

ARMAMENTS AND DISARMAMENT IN THE NUCLEAR AGE ¹

This work, edited by Dr. Marek Thee and published in October 1976 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, is a valuable source of information for those concerned with the increasingly vital problem of the spread of armaments.

The first chapter gives statistics on the present state of world armaments. Figures here tell us a great deal about the sums spent on arms throughout the world, the total explosive power of existing nuclear weapons (estimated at 15 tons of TNT for each inhabitant of the globe), stockpiles of chemical weapons, and the turnover of world arms trading. Some of the comparisons made by the author—for example, of arms expenditure with the sums spent on health or education, or with the gross national product of some poorer countries—supply further food for thought.

The second chapter deals with various aspects of nuclear weapons: historical (thirty years of nuclear arms), philosophical (absurdity of the nuclear arms race), technical and military (theory of the first use of atomic weapons), political (balance of nuclear terror in Europe) and legal.

Chapter Three deals with chemical and biological warfare, with special attention to the practical consequences of the Convention prohibiting the use of biological weapons, which came into effect on 26 March 1975, and of the Geneva Protocol of 17 June 1925. Part of the chapter is devoted to refuting the argument that the use of biochemical weapons could be justified as being “less inhuman” than other types of arms.

The following chapter, the fourth, deals with the effects of war, and particularly of certain types of weapon, on the environment. It discusses the draft Convention presented jointly by the USSR and the USA to the Committee on Disarmament and aimed at prohibiting the use, for military or other hostile purposes, of techniques for modifying the environment and it reviews the draft Convention on the crime of “eco-

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cide", put forward in an individual capacity by the American legal expert Richard A. Falk.

Conventional weapons and trade in them are the subject of Chapter Five. The sixth deals with the dynamics of the arms race (pressures arising from opportunities created by technological advances; reactions and counter-reactions caused by the arsenals of potential enemies) and with military research and development. The seventh outlines the economic and social consequences of arms deals.

The eighth and last chapter of this well-documented study looks at the fundamental question of arms control and disarmament. Efforts being made in this field are carefully weighed and analysed. The final part of the chapter examines the laws of war prohibiting or limiting the use of "dubious" weapons—"dubious" being the word used to describe those weapons which might belong in the categories prohibited by the laws of humanity. Any improvement in the law of war will consist mainly in the reaffirmation and clearer definition of laws derived from existing principles, and this the authors attempt to do. It must also take into account principles whose importance has become manifest only recently, for example, the principle that the survival of the human race must take priority over national interests, and the principle that the environment must be protected.

The many tables add to the value of this work, which will certainly become an indispensable aid to all those studying the problems of disarmament and its associated subjects.

Y. S.

International Instrument for Nurses, *International Nursing Review*, Geneva, No 5.

Official preparation of an international instrument on the conditions of work and life of nursing personnel began at the ILO's International Labour Conference held in Geneva, June 2-23.

48 nurses from 34 countries attended the conference as delegates or advisers to government, worker or employer groups, or as observers.

"The nurses made outstanding contributions to the discussions of the Committee on Nursing Personnel and had a tremendous impact on the meeting", says ICN Executive Director Adele Herwitz.