

Surprising Talks Open U.N. Disarmament Meet

United Nations (RNS) — A Soviet pledge never to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states and Chinese advocacy of a new U.N. disarmament organ with universal membership highlighted the U.N. Special Session on Disarmament in the opening general meeting.

Anticipating a vehement response to U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale's address which had sharply attacked Soviet military policy and vigorously justified a military buildup by NATO, most Assembly delegates seemed surprised by the relatively mild statement by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

To be sure, Gromyko did call unfavorable attention to the simultaneous NATO summit in Washington, chided Mondale for his "difficulty" in pronouncing the word "disarmament" (Mondale had repeatedly spoken of "arms control"), and blamed the United States for the "dragging on" of the SALT talks. But the veteran Soviet diplomat's address consisted largely of a lengthy summary of previous disarmament proposals and negotiations in progress.

Repeating the main points of Chairman Leonid Brezhnev's address in late April, Gromyko urged a cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons; a cessation of the production of all other weapons of mass destruction; a cessation of the development of conventional armaments of great destructive capability; and a renunciation of the expansion of the armies of all permanent members of the Security Council.

Details of implementation and verification were not provided: a cause of repeated

criticism of previous Soviet proposals. Moreover, the proposed freeze on armed forces expansion finds both the NATO powers and China engaged in force increases to cope with massive Soviet troop deployments in Central Europe and on the Chinese border.

Hehir Talk Cancelled

Father J. Bryan Hehir's scheduled talk on Disarmament was cancelled last week. Father Hehir, executive secretary of the Office of International Justice and Peace for the USCC, was unable to fly to Rochester because of thunder storms in New York City, according to a spokesman for the sponsoring Justice and Peace groups.

While Gromyko referred to proposed neutron weapons as "particularly cruel and vicious" and as "intended to annihilate all things living," his address did not dwell at length on the subject.

Hoping to strengthen resistance to nuclear proliferation, Foreign Minister Gromyko pledged that the Soviet Union would never use nuclear weapons against those states which renounce the production and acquisition of such weapons and do not have them on their territories. This pledge, a so-called "negative assurance" for the security of non-nuclear states, is the strongest Soviet commitment to date on this subject.

Gromyko also used unprecedented language for his government in announcing Soviet readiness to negotiate "substantial reductions" in missiles and bombers

following a SALT II agreement.

Against a diplomatic backdrop of U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's recent trip to Peking, the opening address of Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua was more sharply critical of Soviet military and disarmament policies than those of the United States. However, Huang repeatedly rebuked both the "superpowers" for their "hypocrisy," "hoaxes," and "duplicity," in matters of disarmament.

More positively, Huang generally expressed approval of the main disarmament proposals of the non-aligned states whose initiatives led to the creation of the Special Session. As most delegations waited for word as to whether the Chinese would join France in resuming a more active role in disarmament negotiations, the foreign minister stressed the need for a new "international organ with the participation of all countries under the auspices of the United Nations." This proposal seemed to imply a continuing repudiation of the 31-nation Geneva Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD). The proposed new organ, reminiscent of the U.N. Disarmament Commission, which has been inactive since 1965, should be "truly free of superpower control." (The U.S. and the USSR are permanent co-chairmen of the CCD.)

Some observers questioned whether Chinese support for non-aligned proposals for disarmament might not be offset by the extreme emphasis of Huang Hua's speech on Soviet military aggrandizement — an emphasis tending to strengthen anti-Soviet, anti-disarmament pressures in the U.S. and NATO.

Pope Lauds Bishops For Abortion Fight

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul has warmly praised the Catholic bishops of the U.S. for their campaign against abortion and for their efforts on behalf of the hungry, the poor and minorities.

The pontiff received in a special audience bishops from Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado. The prelates were in Rome to make their required "ad limina" reports.

Addressing the group, the pope said he intended his remarks for all the Catholic bishops in the U.S.

"With the enlightenment of faith, the incentive of love, and an awareness of your pastoral accountability," the pope said, "you have worked to oppose whatever wounds, weakens, or dishonors human life.

"Your pastoral charity has found a consistent expression in so many ways — all related to the question of life, aimed at protecting life in its multiple facets.

"You have endeavored to proclaim in practice that all

aspects of human life are sacred. In this regard, your efforts have been directed to the eradication of hunger, the elimination of sub-human living conditions, and the promotion of programs on behalf of the poor, the elderly and minorities. You have worked for the improvement of the social order itself."

"We know," said the pope, "that you have held up to your people the goal to which God calls them: the life above, in Christ Jesus. Among your many activities at this juncture in history, one deserves our strongest commendation and our firmest support. It is the continuing struggle against what the Second Vatican Council called the 'abominable crime' of abortion."

The pontiff continued: "Disregard for the sacred character of life in the womb weakens the very fabric of civilization. It prepares a mentality, and even a public attitude, that can lead to the acceptance of other practices that are against the fundamental rights of the individual.

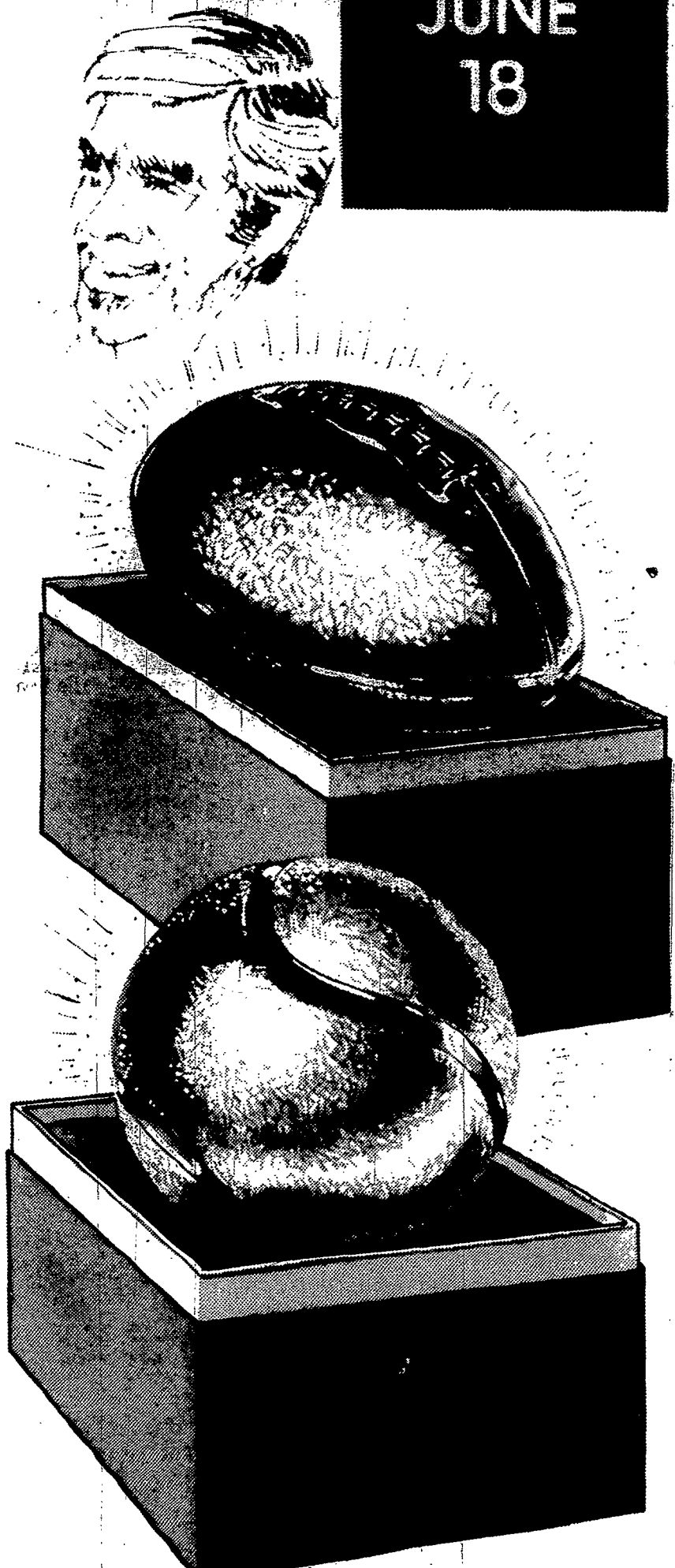
"This mentality can, for example, completely undermine concern for those in want, manifesting itself in insensitivity to social needs. It can produce contempt for the elderly, to the point of advocating (direct) euthanasia. It can prepare the way for those forms of genetic engineering that go against life, the dangers of which are not yet fully known to the general public."

Pope Paul also referred to the conference in New York City commemorating the 10th anniversary of his encyclical "Humanae Vitae," in which he condemned all except "natural" forms of birth control.

"We know," said the pope, "that in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of 'Humanae Vitae,' various initiatives are being sponsored throughout your country to explain natural family planning in accordance with the teaching of the Church. These activities honor life directly in the dignity and importance of its origin."

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