

Proposal: That the United States and the Soviet Union jointly commit to the goal of Immunizing all the world's children by 1990.

Our basic premises are that while arms control is of monumental importance, it is, for the time being at least, deadlocked; and that a breakthrough in another area could break the log-jam in US-Soviet relations. We have now found a project that could work to this effect and, in the process, contribute to saving the lives of 5,000,000 children.

The project centers around an idea whose time is coming: Namely, to immunize the world's children against six childhood diseases (measles, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, tuberculosis, and polio). This idea is presently percolating up through the international health community: The World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the United Nations as a whole are all starting to focus on it, and probably by the end of the year a resolution will pass the UN General Assembly which calls for immunizing the world's children by 1990.

We propose that the United States and the Soviet Union make a joint commitment to immunizing every child in the world against these six diseases by 1990. By doing this, they would establish a cooperative relationship in an area which both nations support, and they would take a leadership role in a non-military, humanitarian area. They would be acting in a very different way from their normal adversarial relationship. There is a precedent for such cooperation in the health field: The US and the Soviet Union worked together to end smallpox during the 1960's.

The advantage of a joint U.S./Soviet world immunization program is that it takes advantage of the superpowers' strength in technology and resources while bypassing their innate geopolitical competitiveness. Unlike development activities, immunization activities do not have an inherent geopolitical dimension: they involve no vested interest in any particular Third World regime. Immunization requires only politically-neutral medical teams, backed by politically-neutral resources, to go in and do the job. A joint US/Soviet immunization effort would be as symbolically valuable as a joint space mission, vastly more productive in human terms, and a possible step towards ameliorating the East-West conflict at a time of entrenched and dangerous stalemate in superpower relations.

The resources required for a multi-disease immunization program are relatively small: \$5 per child for the 100 million children born in the developing countries each year--or \$500 Million per year. The World Health Organization estimates that an increase in funding of \$1.25 billion would be sufficient to institute the program world-wide.