

From UN Headquarters

Three Voices

THREE voices were heard here during the general debate which opens every session of the General Assembly and they were the voices of the three most powerful nations in the world today. First to speak was John Foster Dulles. He was followed by Andrei Gromyko. Then spoke Selywyn Llyod for United Kingdom. Between the three, they laid the groundwork for the Twelfth Session of the General Assembly, but even before they had spoken, it was common knowledge that Disarmament, more than any other subject, would dominate the discussions. In this, the prophets have proved to be right.

At various times in the ten-year history of the United Nations, the nations of the world have been seized with other no less momentary problems. In 1948 Europe was the scene of the greatest tensions and the discussions in the General Assembly reflected them. Between 1950 and 1952, it was Korea, and in 1954 it was Indo-China. The 1957 Session of the General Assembly is confronted with the ticklish problem of disarmament and to a lesser extent—of West Asia,

The three Foreign Ministers who addressed the General Assembly had no illusions as to the nature of the natural conflicts between them. But to many it seemed that for the first time, the Soviet Union spoke from a position of strength. Mr Gromyko's speech was pitched in a low key. Gone were the wordy fulminations against the West, the bitter attacks, the acid phrases. In their stead, the General Assembly heard words of hope couched in the language of felicity. Mr Gromyko did not spare the West, but he seemed to operate on a higher level of statesmanship. There were references to Bandoeng, to the Five Principles and the "commendable example of the application of the Principle of Peaceful Co-existence in the relations which have developed between the Soviet Union and countries like India, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria—and a number of other countries".

Those who listened to Mr Gromyko had expected something along these lines. But they were nevertheless pleasantly surprised by the positive tone adopted by the Soviet

Foreign Minister. The reference to Bandoeng might have been a concession to Asian-African sentiments, but in those circles it was certainly well-received. What seemed obvious, however, was that the Soviet Union was feeling more secure internally and externally. The perfection of the intercontinental ballistic missile must have gone a long way in completing the transformation of the Russians from the bitter denouncers of the West to the quiet and dignified proposers of disarmament formulae,

Mr Dulles' performance was in marked contrast to that of the Soviet Foreign Minister. Speaking first— he did not have the benefit of listening to his antagonist he devoted his entire speech to two topics that were undoubtedly on his mind, Disarmament and West Asia. Mr Dulles had no time for Asia or Africa; he was not concerned with Bandoeng, with airy reflections on "Peaceful Co-existence"; he sounded bitter, angry, wanting to better the Soviet Union, but not knowing how. In short, he seemed to speak with a deep serine of insecurity.

Diplomats noted that Mr Dulles did not sound convincing, though he undoubtedly made a heroic effort to do so. There was some exercise in bravado, some whistling in the dark, but it was obvious to those who heard the U S Secretary of State that he was fighting for time.

Mr Dulles at least made an earnest attempt to don a mask of injured innocence. Not so Mr Ulyod, whose performance was marked with a bitterness that, was once associated with the late Mr Vyshinsky. If increased bitterness is a sign of national insecurity, then the United Kingdom gave signs of it in a large measure, Mr Dulles made no reference in his statement to the unification of Germany, but Mr Llyod did, indicating clearly the extent to which the United Kingdom depended on a Unified Germany to "hold" the Soviet Union.

The truth of the matter is that the "Cold War", instead of thawing, is getting the worse. Mr Gromyko, who ought to know, de-

scribed the International situation as "altogether abnormal and alarming" and the atmosphere between the two armed military groupings as being marked "by deep mutual mistrust". The statements made by the Foreign Ministers of the "big three" reflected it

What is causing distress in the Western camp is the failure of their prognostications about the downfall of the Soviet Union. When Mr Khrushchev came to power, hopes were being expressed in Washington that a new struggle between the Kremlin leaders would, temporarily at least, cause a setback to Communist leadership. This failed to materialise. Nothing would have caused more wholesome glee in the Western camp than the trials of Molotov and Shepilov to be followed by death sentences. This did not come to pass either. The Soviet Union, apparently, had grown strong enough to sustain the shock of top members of the Soviet hierarchy being deposed. This strength was simultaneously reflected in sensational technological advances as was evident in the perfection of the intercontinental ballistic missile. The Soviet Union, through its representatives abroad, could afford to sound lenient. Not so members of the Western Club.

It is this grim picture of two military blocs, suspicious of each other, engaging in diplomatic double talk that is presented at the United Nations. The disarmament proposals as put forward by the Soviet Union are alluring to the small powers. But they sound like the death-knell to the Western Powers, who feel that if the Soviet proposals are accepted in good faith, it will leave the Soviet Union with sufficient striking power over land and air that could, in effect, paralyse Western Europe and leave large portions of West Asia defenceless.

Basic to the issue, it is just as well to remember, is the fact that barring Germany, no European power is capable of withstanding Soviet pressures. Mr Gromyko had no comments to make on German unification; significantly, the United Kingdom State Secretary, Mr Llyod, had. The Soviet Government, Mr

Lloyd said, should agree that the German people should be allowed freely to choose their own Government, by means of free All-German elections, and it should recognise the right of a freely elected All-German Government freely to choose its own domestic and foreign policies.

"If the Soviet Government were to accept all those propositions", Mr Lloyd continued "the main obstacles to establishing European security would be removed. If, as a result of this self-determination of their future by the people of Germany, the Soviet Union felt any anxiety, the countries of the West are prepared to enter by treaty into binding assurances to secure the Soviet Union against any threat of German attack".

In saying that Mr Lloyd said exactly what is in the mind of the Soviet Government, which has bitter memories of World War II. Assurances are all very fine, a Soviet source said here in an informal discussion about the future of Europe, but what guarantees were there that they would not be torn to pieces once free? The phenomenal industry of the Germans that has resulted in the present strength of the deutchmark is already causing concern in East European circles. These circles have reason to be apprehensive of the growing strength of Germany. Indeed the Polish Foreign Minister, in his statement, made it fairly clear that German Militarism was something that his country could not look forward to with any degree of equanimity. The Western Powers, it would seem have other than purely altruistic reasons for seeing a United Germany take its place among the comity of nations. The Soviet Union, it would seem, has reasons not necessarily vicious, to see the continuation of a Divided Germany. Germany, in that sense, symbolises the deep distrust of one military bloc for the other. The Western Powers do not trust the Soviet Union; this is reciprocated by the Communist Bloc and not all the sweet words from the Soviet Union, nor all the bitterness of the Western Powers can apparently improve matters.

Mr Gromyko, with the directness and transparency that is often characteristic of the Russians, said this in so many words. "Confidence and once more confidence." He said in his policy speech, "Ending of war propaganda, normal eco-

nomie ties between countries without which confidence is inconceivable — this is more essential now than ever before".

And then he added: "They (the Western Powers) are looking for the kind of disarmament agreement which would be advantageous to them and detrimental to the security of others. This method of negotiations in advance dooms these talks to failure".

If confidence—or lack of it—is the key to world peace, then to many it appears futile to hope that any progress in that direction is possible at this stage. If the speeches of Messrs Gromyko, Dulles and Lloyd provide any indication, confidence between them is just the element which is lacking. Co-existence today merely means that the Three Big Powers do not know of anything better. They co-exist since they cannot destroy each other or are unwilling to do so. Co-existence is a simple matter of reality. The atomic bombs and the nuclear weapons that both parties have in plenty have seen to it that it is not otherwise.

The situation admittedly looks anything but cheerful, but optimists, who have watched the international scene since the League of Nations days, keep asking for new blood in the counsels of the Disarmament Commission—and its Subcommittee. The election of Japan to the Security Council undoubtedly will make this possible to some extent, but there is no agreement again, among the Big Powers, to have both the disarmament bodies expanded. The United States is against such a proposal; so is the United Kingdom. Once again, the Soviet Union is the only one to support such an idea. "In the opinion of the Soviet Government" said Mr Gromyko, "the participation of new States in the disarmament negotiations through the extension of the composition of the Commission and its Subcommittee can have only positive results." He added: "It would allow a more objective and comprehensive approach to the urgent problems of banning atomic and hydrogen weapons and reducing armed forces and conventional armaments".

But who, among the Western Powers, wants such a thing to happen, when each considers itself

still weak? A diplomat, who is a distinguished member of his community and represents a "neutral" country, summed it up in the following words. "The Western powers," he said, "are today strong, but not strong enough, in Europe. They do not trust the Soviet Union. They want to dictate terms and not be dictated to. In the circumstances, they will continue to hedge for time, until they have perfected their inter-continental ballistic missiles, until they are sure Western Germany has again become militarily strong and when they feel that Soviet expansionism can be halted on the one hand by Germany and on the other by Japan. Then and then only will the West care to listen. Then it might be the Soviet Union's chance to baulk"

He had reason to suspect Japan as an accomplice of the West. Japan's election to the Security Council was not warranted by a "Gentleman's Agreement" that the Big Powers had arrived at between themselves in 1946 at a conference in London. According to that Agreement, the seat which was contested by Japan, ought, in all honesty, to have gone to an East European country. Japan might have been forgiven for aspiring to power, but the cynical manner in which the Western Powers supported Japan in the elections constitutes a sorry commentary on the manner in which elections at the United Nations are "sold". Japan's representative at the United Nations, Mr Matsudaira blandly suggested at a press conference that the answer to the dilemma of the "Gentleman's Agreement" was the expansion of the membership of the Security Council—something which is anathema to the Soviet Union without the ousting of the present representative of Nationalist China and his substitution by the real representative of mainland China.

All of which makes the situation "curiouser and curiouser". as Alice might have said, at the United Nations Wonderland. The United Nations was built on hope and the most hopeful thing that can be said about it today is that it keeps nations from mischief by bringing their representatives face to face with each other. There is still hope for the world as long as this is possible.

