its main campaign has been directed towards achieving a complete test ban on nuclear explosions. When a partial test ban treaty was signed 25 years ago this August it was resolved "to continue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date." That time has now come: according to IPPNW, nuclear tests are needed for only one purpose—the development of a new generation of qualitatively superior nuclear weapons. The strategic defence initiative ("star wars"), an obstacle to Russian negotiators agreeing to reductions in strategic arms, would never get off the ground without comprehensive testing. The nuclear weapons that already exist would certainly not disinvent themselves, but the acceptance of a complete test ban would strengthen the non-nuclear proliferation treaty and would keep up the momentum initiated by the

- Research on Star Wars in 1988 (\$3900m)=elementary school education for 1 400 000 children in Latin America.
- One Trident submarine (\$1500m)=five year programme for universal child immunisation against six deadly diseases, preventing one million deaths a year.
- Two fighter aircrafts type JA 37 (\$45m)=installation in Third World of 300 000 handpumps providing villages with safe water.

From *World Military and Social Expenditures 1987-8* by Ruth Léger Sivard.

INF treaty. In the short term this could mean the halving of the number of long range arsenals (the goal of START) and in the longer term cuts in conventional forces. Problems of verifying a test ban, for so long a stumbling block for negotiators in arms reduction, have been solved.

Now is the time to invite a Russian into your home

One of the topics discussed at previous IPPNW congresses has been how stereotyped (and false) ideas of "the enemy" have paralysed action and thought. The most direct way of ridding ourselves of these distorted views of others is to meet these others and if possible work with them.

To help counter distorted images of "the enemy" IPPNW has pioneered a programme of citizen diplomacy: exchanges between Russian and American doctors have been taking place for the past three years and have since been extended to include Canadian doctors and those from other socialist bloc countries. After this year's congress about 150 delegates from socialist countries spent time in North American homes.

Another recent initiative of IPPNW has been to increase its activities with medical students. For a week before this year's congress medical students from 17 countries were brought together with the cooperation of McMaster University Medical School "to evolve strategies for survival and deepen understanding of global health problems." IPPNW has now completed a medical curriculum on nuclear studies to be presented to the World Health Organisation. Dr Eugene Chazov, minister of health in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and former copresident of IPPNW, has promised to incorporate this curriculum into all Soviet medical schools.

Next year, Hiroshima

This year's congress was only the second to take place in North America; next year's, in Hiroshima, will be the first in the Far East. This year's total of 2000 delegates from 70 countries was down from the 2500 delegates who went to Moscow, which the organisers attribute to Moscow's closer proximity to large centres of population. Hiroshima will be too far for many of those who found Moscow or Montreal convenient: in any case it is time to question whether a single annual international congress with delegates numbered in the thousands and up to 20 sessions running simultaneously is the best way forward. At the congress's closing session there were suggestions that after Hiroshima international conferences may be held biennially and the programme of regional conferences stepped up. This way more attention could be given to specifically local problems of development, which, together with IPPNW's campaign for a complete ban of nuclear testing, now makes up a large part of its activities.

Further details of next year's congress in Hiroshima (7-10 October) are available from IPPNW 9th World Congress Secretariat Office, Hiroshima Medical Association, 1-1-1, Kannon-honmachi, Nishi-ku, Hiroshima 733

IPPNW may be contacted at 126 Rogers Street, Cambridge MA 02142, USA. The Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (IPPNW's affiliate in the United Kingdom) is at Tress House, 3 Stamford Street, London SE1 9NT (tel 01 261 1266).

Last year's model. A sales representative displaying Goodyear's contribution to the Pershing II missile system. Under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty all Pershing IIs should be gone from Europe by 1991, although their warheads may be back in new systems by 1994-5. Photograph by Robert Del Tredici from his book *At Work in the Fields of the Bomb* (Harrop).