MATHEMATICIANS CALL FOR A HALT TO THE ARMS RACE

Mathematicians significantly contribute to military planning and the design of weapons systems both indirectly, by providing the theoretical basis for science and technology and directly, by working on arms research projects or by producing mathematical results which later are found to have military significance. We, mathematicians from all over the world, therefore feel obliged to publicly express our deep concern about the present acceleration of the arms race.

By consuming vast amounts of human and natural resources which otherwise could be used to help solve many of the urgent problems mankind now faces, the arms race is a major cause of much suffering, hunger and death in the world, especially in the developing nations. Also, the arms race does not prevent local wars.

We share the opinion of many colleagues in other scientific fields and of several military experts that in fact, if left unchecked, the arms race will most probably lead to nuclear war between the two major military blocks.

The increased danger of nuclear war, initiated either intentionally or unintentionally, stems mainly from the following facts which have been clearly brought out in the current public debate:

Many of the nuclear weapons systems and space weapons presently being developed and, in some cases, already being deployed are designed to be war-fighting rather than deterrent weapons. The associated control and warning systems are becoming more and more complex and they are fallible.

The success of negotiations depends greatly on the ability to verify compliance to arms control agreements. We still have a chance to solve the verification problem. As the arms race proceeds, this problem will become more and more difficult, if not impossible, to solve.

Nuclear war must be averted and initial steps toward this end must be made now. A necessary first step is a freeze on all nuclear weapons systems and space weapons. The freeze should not be postponed until the conclusion of time-consuming negotiations. Each nation can immediately enforce a comprehensive freeze on a unilateral basis without endangering its own security or that of its allies.

We call for an agreement to freeze all nuclear weapons systems and space weapons, that is, to stop their development, testing, production and deployment. Meanwhile, each nation should unilaterally enforce this freeze. We urge that measures then be taken to significantly reduce the present number of nuclear weapons and that serious efforts be made to reach further, more comprehensive agreements on other types of weapons, in particular chemical and biological weapons.

Initial signatures as of August 1st, 1985 include:


continued overleaf: